

JAMES ANTHONY NIEDERBERGER



On Saturday, November 11, 2023, after an eight-month battle against various ailments, James Anthony Niederberger passed away peacefully at age 71 while in hospice care in Charlottesville, VA.

A native of Pittsburgh, PA, Jim lived and worked for 50 years at the Blue Ridge School in St. George, VA, surrounded by idyllic views of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Jim's career at Blue Ridge

School is unparalleled. From humble beginnings as BRS's organist while a University of VA undergraduate student in 1970, Jim became a full-time faculty member in 1974.

Over the subsequent 49 years, Jim served with distinction and impact in a wide array of leadership roles. Among them, Jim was Dean of Faculty, Advisor to the Honor Council, Chair of the History Department, Advisor and Dorm Master, Organist, Musical Director for dozens of theatre productions, and a respected member of the Leadership Team. Jim had a unique ability to bring out the best in his students and was universally appreciated by scholars as well as students with academic challenges. When asked, Jim said he was most proud of the senior trips to Washington, DC where the students met with Federal elected officials and members of the Supreme Court.

While low-key and understated in his approach, Jim was dedicated to those people and things he loved: his family, his many dear friends in Virginia, his students, American history and his music. Jim was born an old soul and served as the family historian. He remained committed to Lawrence Welk on Saturday nights and loved the old standards created by the Gershwins and Cole Porter. He loved playing the music for various high school and community theater productions but wasn't stuck in the past, becoming a fan of Stephen Sondheim's work in more recent years.

Jim's life was low-key, straightforward and full of purpose. He left a big and lasting impact on those who knew him. His delivery was dry, his wit quick, his rebukes sometimes stinging and he had little tolerance for stating the obvious. But he was also the uncle who continued to give holiday Target gift cards to all the nieces and nephews and great-nieces and nephews long after other siblings felt it was too much. He was kind.

Jim was the middle child of nine. One of his early jobs was delivering papers for the Pittsburgh Press, a job that led to a lifetime fear of dogs in a dog-loving family. At homes with mean or barking dogs, he delegated delivery to his unsuspecting younger siblings. He was wise. This paper route led to a full scholarship at The Peddie School in Hightstown, NJ where Jim excelled academically and led three other siblings to attend. Jim then graduated from the University of Virginia where he fell in love with the landscape and the people while still maintaining his love for his family and hometown back in Pittsburgh. Jim remained dedicated to his family and was determined to drive home, make the stuffing and help with "the bird" one more time this Thanksgiving. Our holidays and summers are forever changed.

Preceded in death by his parents, Emmett and Nancy; sister, Nancy (Eugene Bik); brother, Vincent and brother, Robert (Sandy); Jim is survived by his siblings, William E., John J. (Clifton Dietz), Mary Jo, Michael E. and Cathy (Guy Costa); many nieces and nephews and great-nieces and nephews.

Funeral Wednesday, December 27, 2023, Mass of Christian Burial, St. Paul Cathedral 10 a.m. followed by interment with his mother's Irish relatives at St. Mary's Cemetery in Lawrenceville.

In lieu of flowers, remembrances may be made to the Blue Ridge School, 273 Mayo Drive, St. George, VA 22935. Arrangements by JOHN A. FREYVOGEL SONS, INC. (freyvogelfuneralhome.com)

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