



James F. Kuryak

August 28, 1942 - February 19, 2018

Known for his prowess on the basketball court, his ability to catch baseballs with his bare hands while coaching his sons' teams, a booming voice as a Eucharistic minister and an encyclopedic knowledge of New York state's gasoline supply and demand, James Francis Kuryak passed away Monday, 19 February 2018 at the age of 75 surrounded by his loved ones.

Born on August 28, 1942 and raised in Lackawanna, Jim was the son of the late Joseph & Frances (Lis) Kuryak, older brother of John, Michael (Kimberly) & Joseph (Andrea). In his hometown, Jim's athleticism was evident early on, as he played numerous sports at Baker Victory, where he was ultimately honored as an inductee into the high school's Hall of Fame.

Earning a four-year scholarship for basketball from Niagara University, Jim - or "Gunner" as his teammates nicknamed him - played for the University from 1960-64, and was Captain of the Division 1 team in his final year. He graduated in 1964, earning a degree in Business as an accounting major.

Jim put his business degree to work as a 37-year veteran of Mobil Oil, where he was District Sales manager of New York State. He's lovingly remembered as a frequent fixture at the Mobil stations he called on, chatting with his clients over a cup of coffee, not to mention sitting at his kitchen table setting gas prices with daily calls - "Up a penny"; "Down a penny" - like the OPEC of

Western New York.

He was most proud, though, of his family of five children, James (and his wife Kathy), Mary Beth, Deborah (and her husband Art) Bradley, Mark and Timothy. During his children's school years, Jim loved nothing more than taking day trips in his car to Rochester, Geneva, Boston and Providence, logging more than 50,000+ miles a year to watch his kids compete in their collegiate sporting events, along with 'shorter' 3-hour round-trip jaunts for pancakes during maple syrup season in central New York. While each of his children have individually become quite successful in their own fields and careers, it's through their father's hard work ethic and competitive spirit that allowed them to flourish and achieve as much as they have.

As beloved husband to the late Josephine Douglas, and loving step-father to Nancy (Brian) Eckert and Jodi (Garry) Vermaas, Jim shared his late wife's love of Disney, where they worked together at DisneyWorld in Orlando, looking dapper in their western-wear uniforms in Frontierland, greeting families as they sold photos as happy memories at Splash Mountain.

In his retirement, Jim loved doting on his grandchildren, Grace & Grant Bradley, Sydney Giardino, Brian & Jackson Eckert, Garret, Jolyn, Shiya, James, William & Luxmi Vermaas, where each one had a colorful nickname for him, from 'Turtle' to 'Alligator' to 'Polar Bear'. He also enjoyed volunteering his time at the local Florida chapter of the Special Olympics, where he earned the honor of Volunteer of the Year in 2012.

In lieu of flowers, a donation to Special Olympics Florida in his name would be accepted with heartfelt appreciation (<https://give.specialolympics.org/page/contribute/florida>)

The family will receive friends on Friday, February 23rd, from 4-8p at Wattengel Funeral Home,

Previous Events

Visitation

FEB **23**. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Wattengel Funeral Home (Meadow Drive)
533 Meadow Drive
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 693-0440
wattengelfh@gmail.com
<https://www.wattengel.com>

Mass of Christian Burial

FEB **24**. 10:30 AM (ET)

St Jude the Apostle Parish
800 Niagara Falls Blvd.
North Tonawanda, NY

Tribute Wall

LL

“ My deepest sympathy to Jim's family and friends. I work for Special Olympics Florida where Jim volunteered for many years. I always enjoyed coming into the office and seeing him sitting at the front desk. He always had a big smile on his face and would always inquire about my children. He loved to read the newspaper and we would often get into "discussion" lol about the latest headlines. He was a great man, very thoughtful and always treated everyone the same. The athletes at Special Olympics Florida loved him. All though we had not seen him in a while since moving back north, he will be greatly missed.

Linda Lewis - March 05, 2018 at 06:20 PM

DA

“ I am so incredibly sorry for your loss. There isn't a day that goes by that I haven't thought of Jim. I miss him and his dry sense of humor. He was my friend and reminded me a lot of my own father. He may have been stubborn but we had a great working relationship just the same. He touched many lives. I wish I had a chance to express my condolences to you in person and to hug him one last time. He always took the time to ask how I was doing despite the quality of his circumstances. Jim had a big heart. I have no doubt that he continues to watch over each of his family members every day. You were all very loved. To snail: in the short time that I've known you, you have grown and matured beautifully. You are smart, kind, and attentive. I have no doubt that you will be as strong willed, hard working, and determined as your grandpa in any endeavor you choose to pursue. He loves you very much and is so proud of you. I will be thinking of all of you - Danielle.

Danielle - February 26, 2018 at 01:42 PM

ED

“ *Not sure this is the right family.*

Kathy Kuryak (James) used to live across the street from us at 8 East Bihrwood Dr in West Seneca.

Even if it's not, I'd still like to say that I'm sorry for your loss.

Ellie Dillingham

Ellie Dillingham - February 26, 2018 at 11:50 AM

SB

“ *Mary Beth,
So sorry to hear of the passing of your father. My thoughts are with you and your family.*

Stuart Bolton

Stuart Bolton - February 25, 2018 at 08:51 PM

K(

I remember hearing Jimmy's name as a young child. My brothers played ball with/against him. Our Dads were friends in the Knights of Columbus.

*Kuryak family has a new Angel...
RIP +*

Kathleen Rogers (Dziak) - March 05, 2018 at 01:21 PM

CT

“ Mimi, Mark and family:

I am so sorry to read of the passing of your father. It has been many years, but the one thing I remember about Jim is the love and devotion he had for his family. I hope that you find comfort in all the memories and stories shared over the upcoming days and weeks ahead. My thoughts and prayers will be with you and your family.

Colleen Thomas

Colleen Thomas - February 25, 2018 at 09:19 AM

DS

“ A giant on the court(s) & fields, and in the classroom and our "oil patch" Jim was a good and loyal friend to many including myself. We shared 4 years on Monteagle Ridge and 35 years with Mobil Oil. You could depend on Jim. A real loss of a good man. My condolences to his entire family.

Dave Selner, NU Class of '64

David Selner - February 24, 2018 at 11:18 AM

MW

“ Kuryak Cousins, We truly lost one of the best guys on Earth. I'm going to miss him with all my heart and soul. He was always so very proud of his beautiful family. Cousin Maryann Wannop

Maryann Wannop - February 23, 2018 at 03:11 PM

RS

“ *RIP Jim.
Remembering the close family ties in Lackawanna and helping you
coach little league in NT. 7-11 went all the way.*

Ray & Rose Mary Struski

Ray Struski - February 23, 2018 at 02:28 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of
James F. Kuryak.*



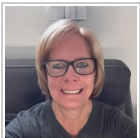
February 23, 2018 at 01:19 PM

TF

“ *The Ambuehl-Diamont Family purchased the Hea
ven's Comfort for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



The Ambuehl-Diamont Family - February 23, 2018 at 01:17 PM



“ *Mary Beth & family.....I'm so sorry for your loss. May you find
comfort in all the wonderful memories. Thinking of you at this very
difficult time!*

Lori Lampitt - February 23, 2018 at 12:54 PM

LZ

“ *Jim and Family*

So sorry to hear about the loss of your father. our thoughts and prayers are with you at this time. May god bless you all.

John & Lori Zipp

Lori Zipp - February 23, 2018 at 10:16 AM

TH

“ *Mary Beth - our condolences to you and your family. You are in our thoughts and prayers. - Trish Hudson*

Trish Hudson - February 23, 2018 at 09:54 AM

RS

“ *"Kuryak with the ball. He drives the middle and lays it up. It's good, Eagles win!
Ric Samulski NU '64*

Ric Samulski - February 23, 2018 at 09:31 AM

CK

“ *Uncle Squeeze was one of the greatest.*

I fondly remember the firm handshakes and sarcastic comments. It took me a while to see through his straight-faced, stern humor -- but behind it was a big softy. Loved this guy.

Sorry I can't make it this weekend. I will miss Ol' Barrel Ass dearly. I think he'd want me to drink a Michelob Ultra in his memory.

*Love ya'll, and talk soon,
Nephew Chris*

Chris Kuryak - February 22, 2018 at 11:10 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 09:18 PM



“ *Sorry for your loss. Big Jim was a great man I remember watching him play basketball at ridge junior high.when he crashed the boards bodies were every where and he got the rebound.*

Patrick Murphy - February 22, 2018 at 07:48 PM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Nancy Eckert - February 22, 2018 at 06:16 PM



“ *This All-Star Team made a good run but came up short making it to Little League World Series. I blame the coaching.*



Mark Kuryak - February 22, 2018 at 06:15 PM

MK

Please Help me put names to all the faces! It's been over 30yrs+! I know remember some - Walters, Stringfellow, Gabel...

Mark Kuryak - February 22, 2018 at 11:56 PM

KM

Brochey, Puesheck, Kornacki, Sedelack, Sarkovics, Taylor, Owlenik, Pawlick

Kyle Miller - February 23, 2018 at 12:33 AM

KM

Fun team to go watch

Kyle Miller - February 23, 2018 at 12:34 AM

MK

Ted Toponack in Purple?

Mark Kuryak - February 23, 2018 at 02:32 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Deb Bradley - February 22, 2018 at 04:53 PM

JC

“ Jeff Carr purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of James F. Kuryak.



Jeff Carr - February 22, 2018 at 04:50 PM

JL

“ *My deepest condolences to the Kuryak family on the loss of James. You are all in my thoughts and prayers.*
Joe Lis, cousin

Joseph Lis - February 22, 2018 at 03:22 PM



Thank you, Joseph, for adding to his tribute wall. He loved his large, extended Lackawanna family!

Deb Bradley - February 22, 2018 at 04:56 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 03:02 PM

JK

“ *Mary Beth, I'm so sorry for your loss and am keeping you and your family in my prayers. I pray that, soon, you will find comfort in fond memories and knowing that you are loved. God bless.*

Jenny Knight - February 22, 2018 at 02:01 PM

JN

“ Jim and I were roommates Junior and Senior years at Niagara. Jim was smart, fun, humorous, loyal, competitive, multi-talented, spiritual, and driven.

He and I were about the same size and shared clothing, doubling our separate wardrobes.

I was amongst his first customers at his first Mobil Training site in Rochester, at the corner of Route 104 and Long Pond Road. To “bust his chops” I asked him to wash the windows and check the oil on my father’s car. He reacted with his typical good humor and even called me “Sir”.

We stayed in touch occasionally by email.

I treasure our time together.

“Well done good and faithful servant”

Enjoy your rewards for eternity

Jerry Norton

Timon Hall Room 17

Varsity Village House 5, Room 1

Jerry Norton - February 22, 2018 at 01:58 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.



February 22, 2018 at 01:00 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 12:58 PM



“ *Very sorry for your loss. Jim and I grew up together in the same neighborhood. We both went to BV and NU. We played many sports together and shared a lot of good memories.*

Bernie McCann - February 22, 2018 at 12:57 PM



*Thank you, Bernie. We are comforted by your words.
Deborah (Kuryak) Bradley*

Deb Bradley - February 22, 2018 at 04:53 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 12:44 PM



“ *he was a great guy and a great player at Baker-Victory and Niagara, he will be missed by many of us*

don grosso - February 22, 2018 at 12:18 PM

KD

“ I grew up in high school listening to Niagara basketball and the "barrel chested captain from Baker-Victory High School" with the voice of Van Miller on the radio. After college, I had the pleasure of being a teammate of Jim's on the K of C bball team. One of the greatest athletes and competitors I ever had the pleasure to be on a team with. Words of wisdom from Jim when we played that I remember him saying to me: "when in doubt, shoot!", and we did. Condolences to all of Jim's family, we will all miss him.

Ken Dziak - February 22, 2018 at 11:23 AM



Ken, Thanks for your great, vivid memory of my dad in action. Much love and appreciation! Deb Kuryak Bradley (daughter)

Deb Bradley - February 22, 2018 at 04:24 PM

JK

Ken, love the memory. What was the difference between K of C and the Sheriff Tutuska Basketball teams?

Jim Kuryak

Jim Kuryak - February 23, 2018 at 08:47 AM

KD

K of C was a multi year championship team in the Lacka city league which represented Lacka in many tournaments; not sure what Sheriff Tutuska bball was, sorry.

Ken Dziak - February 23, 2018 at 03:42 PM

MK

Ken, Thank you sharing your memories.

Mike Kuryak

Mike Kuryak - February 26, 2018 at 11:55 AM

VS

“ *Rest is peace my friend. Perhaps it was fate that we were able to reconnect down in Florida for a few years. May God be with you and your family.*

Vic & Judy Struski - February 22, 2018 at 11:18 AM

JD

“ *Jen, Liz, Joel, Ash + Nellie (Team Deb) purchased the Heaven's Comfort for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



Jen, Liz, Joel, Ash + Nellie (Team Deb) - February 22, 2018 at 11:10 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 11:03 AM

EY

“ *I spent a lot of time with Jim at the hockey rinks and baseball fields watching and coaching our sons. You couldn't find a more friendly person than Jim. Our condolences to all his great kids. Ed and Carolynn Yablecki Spring Hill Fl.*

Edward & Carolynn Yablecki - February 22, 2018 at 10:51 AM



Thank you, Mr. & Mrs. Yablecki! Dad and all the kids loved and feel blessed having you in our lives.

Deb Bradley - February 22, 2018 at 04:55 PM

B1

“ *Baker-Victory Class of 1960 purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



Baker-Victory Class of 1960 - February 22, 2018 at 10:29 AM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 10:14 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 22, 2018 at 12:15 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 21, 2018 at 04:58 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



February 21, 2018 at 10:22 AM



“ *The Eckert and Vermaas families, with 8 grandkids purchased the Sunny Memories for the family of James F. Kuryak.*



The Eckert and Vermaas families, with 8 grandkids - February 21, 2018 at 06:39 AM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Jodi D Vermaas - February 21, 2018 at 06:31 AM