



## James Jacob Steele

March 22, 1939 - October 25, 2015

James Jacob Steele, age 76, passed away Sunday, Oct. 25, 2015, at Mount Carmel East Hospital surrounded by his family.

Jim was born March 22, 1939, in Madison, WI, to Clarence and Elizabeth Steele. He graduated from Washington & Lee High School in Arlington, VA, where he lettered in football, basketball and track. He attended Purdue University and later transferred to Indiana Tech where he earned a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering. He then earned a graduate degree in Highway Design from Clemson University.

Jim spent 48 years with the Federal Highway Administration and retired in 2010 as Division Administrator for the state of Michigan. He was well respected and recognized by his peers for his many achievements. During his tenure Jim lived or worked in 46 of the 50 states.

Jim was a strong and loving father who cherished time with his family. He met his wife, Deborah Luce Steele, while attending Indiana Tech. They were married on June 6, 1964, and recently celebrated their 51st wedding anniversary.

Jims' philanthropic and spiritual natures were evident from the many charities he supported and his active involvement in Linworth United Methodist Church in Columbus, OH and University United Methodist Church in East Lansing, MI. Jim was a natural musician. In elementary school he started playing the tuba and continued playing throughout his life. He was a member of many bands including the Capital Area Brass, Clemson University Marching Band,

Meridian Community Band, Ohio Department of Transportation Band, Purdue University Marching Band, Westerville Community Band, and the Worthington Civic Band. He was also a member of the Bell Choir and Chancel Choir at Linworth United Methodist Church as well as the Choirs at University United Methodist Church.

Jim is survived by wife, Deborah Luce Steele; three children, Sandra (John) McKinley, James (Amy) Steele, and Phillip (Cherilyn) Steele; four grandchildren, Victoria and Nicholas McKinley, and Ashley and Andrew Steele; three brothers, Richard (Sharon), Thomas (Diane), and William. A celebration service will be held Saturday, Nov. 7 at 4 p.m. at Linworth United Methodist Church (7070 Bent Tree Boulevard Columbus, Ohio 43235), followed by calling hours. In lieu of flowers the family has requested donations be made to Linworth United Methodist Church in Columbus, OH, University United Methodist Church in East Lansing, MI, or a charity or local band of your choice.

# Previous Events

## **celebration of life**

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NOV 7. 4:00 PM (ET)

Linworth United Methodist Church  
7070 Bent Tree Blvd  
Columbus, OH 43235

# Tribute Wall



“ *James Jacob Steele*

January 28, 2023 at 10:24 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of James Jacob Steele.*



November 05, 2015 at 05:13 PM



“ *We were so glad Jim came to the FHWA reunion last April so we could visit. Lots of good memories we had from the training program. May he rest in peace. Dennis Mittelstedt, Chandler, AZ*

**Dennis Mittelstedt** - November 05, 2015 at 11:22 AM



“ *I think Pat Isom said it well. Jim was a professional administrator and great partner with the states. I too enjoyed working with him in my eight years at MDOT. Rest in peace Jim!*



**leon hank** - November 05, 2015 at 10:00 AM

JS

“ Dear Debbie and family,

*I certainly agree with Pat Isom's sentiments. Jim was a good partner to the states while always upholding his responsibilities to FHWA. It was interesting working with Jim on the new bridge crossing in Detroit. That occupied much of his time. Manny met his match in Jim. I would also say that Jim made my job easier by giving me the support I needed to do my job. Jim made it possible for me to feel successful in my last years with FHWA. I will miss Jim.*

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**Jim Salus** - November 03, 2015 at 12:24 PM

PI

“ I remember Jim as an outstanding, dedicated public servant and good person. As the Assistant Attorney General in Charge of the Michigan Transportation Division, I worked with Jim on many difficult issues over a number of years. He was always insightful and helpful as we worked through the matters. I know that the public at large cannot know the great value that Jim brought to his work, but those of us who worked with him will always remember his warm and generous personality and his unflagging fidelity to his public responsibilities. Jim Steele will be missed.

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**Patrick Isom** - November 02, 2015 at 06:54 PM

RH

*Debbie and family,*

*I truly enjoyed working for Jim. I cried the day he left FHWA. His heart was always in the right spot and I know how much he loved his family. He supported me through some tough battles and he made feel proud to be a part of FHWA. His passing was so unexpected. My heart goes out to you and I will miss him.*

*Ruth Hepfer*

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**Ruth Hepfer** - November 05, 2015 at 08:59 AM

RR

*Debbie,  
How else would I have rubbed elbows with a billionaire if Jim hadn't introduced me to Matty. I told Jim that day at Matty's house was probably the most interesting day of my life.*

*Jim had some solid insights into what it takes to be a leader including that he cared deeply about those he was responsible for.*

*Please accept my condolences.*

*Ryan Rizzo*

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**ryan rizzo** - November 05, 2015 at 03:51 PM

NS

*Dear Debbie and family,  
I struggle to find the right words with which to measure the depth of my grief at learning of Jim's passing. Our career paths have criss-crossed in various ways over many years. We shared not only adjoining offices in the Lansing division office but also adjoining back yards in Okemos. I chuckle to myself as I recall thinking of the two of us as the men of "steel and stone" during our time working together in Michigan.*

*While Jim and I had our individual perspectives on some issues, we both shared, in-common, passions for the core principles of honesty, public service for the greater good, and the national interest in preserving the integrity of the Interstate System. Jim was widely recognized as a national champion who advocated, with a clarion voice, for a revitalized national vision for the Interstate System. Jim championed a national vision that would establish a common national understanding, in his own words: "that the Interstate system is an important element of our economic engine and that to help our economy to grow we need to protect and improve that system."*

*I greatly appreciate, as do many, Jim's many professional contributions. Beyond, our work relationship, Karen and I also highly value the friendship with you and Jim that grew over the years, especially as mutually supportive neighbors on Silkwood Drive.*

*May God graciously bless you and the family with His unending comfort in this time of sorrow.*

*Norm and Karen Stoner*

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**Norman Stoner** - November 06, 2015 at 02:38 PM