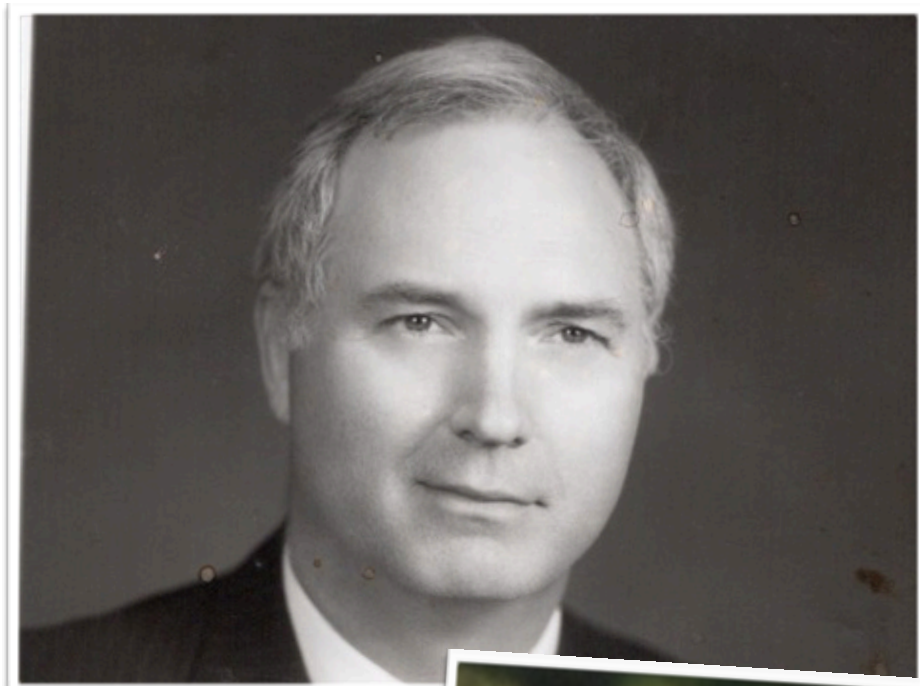


*A Life Well Lived*

*James Parrish Hodges, PhD*



# *James Parrish Hodges, PhD*

*December 24, 1935 - February 2, 2023*



Dr. James Parrish Hodges (“Jim”), 87, departed this world peacefully on February 2, 2023 at his home in Edmonds, Washington. His journey began during the Great Depression in Montgomery, Alabama, where he was born to Oliver and Gladys Irene Scott on Christmas Eve, 1935. Sadly, his parents divorced when he was just an infant, and his mother struggled to make ends meet. Five years later, Irene married the strict Wilton (“Bill”) Hodges, who served as a Lt. Colonel in the Army Air Corps.

In the winter of 1950, Jim, Irene, and his three half-sisters (Joyce, Wendy, and Carol) embarked on the arduous 5-day train trip from Panama City, Florida to Seattle, Washington. The family planned to catch a boat to Japan to join Bill, who was serving as adjutant at the US air base in Tachikawa (near Tokyo). Preparing for the worst snow storm in Seattle’s history, Irene dressed the children in warm wool undergarments that were itchy and made them squirm the entire way. Once aboard the ship, Jim was introduced to baked chicken. Growing up in the South, he thought chicken could only be fried. Who knew? The rough seas tossed the passengers mercilessly about, and the seasick Jim often found himself hanging over the railings. After two weeks rocking and rolling on the high seas, the family safely made landfall.

Japan held many surprises for the teen, including an appearance by Emperor Hirohito at his high school. On the long bus rides to and from school, Jim would marvel at the splendor of the snow-capped Mt. Fuji. He hoped to find similar scenery in America one day, which he did many years later in Washington State. There were also misfortunes. One day, his 8-year-old sister, Wendy, was playing on a seesaw. When the older boy on the other end suddenly jumped off, little Wendy came crashing down, knocking out her front teeth on the handle. When she got home from the hospital, her brother sat next to her on the couch, holding her hand to comfort her. The boy who had caused the injury came to the house to apologize, and brought a big box of Whitman’s chocolates as a peace offering. Since Wendy could not eat them, Jim “helped” her, and ended up polishing off the entire box of candy. He was a growing boy!

In 1952, when hostilities in Korea quieted down, Bill was transferred to Rome, New York. On the trip back to the States, Jim discovered - much to his chagrin - that he had outgrown the ship’s bunk beds. He could barely cram his 6’6” frame (or, as he used to joke, 5’18”) into the bunk to sleep. Forget about it!

Rome Free Academy in upstate New York was the last in a long series of schools for Jim. A military brat, he had attended about 18 different schools by then. Luckily, Jim’s gregarious



personality enabled him to make friends easily. He could strike up a conversation with practically anyone, and as an adult, would often “hold court” with perfect strangers, regaling them with tales about historical figures.

One summer while Jim was still in high school, he decided to get a construction job. Once on the job site, the hiring foreman directed the hopeful applicants to “Go stand over there!” They obeyed, but eventually, all of the others grew bored and impatient. They slowly drifted off, leaving Jim as the last man standing. Finally, after two hours had passed, the foreman returned and gave him the job. Jim was the only one who had passed the unusual screening test.

After Jim graduated in 1953, he won a full football scholarship to the University of Maryland, where he played tight end. A superb athlete, he also got a position on the basketball team. In addition, Jim joined the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity and was admitted to the prestigious Phi Kappa Phi honor society. Because he excelled at scholastics, his friends nicknamed him “The Brain.” He was ambitious and got good grades, so he decided to get a Master’s degree in economics. Jim taught economics to undergrads to help pay for school. Of course, he got stuck teaching the 8 am classes!

After attaining his Master’s degree, Jim pursued a career in business. He landed his first job at John Hancock in Washington, DC, where he became a successful life insurance salesman. His affable nature helped him create a personal rapport with his clients, whose interests he always sought to protect. Jim became a Chartered Life Underwriter (CLU) and a member of the Million Dollar Roundtable.

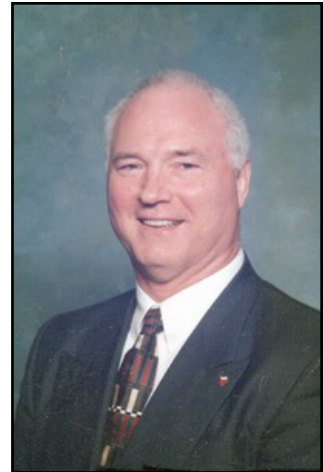
Jim married Eleanor Salmon in 1956. They had two children together: James Jr. and Jennifer. Jim would trick his reluctant young son into getting ready for bed by telling him that a football player could put his pajamas on in less than a minute. Naturally, the boy would race to get his PJs on as quickly as possible! After the couple had divorced, Jim maintained a good relationship with his children. Once, he took Jennifer to see the movie, “Puss N Boots.” When the film was over, she wanted to see it again, so Jim obliged. They stayed and watched it twice in a row.

One January night in 1968, Jim attended a dance mixer for young professionals. He spotted a beautiful brunette, and knew instantly that he would marry her. Meanwhile, the brunette, Bonnie Martin, kept seeing this face smiling at her from across the room. He was tall and handsome, so she finally decided to go talk to him. Bonnie turned around - right into his chest! Jim had walked over to meet her.

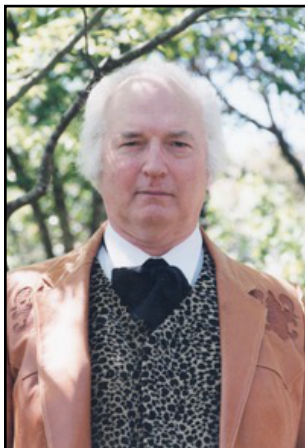
During their dating days, Jim would often pick Bonnie up at her parents’ house. Her folks liked to crank classical music up to 11, and sometimes, Jim could hear opera blaring from a block away - it literally rattled the windows. Jim and Bonnie both loved classical music, and that

was one thing that endeared her to him, and also the fact that she did not smoke. He had resolved to never date a smoker, even though almost everyone did back then. Luckily, Bonnie's New Year's Resolution that year had been to stop smoking. She had quit just one week before they met.

Jim married the lovely and talented Bonnie on Flag Day, June 14, 1969. While on their honeymoon, they fell in love with West Germany. Jim had the opportunity to transfer to Wiesbaden through his work, so they picked up and left Washington, DC. While living abroad, Jim competed in marathons and won several medals. The couple also took the opportunity to travel. While on the plane to Kenya one time, Jim learned some Swahili, and greeted the Natives with "Jumbo," which they appreciated. The adventurous pair went on a photo safari in the Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Unfortunately, their presence angered a giant bull elephant, who chased their Jeep, nearly goring it with his long, sharp tusks. Luckily, the driver managed to outrun him, much to the terrified passengers' relief. A few days later, the couple was enjoying lunch with a group of tourists at Murchison Falls in Uganda when a man from the US State Department suddenly appeared. He warned them that there was serious political unrest, and that Idi Amin was about to stage a coup d'état. They dropped their forks mid-meal and fled the country to safety.



When the couple's daughter, Cynthia, was born, they decided to return to the States. Jim transferred to El Paso, Texas, where their second daughter, Pamela, was born. The family remained in the Lone Star State for 36 years. Jim became an expert on Texas history, and was President of the Harris County Historical Society for a number of years. He was awarded an honorary membership to the Sons of the Republic of Texas and even became an Admiral in the Texas Navy. The bulk of their time was spent in Bellaire, the biggest city in Houston. The family enjoyed taking trips, and once, while visiting Big Bend National Park, Jim nearly stepped on a rattlesnake, much to his surprise and the snake's! A park ranger noted that he had never seen a rattlesnake at the park before, but Jim had found one right away. Lucky him!



At one point, Jim decided to switch careers and became a Certified Financial Manager (CFM) and Certified Financial Planner (CFP). He ended up working at Merrill Lynch in downtown Houston for many years, where he earned the distinction of Vice President of Wealth Management. Apart from a successful business career, he was active in a number of organizations. As a member of both the River Oaks Rotary Club (president in 1984) and the Briar Club (president in 1990), Jim called bingo for 9 years to raise money for charity. He loved to help good causes, and once he raised \$3,000 for charity raffling off a painting by his artist wife, Bonnie. He also held a



national office in the Shriners International charitable organization. In addition, Jim was involved with Toastmasters, the National Speakers Association, American Society for Training and Development, and the church. Jim was active at the Holland and Anson Jones Lodges, too. He received the Golden Trowel Award in 1997 and the 50 Year Service Award in 2020 (he had been raised up in the Benjamin B. French Lodge in Washington, DC in 1969). To top off a busy schedule, Jim also loved to play tennis. His social circle grew so large that he could scarcely go anywhere in Houston without running into someone he knew.

In 2005, after a 50 year career, Jim retired, but he did not slow down. He penned his book, *Beyond the Cherry Tree: The Leadership Wisdom of George Washington*, and earned his PhD in Economics from Hamilton University. A proud patriot and expert in American history, Jim engaged in motivational speaking to impart the wisdom of great leaders such as George Washington, John Paul Jones, Sam Houston, and Anson Jones. During one school presentation, a little girl, thinking that the tall gentleman dressed in a Revolutionary War uniform really was George Washington, looked up at Jim and remarked, “I thought you were dead!” For his contributions in speaking and education, he was awarded the George Washington National Medal of Honor from the Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge and the Washington State Teachers’ Apple Award.

On New Year’s Day 2008, Jim and family left Houston for the Pacific Northwest, taking a five day road trip to Portland, Oregon, but finally settling in Edmonds, Washington (just north of Seattle). In typical fashion, Jim kept busy working on book projects, attending Rotary meetings (he was a Paul Harris Fellow), visiting with his Wise Guys group, and reading. He would often look to the West at the snow-capped Olympic Mountains and reflect on his journey to Japan all of those years ago. It was almost as though his life had come full circle.

Eventually, poor health prevented Jim from engaging in the activities he loved, but he still enjoyed watching football on TV! Slowly, one by one, his friends passed away, but Jim still had his devoted wife and daughter, Cynthia, to care for him until he himself passed away on February 2, 2023. He had taken good care of his family, and they took care of him. It was a life well lived.

Jim is survived by his wife of 53 years, Bonnie; daughters Cynthia and Jennifer Hodges; son James P. Hodges, Jr.; sisters Wendy Seckar, Joyce Hoff, and Carol Curtis (now deceased); grandchildren Alexandra and Antonia; and great-grandchild Laughlin. Jim was preceded in death by his daughter, Pamela Hope Hodges, and grandson, James P. Hodges, III.

Condolences may be sent to P.O. Box 591, Edmonds, WA 98020. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the Nature Conservancy. Jim’s website, [leadershipbygeorge.com](http://leadershipbygeorge.com), will be preserved as a memorial to him.

