



## James "Jim" Robert Etgen

October 29, 1933 - October 9, 2025

James Robert Etgen, beloved husband, father, grandfather, and friend, passed away peacefully at 4:40pm on October 9, 2025, at the age of 91, surrounded by his children. Born on October 29, 1933, in Delphos, Ohio, Jim was a kind and steady man of humble roots, strong faith, and deep devotion to family. He believed in hard work, service, and living each day with gratitude and purpose.

Jim met the love of his life, Mary Lou, at Virginia Beach while serving in the U.S. Navy, stationed in Norfolk. They married soon after and shared nearly 70 wonderful years together. Their life's journey took them from Ohio to Richmond, Fairfax, and Severna Park, Maryland, before retiring to Bryce Resort in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. In their later years, Jim and Mary Lou returned to Annapolis, Maryland to be closer to family.

A proud Navy veteran, Jim served four years on anti-submarine aircraft, earning the National Defense Service and Good Conduct Medals. His lifelong interest in aviation guided his professional path—from earning a two-year degree from the University of Dayton to achieving his Professional Engineer designation early in his career at the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). His firm yet fair leadership style propelled him into the Senior Executive Service, where he retired as Deputy Director of Radar Systems.

After retirement, Jim led an international team as President of Thompson Hickling Aviation, helping modernize Canada's national radar network. Later, he continued contributing to his community and profession—as a volunteer for Bryce Resort and a tutor for English- language learners (earning Volunteer of the Year honors), and as a patent reviewer for the U.S. Patent Office, satisfying his enduring curiosity for engineering innovation.

Jim's career took him across the world—from Saudi Arabia and China to Alaska's Arctic Circle. Early in his service, he was stationed at Enewetak Atoll in the South Pacific during nuclear testing, an experience that shaped his lifelong respect for science and service. His adventures included a memorable emergency flight home to Richmond when his first child, Ken, arrived two months early.

Of all his accomplishments, Jim was most proud of his six children, crediting his wife Mary Lou for their success and character. During the pandemic, he reflected deeply on his life in a personal memoir, expressing immense pride in his family. His favorite family memory was a 2019 trip to Williamsburg, Virginia, where they gathered for golf, cards, and a family reunion.

Family was at the heart of Jim's world. For more than fifty years, the extended Etgen and Mary Lou's Italian families gathered for "Beach Week" at Croatan Beach near Virginia Beach—an annual tradition of fishing, cards, laughter, and cocktails at sunset. At times, nearly eighty relatives and friends joined. That tradition continues today with the second and third generations, a living legacy of the love that they all inspired.

Jim's discipline and vitality defined him. He ran and later walked five miles a day well into his later years. A talented athlete, he competed in the USTA 4.5 national tennis championships and was an accomplished golfer, known for his easy swing and near- mystical ability to read a green—earning six hole-in-

ones and countless tournament titles along the way.

At home, Jim was a gracious host, especially at 4 p.m. bourbon time, and always ready for good conversation. Though reserved by nature, he was warm and engaging, making friends easily. He and Mary Lou led an active social life at Bryce Resort, where they enjoyed travel, golf, and deep friendships. Among his fondest journeys were trips back to his hometown of Delphos, Ohio for Etgen family reunions and visits with his beloved sister, Mary Ann.

Jim is preceded in death by his cherished wife, Mary Lou, his sister Elizabeth “Betty” Bowersock (Donald), and his brother William Etgen (Jesslyn). He is survived by his six children—Ken (Wanda), Trish (Mike), Rob (Suzanne), Lou (Cindy), John (Cheryl), and Paul— along with numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren, his sisters Mary Ann Beining (Gene) of Ottoville, Ohio, and brother Howard “Tom” Etgen (April) of Delphos, Ohio, and many dear friends.

A Catholic Mass followed by a Christian burial will be held on October 29, 2025, at 11:00 am, Jim’s 92nd birthday, at Bryce Resort in Basye, Virginia. He will be interred beside Mary Lou at a nearby cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to Our Lady of the Shenandoah Mission Chapel, 240 Fritzel Way, Basye, VA 22810.

James Robert Etgen touched countless lives through his kindness, faith, and quiet strength. His spirit endures in the family he cherished and the values he lived by. As he wrote in his memoir as his advice to his great-grandchildren:

“Know God, love God, love your family, love your neighbor, love your country.”

# Previous Events

## Service

OCT **29**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Our Lady of the Shenandoah Chapel  
240 Fritzel Way  
Basye, VA 22810

# Tribute Wall

DO

“ My fondest memory of Jim and Mary Lou was seeing both of them at our church in Bryce at Our Lady of the Shenandoah. They usually went to the 5pm Vigil Mass and sat on the left side. I always loved sitting near them so we could chat afterwards. They both were on our team of cleaners of the church, and attended our dinners and breakfast socials. I'm so glad that I was part of their lives, even in a small way. They made a great impact on me in their positive, loving manner. I am sure they both will be missed immensely in the circle of family and friends. God bless Jim and Mary Lou's souls.

Doris O'Donnell - October 27, 2025 at 06:51 AM

LH

Just saw this obituary now (2/12/26). My sympathies to he his family. Jim was a great friend to my Dad, Jack Swick, from Delphos. I remember him from visits he made, and from the time he & Mary Lou allowed us to stay with the family when we made our 1 & only family vacation to Washington DC. That was a Great Time! I remember him as kind, caring & fun-loving, even making a trip back for my parents' funerals. RIP, Jim. Heaven gained a good one! 🙏🙏

Laura (Swick) Hammons - February 12 at 01:36 PM

EM

Jim was a terrific tutor to the ESL students at Stonewall Jackson High School when I taught there many years ago. He could help with any subject and any grade level. He certainly made my life easier! I enjoyed chatting with him when the kids would leave for their other classes. He was an advocate for those who needed a little help, and that was most invaluable to us. Love to your family; he will be missed.

Erin Miller - February 24 at 09:59 AM