
Dr. James Walter Bedingfield

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Bedingfield
November 14, 1922-
June 1, 2012

Columbus, Georgia- Dr. James Walter Bedingfield passed away at his home on Friday following an extended illness. The funeral service will be held at the Chapel of Striffler-Hamby Mortuary, 4071 Macon Road, Columbus, GA 31907 on Monday, June 4, 2012. Visitors will be received at 10:00 a.m., and the funeral will start at 11:00 a.m. Interment will follow the service at the adjacent Parkhill Cemetery.

Born in Laurens County, Georgia, Jim, (known as "T"), grew up on a farm near the small town of Cadwell, GA. He was active in sports, playing high school football and basketball. He held the state record for high jump and discus throw for many years in his division, and his basketball team also won state. His sports pursuits and interests attracted the attention of at least one baseball scout, but his aspirations were placed on hold when Pearl Harbor was bombed.

A few months after high school, Jim joined the Marines. He went to Parris Island, SC for boot camp, eventually serving as Drill Instructor, and was then sent to Camp Pendleton, Calif. for a few months before transferring to Camp Maui, Hawaii. From there, his company made invasions on the Pacific islands of Roi Namur, Saipan, Tinian, and Iwo Jima. As a result of his battlefield valor, he was awarded the [Purple Heart](#), [Bronze Star](#), Silver Star, Gold Star, and received a field promotion from Sergeant to 2nd Lieutenant on Iwo Jima. Of the 42 men in his platoon that landed on Iwo Jima, Jim was one of 7 that walked off the island. Soon after Jim's discharge in 1945, he enrolled in the [University of Georgia](#). In three and a half years, he had completed his BS degree, was well on the way to the completion of his Masters degree, and had met his wife-to-be, Kathryn Mikel Jenkins. They were married on March 19, 1949, and recently celebrated their 63rd wedding anniversary.

Not long after their wedding, the couple settled in Columbus, Georgia, where he continued to pursue a career in Education. He started as Principal of Midland Elementary School near Columbus, worked with a Veterans Training Program, and was then named Principal of East Highland Elementary School in Columbus.

Jim continued to pursue his education, even while he and Mikel raised four children. He attended summer classes at Auburn University, receiving a post-graduate 5th year certificate, then earned a Doctorate in Education from [University of Florida](#), including a year of resident study in Gainesville, Florida with his wife and children.

Upon returning to Columbus, he served as Guidance Counselor at Columbus High School, and then Director of Guidance and Counseling Services for Muscogee County School District.

Motivated by his desire to help children with educational challenges, he helped establish the Woodall Psychoeducational Center, and served as its director from 1974 until his retirement in 1982.

Following his retirement, he continued his hobby of gardening, with a special focus on growing and milling sugar cane in his backyard, and hosting an annual Family Cane Syrup Cooking. He also skillfully filled the role of grandfather and great-grandfather, sharing with the family his wisdom, his unique faith, and his love for music.

From his Marine Corps service to his educational career to heading his large family, he exhibited a special kind of leadership. A quote from a fellow Marine sums up the strengths that served him well from battlefield to boardroom. "He was a good leader, easy-going and likable, with a sort of silent control. People admired him, and would follow him anywhere. He had nerves of steel." Jim was preceded in death by three brothers, Joe, Adgar and Warren, and two sisters, Ruth and Grace.

Family members who are still here to miss him include his wife Mikel, a son, Carl, three daughters, Carol, Cheryl, and Charisse, grandchildren Rebecca, James Jr., Elisabeth, Benjamin, Cathy, Rob, Shannon, Brad, Carson, McKenzie, Mikel Anna, and McLendon, and four great-grandchildren, Anders, Halle, Tate, and Sarah.

In accordance with Jim's concern for children, the family suggests memorial donations to the Camp Joy ministry of the Valley Rescue Mission, 706-322-8267, www.valleyrescuemission.net, PO Box 1232, Columbus, GA 31902.



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