



Mr. James G. Prather

February 11, 1933 - September 4, 2022

Surrounded by his loving family, James G. Prather – “Jim” to all who knew him -- passed away on Sunday, September 4, at the age of 89. He died in his Homeland home where he had lived for over 40 years.

James Gowen Prather was born February 11, 1933, at Ft. Benning, GA, to Maj. Gen. Richard Givens Prather and Elizabeth Gowen Prather. He grew up on US army posts and in the mid-1940s lived in Germany during the occupation, his father a commanding officer in the 397th Infantry Regiment.

Frequently relocating, Jim attended a bunch of schools. Among them: the Sacred Heart School in Hickman, KY (8th grade); St. Mary Star of the Sea School in Phoebus, VA (junior high); Mt. St. Joseph High School in Baltimore, MD; and the Bullis School in Silver Spring, MD, from which he graduated in 1951. Jim’s senior yearbook described him as a “unique man... always kidding around... always in some sort of scrape... manages to remain high on the list of beautiful grades, and maintains the friendship of all the Bullisites.” No matter where he went, Jim was friendly and well-liked. He was also terrible at Spanish.

Receiving appointments to the US Naval Academy and the US Military Academy, West Point, Jim ultimately fulfilled his service obligation in the US Coast Guard. He served from 1960-1964. In 1961 he lived aboard the

American Shoal Lighthouse off Sugarloaf Key, FL. From 1962-1964 he served on the USCGL Sweetgum out of Mayport, FL. He earned the Coast Guard's Good Conduct Medal and attained the enlisted rating of Storekeeper 3rd Class.

Following his honorable discharge, Jim became a train man. Beginning in August 1965 he worked for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, then for the Chessie System, and finally for CSX Transportation. He was a car service agent (auditor) and eventually the Chief of Demurrage. He retired in August 1995.

Long before and ever since his retirement, Jim was keenly and lovingly devoted to his radiant, eternally patient, and much younger wife of nearly 49 years, Gail Inman Prather. Together they raised two staggeringly attractive, intelligent children, Chad and Stacy.

Jim loved his family in great little ways. He held your hand on airplanes. He wrote heartfelt notes on every birthday card. He made awesome leaf piles and built great, cozy fires. He entertained at the dinner table by reciting random poems, singing old songs, and making quirky, inaccurate animal noises. When his kids were sick, he brought them peanut butter sandwiches and bowls of tomato soup. When his kids were not sick, he brought them peanut butter sandwiches and bowls of tomato soup. Jim delighted in his kids. He attended every single one of their athletic events, even though they were objectively terrible and rarely played. It didn't matter; he was present every time. He enjoyed nothing more than everyone being present together.

Gail was his favorite presence. Jim was happiest whenever Gail was with him. He made daily preparations for her return from work, maneuvering his car hours earlier in such a way that others could not squeeze into "Gail's spot" (public street be damned!). Come 4:00 he would watch for her arrival, then

scurry out to inch his car forward and make her way clear. He wouldn't suffer his "precious darling" to park around the corner. He loved her (and the street spot) too much to chance any stranger parking in her place. The entire operation was a buffet of anxiety, but the success of it all made Jim very happy.

Happy Hour also made him happy. Jim made sure every adult in the house, whether family or guest, had exactly what they wanted to drink by 5:00, noting the importance of being able to relax through "the terrible evening news" programs he couldn't not watch. His grocery list guaranteed an abundance of salt, trans fats, and sweets. Jim kept a dining table full of pastries and sheetcakes, for he never met a vegetable he liked, and he boastfully insisted that his grandkids could grow old just like their Pa without eating leaves and roots (an assertion they all accept as very fine).

Provision was Jim's love language. He made sure the house was fully stocked with whatever he deemed helpful. Thanks to Jim, the Prathers never knew a day without at least six working flashlights, fresh chapstick, Ritz crackers, and thick, babysoft, double-ply toilet paper. (Toilet paper was very important. "Some tawlet paper," Jim would say, "isn't worth a darn!") And batteries. Jim purchased half the batteries in Baltimore. He labeled each pack with its associated device and date of installation, so there was never any guessing. Wherever he could, however he could, Jim sought to make things just a little easier for the people he cherished.

Unto others he was kind and loyal, polite, compassionate, and altruistic. He cheered for underdogs, gave people chances, tipped generously, and trusted folk to go along in a good manner. He hated to bother anyone and always had the best of intentions. He was interested in other people and liked hearing their stories.

Odds are decent that his story may have been the most interesting of all, but few would have known it. Jim was full of surprising tales and wacky lived experiences, yet he shared them only sparingly, inch by inch over many years and just with those who expressed real curiosity. He didn't offer much about himself, but when he did he captivated.

Jim himself was most captivated by Jesus. His Catholic faith was the rock of his identity. For decades he attended daily mass at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen. In later years he was a regular attendant at St. Mary's in Govans. He placed full confidence and trust in his Heavenly Father, hopeful beyond understanding and certain of promises beyond what was visible.

As to what was visible, Jim liked El Producto cigars, hot roast beef platters, and a good drink to set the evening down – bourbon in his younger days and Bud Light more recently, always in a glass with two ice cubes. He liked supper clubs, nights out with his buddy "Old Irish," and brunching with family at The Nautilus (long insisting it was called "The Padonia"). He liked player piano music, Johnny Cash, Frank Sinatra, old hymns, and Irish pub songs. He liked observing people's heights and was well pleased that his children's friends became so tall. Jim liked Cape May Point, his Jaguar, the Paint and Powder Club, and family history. He liked Andy Rooney, Vicks Vapor Rub, old Westerns, coffee, calendars, clocks, Scripto pencils, chest-pocket t-shirts, crabcakes, and the O's. He did not like hospitals, unknown callers, wrinkled dollars, stepping in gum, or wearing shorts. Shorts were most disagreeable. Jim was dapper. He wore dress slacks to go whitewater rafting. He was uncompromisingly and unapologetically himself, slacks and all.

Jim's people will miss him dearly. Loving him forever: his wife, Gail Prather; his son, Chad, and wife Katie Prather; his daughter, Stacy, and husband Blair Connelly; his grandchildren, Sam and Lucy Prather and Dean and Gowen

Connelly; his dear sisters, Beth Adam, Nancy Kahn, and Marjorie Manley (who followed Jim to Heaven only three days later); loving in-laws, Terry Conlon and June Murphy; beloved cousins, including Jim Murphy Prather, his best friend and the Best Man in his wedding; many precious nieces and nephews; longtime neighbors, supper club members, Church family, and friends.

Jim's most favorite song growing up was the folk recording "Red River Valley." He would sing it often, sometimes at the piano. Its opening lines:

From this valley they say you are going.
I will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile.
For they say you are taking the sunshine
That has brightened our path for a while.

Jim Prather was a sweet smile and a bright path in a world of trials. He lived well, loved kindly, and leaves a treasure of soft, gentle memories to shine in the hearts of those who will miss him.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Mary of the Assumption Roman Catholic Church in Govens, or given Jim Prather's extensive network of charitable commitments, please donate to a cause of your choosing.

Previous Events

Ceremony of Remembrance

SEP **30**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Mitchell - Wiedefeld Funeral Home, Inc.
6500 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21212
(410) 377-8300
general@mwfuneralhome.com

Mass of Christian Burial

OCT **1**. 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (ET)

St. Mary of the Assumption
5502 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21212

Tribute Wall

PC

“ Gail, so sorry to hear about Jim. Prayers for you and your family.
Peggy Chambliss

Peggy Chambliss - September 27, 2022 at 06:22 AM

DM

“ Gail- so sorry- Jim was one of a kind! A true gentleman that I
remember so fondly. This Obituary is so perfect for him. Thoughts
and prayers.

Dee Dee Manuel - September 15, 2022 at 08:50 AM

SR

Gail, Jim love his family so much.....All 4 of y'all made him the
happiest i ever saw him. We worked together at CSX.....as you
know.....he never spoke about himself.....I do think when he met the
love of his life and left his old strict life behind ,,,,,he could breathe on
his own and enjoy a great life.....T he obit for him was perfect.....HE
WAS A PERFECT GENTLEMAN.....

suzanne rawlings - October 19, 2022 at 02:25 PM