



James Phelps

May 31, 1931 - March 16, 2012

It's impossible to explain in a brief paragraph the extent to which James Phelps touched our lives. Thank you for everyone who has taken time to drop us a line or called to share a story... a memory... how much you loved him. We hope that all of you will continue to share memories on this website. Allow us to begin... James Joseph Phelps was born on May 31, 1931 in Sublette, Illinois to Mary Patricia (Lahey) and Lloyd Phelps. Every time we drove by the small town, he would insist on a moment of silence to commemorate where it all began. He never lived there, though, since his roots were in Dixon, Illinois. Born the only son of an only son, he always said the Phelps' could hold their reunion in a phone booth. The family grew through the years, and he is survived today by 2 foster siblings: Bernadette McGrath and Joe Murphy; his wife of 47 years, Eleanor Warner Phelps; a son, John (wife Celia), 3 daughters Mary Frances (husband Guy Davis), Margaret (husband Jeff Cadenhead) and Kathy (husband Greg Fasciano); and ten grandchildren: Derrick, 23, Fallon, 21, Cameron, 20, Greg, 18, Chris, 16, Lyndon, 14, Emily, 13, Taylor, 11, Gabbi, 5, and Tori, 4. After a time in the limelight as a Dixon Dukes sports star, Jim graduated from Dixon High School and then from Western Illinois University with a teaching degree. Immediately following, he was drafted into The Korean Conflict. Remaining stateside for his two years, when he left the service he returned to Dixon High School where he taught English, coached high school sports, and often reminisced about the time he got roped into directing the school play. Education was always important to

him. He continued his graduate degree at Notre Dame University Law School. The Fighting Irish were always his favorite sports team, which proved difficult when the Fighting Irish took on the Fighting Texas Aggies at the Cotton Bowl in 1988. At the time his three girls were at A&M...and that was the only time he would have been happy with either outcome since "his money was at A&M, but his heart was at Notre Dame." When he returned to Dixon, he began his career as an insurance claims manager with USF&G insurance. It was this job that eventually lead his family to Texas as he accepted a transfer to Houston in 1978. He retired from USF&G after 35 years and has enjoyed his role as "Papa" full time since then. By the age of 21, Lloyd had initiated Jim into the Benevolent Protective Order of the Elks (or as he liked to call it, BPOE: Best People on Earth). He followed in his father's footsteps as he became Exalted Ruler in 1966 and at his passing, he was a lifetime member. He was in the midst of one of his favorite past times right before he passed away, as his March Madness bracket was developing nicely. Gambling was something he enjoyed and liked to tell the story of how he paid for Eleanor's wedding rings after winning a daily double at Arlington Park Horse Race Track. He was never a "hands-off" kind of dad or grandpa. He was courtside at basketball games, on the 50-yard line of football games and even carried a tutu or two to a dance recital. He was always interested in what his family was up to, including (much to their embarrassment) his grandchildren's love life. One trait his friends, children and grandchildren all talk about is that Jim always had a connection to someone who knew someone who knew someone... there was always a story there. So as we bid our earthly goodbyes to Jim, we hope you will help us by leaving a story of how he touched your life, and then forwarding the link to others who can do the same. Memorial Mass will be on Saturday May 19, 2012 at 10:30 AM at St Anne Catholic Church in Dixon. Visitation will be on Saturday from 10:00 to 10:30 AM in the church. Burial of cremains was in Oakwood Cemetery in Dixon. Jim loved flowers, and they are always welcome, but in lieu of flowers, the family would like to suggest a memorial donation to the American Lung Association, 1301 Pennsylvania Ave., NW,

Suite 800. Washington, DC 20004 or to the ALS Association, South, 8600
Wurzbach, Ste. 700, San Antonio, TX 78240.

Tribute Wall



“ *James Phelps*

October 08, 2023 at 11:30 AM



“ *James Phelps*

December 31, 2022 at 02:40 AM