



James Charles Dobias

November 6, 1915 - February 2, 2013

JIM'S LIFE STORY: Jim Dobias was a man of many talents, ranging from dairy farming and accordion playing, to bowling and square dancing. His greatest talent, however, was his ability to connect with other people. Whether it was with a thoughtful question or a good-natured ribbing, Jim knew instinctively how to draw people out, and was genuinely interested in their lives. He could converse on just about any topic, and maintained an active and lively interest in the world around him. Jim's wonderful sense of humor, friendly smile, and kind heart made him a welcome sight wherever he went; he touched many hearts, and will be deeply missed. The year of 1915 was a year of transition for the United States, a year in which the rumblings of WWI were beginning to be heard from Europe, but which had not yet affected the life of the average American. James Charles Dobias was born on November 6 of this year, sharing his birth year with Babe Ruth's first homerun, and the use of the first stop sign. James was the fifth of eight children born to proud parents Frank J. and Josephine (Holkup) Dobias. In addition to running a family farm in Baldwin, Michigan, Frank held a variety of jobs to help make ends meet at home. During the winters, he travelled to Chicago for work, while Josephine stayed on the farm with the children. Jim and his brother Charlie, inseparable in childhood, frequently got into scrapes at Weber #3 School in Baldwin. Some teachers were driven away by the school kids' antics such as trapping teachers in outhouses and setting the woodshed on fire. Jim moved to Scottville in 1930 to attend high school and help out on the new family farm.

He graduated from Scottville High School in 1933. In his free time, he played the accordion in a group called the Sugar Grove Hog Scrapers. The band played for local dances and weddings, and the members thought they had hit the big time the day they were paid \$3.50 for a gig! Jim's musical skills also paid off in a different, and much more important, way – after a performance, he met a young lady named Kathlyn Pankow. Kathlyn thought that his playing was romantic, and family members who knew James encouraged the two to get together. Jim and Kathlyn gradually fell in love, and were married on October 2, 1943, at the St. John's Lutheran Church, located north of Jim's farm at Pelton Corners. In the years to come, Jim and Kathlyn were blessed with six children, whom they named Karen, James E., Lorna., Linda, Matthew, and Mark. Jim supported his family as a dairy farmer, while Kathlyn worked as a teacher in both Scottville and Ludington Schools. Later, he would go on to work for Mason County Central Schools as a custodian. No matter what job he was doing, Jim was a hard worker – he was small but strong, and always did the most difficult jobs himself. For example, when throwing hay up in the barn loft, Jim would be the one working in the sweltering heat at the top of the barn. Sometimes, Jim would play a Tiger ballgame on the radio while working in the barn to make the time go faster (he was a diehard Tigers fan). Hard worker though he was, Jim also knew how to have a good time. After a hard day's work on the farm, Jim would sometimes treat the family with a trip to the beach, Dairy Queen, or a drive-in movie. In the evenings, Jim and Kathlyn enjoyed going out bowling or square dancing. Jim also enjoyed regaling the kids with stories he had made up, referred to in the family as “deer and bear stories”. Just when you thought you had heard all the stories, Jim would come up with a new one! At the dinner table, Jim appreciated hearty meat and potato dishes, reminiscent of his Bohemian heritage. Every now and then, especially when he was mad or frustrated, he would speak a few sentences in Bohemian, so the family wouldn't know what he was saying. Jim was actively involved in the life of the community, particularly the faith community of St. John's Lutheran Church (later Our Savior Lutheran Church). He had a very

strong faith, and served as a church Elder for many years. Religious faith was one of the many bonds that Jim and Kathlyn shared, and they studied the Bible together every day. James was also involved in the rural schools, and served as school board president for Sugar Grove School. He was very involved when the rural schools consolidated with the larger public schools. After James' retirement from Mason County Central Schools in 1978, he and Kathlyn began to spend every winter in Lady Lake, Florida. They stayed at the Blue Parrot Campground, a small, friendly community that was also home to several other couples from the Scottville area. Jim and Kathlyn also enjoyed traveling, and camped all over the United States. When they were on the road, Jim would often take a wrong turn (not on purpose), which often turned into a memorable adventure. Closer to home, Jim boasted membership in the Rock & Mineral Club, the Coin Club, and the Michigan Association of Retired School Personnel. Through the years, Jim and Kathlyn were delighted to become grandparents. Jim enjoyed devising nicknames for some of his grandchildren, including the moniker of "Buttercup" for his youngest great-granddaughter (named after Princess Buttercup in his favorite movie, "The Princess Bride"). Some of his grandkids reciprocated by calling him "Jim Bob", "Bumpa", "Poppy" and "Rastis". Jim was a great teaser, and loved to push people's buttons. For example, he often introduced Kathlyn as his "first wife" – although technically true, Kathlyn did not always appreciate the introduction! Beneath his light-hearted exterior, however, Jim truly cared about others, and always took the time to chat with a friend or greet an acquaintance. When Jim and Kathlyn went into town to do their shopping on the weekend, Kathlyn did the shopping, and Jim stood outside visiting with his friends and strangers. Social and fun loving, hardworking and kindhearted, Jim was a devoted husband, a loving father, grandfather, great-grandfather and a loyal friend. He will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered by his many friends and family members. Jim passed away Saturday morning, February 2, 2013 at Oakview Medical Care Facility in Ludington. He was preceded in

death by his parents, his brothers John, Frank, Joseph, Albert, and Charles, and his sister Georgia Dvorak. He will be greatly missed by his wife of 69 years, Kathlyn, his children Karen Rogers, and Lorna Dobias both of Scottville, James (Mary) Dobias of Ludington, Linda (Thomas) Andresen of Cary, NC, Matthew (Le'An) Dobias of Lawrenceburg, TN, and Mark (Patricia) Dobias of Allegan, 11 grandchildren Blake (Kristy Lambert) McCleary, Ryan (Reyla) McCleary, Lori and Greg Dobias, Bryan Dobias, Kellie (Clay) Coffey, Tanya (Keith) Merchant, Christian (Amanda) Andresen, Courtney Andresen, Emily and Elyssa Dobias, 4 great-grandchildren, his sister Bessie Wheeler of Ludington, his sisters-in-law Joan Dobias of Scottville, Charlotte Dobias of Cheyboygan, Evelyn Battige of Newaygo, and Loretta Pankow of Ludington, and numerous nieces and nephews. Funeral services will be held for Jim at 1:00 PM on Thursday, February 7 at Our Savior Lutheran Church with his pastor, the Rev. James Schroeder officiating. Burial will take place at Sugar Grove Cemetery in the spring. Friends may meet with his family for a time of visitation on Wednesday evening from 6:00 – 8:00 PM at the Stephens Funeral Home in Scottville. Those who wish to make memorial contributions are asked to consider Our Savior Lutheran Church.