



CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY Faculty Senate

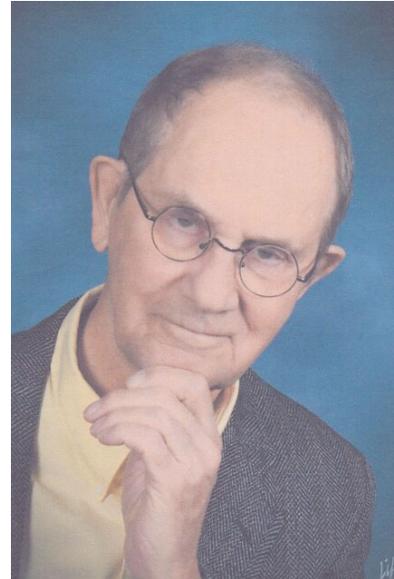
This eulogy for **Dr. James M. Schuerger** reflects the thoughts, experiences and relationships of many of Jim's former students, friends and colleagues. What a fortunate and treasured friendship it has been.

Jim passed away on January 7th, 2021, at the age of 88. His obituary starts with these moving sentences, "James Schuerger, born in 1932, leaves his much loved wife of 60 years, Kathleen. Jim and Kathleen would look at each other sometimes and ask 'How did we get so lucky?'" Jim and Kathleen have three children and seven grandchildren, as well as two great grandchildren. In his post retirement, Jim doted on the grandchildren, as most grandparents do, but the thing most striking was his sense of wonderment and awe about the family and how truly lucky he was.

Part of that wonderment came as a result of an early life experience. Jim was born in Lakewood, Ohio. He had five siblings, three of whom survive him. Jim graduated as one of the top students at Cathedral Latin in Cleveland, Ohio. Of course, Jim was Class President. Even in the early days, others looked up to Jim's intellect, his energy and his willingness to lead. He was an athlete, a debater and was considered by a fellow student, "a real sharp guy and heavy hitter."

Jim thought he was going to be a priest and began studying at a seminary in Maryland for two years before going to Rome for an additional two years of study. Jim's faith and spirituality were lifelong motivators as well as a source of comfort. Near the end of his study, but prior to ordination, Jim made the decision not to become a priest. As we shall see, however, he did not change his mind or heart about his desire to serve others and help them cope with the realities of the human condition. If anything, that terribly difficult decision led him to experience the pain and anguish that so allowed him to powerfully relate to others in the future. It also gave him the opportunity to find and marry Kathleen and build a home and family that brought him so much joy over the years.

Jim initially became an electrician, but the itch for education, learning and service to others had to be scratched. He finished a degree in English at John Carroll University, beginning a 50-year career as a teacher. He taught and was a counselor at Gilmore Academy for 10 years, before pursuing degrees in counseling and research from Kent State University. Jim went to work at the University of Illinois, working for a legend in the field of Psychology at the time, Dr. Raymond Cattell. Jim did research and directed a large behavioral genetics study. Jim eventually came back to Cleveland in 1970 and joined the CSU Psychology faculty. He taught both undergraduate and graduate students, while continuing with his research on personality and ability assessment. He was on staff in the counseling center and maintained a small private practice. He continued



1932-2020

More than any other person we have ever met, Jim displayed and lived a life marked by humanity.

teaching for several more years and easily had the distinction of being one of the most approachable and accessible professors.

When we read Jim's obituary a few days ago, we were struck by the breadth and length of his very impressive and varied career. As has been mentioned, Jim was a seminarian, an electrician, a researcher, a counselor, an educator and a scholar. He also found the time to be an avid gardener, raising amazing tomatoes. He was a multi-linguist, often reading religious texts and works in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. He wrote private poetry and was an early adopter of what is now considered the Mindfulness movement, incorporating prayer and meditation as part of his personal growth and reflection. As might be said, it is a very impressive CV.

And, as mentioned, Jim's life was highlighted and Kathleen and family, with brothers and sisters, children and grandchildren. You only had to speak with Jim for a few minutes before you realized that he experienced joy in his family, especially, JB, Annie and Michael. They all were different, pursued different walks of life and vocations, which is befitting as they all started in different places, but ended up in a loving, supportive and warm home. Jim frequently related his pride in how all of the children grew and have learned to thrive through life's inevitable challenges. He admired their perseverance and grit. And he had an abiding love and dedication to Kathleen, an intellectual powerhouse in her own right, who was a marvelous compliment to Jim in so many ways.

While the obituary highlighted Jim's family and accomplishments, it did not speak much about the man himself. Perhaps this is in keeping with both Jim and Kathleen's true humility. Still, there is much to be recounted in the life story of Jim Schuerger, which certainly won't be done here, except for a few thoughts and reflections, which we hope you will appreciate despite the personal nature of them.

If a person were allowed only one word to describe Jim, it would have to be, in our opinion, the word "humanity." More than any other person we have ever met, Jim displayed and lived a life marked by humanity. This humanity was the magnet that drew others to him. His transparency, gentleness, lack of guile, and true interest in the other person made him a most treasured and special character.

Without doubt, Jim was a smart, most likely brilliant person; he was funny and told funny stories; he understood the difference between hearing and listening; and had an uncanny understanding of nuance and subtlety. In short, he had an amazing ear for tone quality. Those characteristics made him a wonderful educator, a superb counselor, and a superior researcher. But those things do not define the really human soul he possessed.

One of us, as a struggling graduate student, who was confused about the future, once asked Jim a truly sincere, but vulnerable question—"Professor Schuerger, do you ever experience fear or anxiety?" Jim had a quick chuckle (which many of us can remember) and said, "Are you kidding. Fear is my big thing. I'm scared most of the time." And then the question, "what are you scared about?" Jim's humanity was on display that day for that student and no doubt many other days for countless people. Jim's ability to reach others, by sharing himself in a genuine fashion,

provided the consensual validation that reduced the notions of aloneness that so many of us have experienced.

We do not believe that this ability to convey his humanity was necessarily instinctive, nor think it is a result of his academic training or practice. It had to come from a much different place. Perhaps it was his own self claimed failure to complete his seminarian commitment. Maybe it was his struggle to rebuild a life after he chose to become an electrician, before returning to graduate school. We often think that for Jim, he had a new opportunity for redemption and he chose to live in the grace that he experienced in that renaissance. It is clear that whatever drove him to become a seminarian in the first place, dedicating his life to service and faith, remained a fire within him. We saw it time and again with family, friends, colleagues and his community. His ability to witness fear, failure, redemption and satisfaction in his own life gave him a remarkable gift for helping others who were wrestling with similar experiences and the confidence to succeed as Jim himself succeeded. And the kindness he showed to other must be related to the forgiveness and appreciation he had come to in his own life.

Jim's professional work including more than 100 professional articles, many chapters in various books on psychological assessment and he was the author of the Adolescent Personality Questionnaire. In private practice, he counseled many whose stories will never be told but whose lives were forever transformed. He had an enormous heart for those who had experience poverty, lack of basic needs as food, housing, medical care and education. In fact, in his retirement, some of his previous students began an endowment in his name to show their appreciation. As typical with Jim, he requested that the scholarship dollars be given to those who had experienced such disadvantages, and at a luncheon two years ago, many of the Schuerger scholarship recipients returned to campus in a sign of respect and appreciation.

In closing this eulogy, we share two other brief comments. Jim, being as smart as he was, had a wonderful sense of the ironic, but never became cynical or jaded. He took great delight in the banter with the server at his beloved Yours Truly breakfast, as he did in a new publication or a special insight gained at Mass. He was a complex man who lived his life in a straightforward and simple way, often joking, in the past few years as his health was failing, wondering which of the myriad of ailments might eventually "do him in." He felt grief and loss as the curtain was drawing closed, but never despair.

This leads to the final thought, which we have used much in the days since Jim's passing. Jim always said that despair was a necessary and appropriate emotion as a human being and it was okay to feel despair, while adding, "Don't ever let the despair make you a desperado."

So while we mourn this very good man, and grieve with Kathleen, his true love and soul mate, and the family; we should know that Jim is likely chuckling somewhere about all the fuss being made on his behalf and reminding us of the peace we should have. Jim was truly like one of his heroes, Sir Thomas More, a "Man for All Seasons."

✪ Submitted by former students, distinguished alumni, friends, and colleagues,
Tom Hopkins, Andy Passen, and Dave Watterson