



Dr. James B Derr Sr.

June 23, 1942 - May 20, 2024

Dr. James B. Derr Sr. passed away May 20, 2024 after a long illness. He was born in Green Bay Wisconsin in 1942 to Bernard and Loa Derr. He was an extraordinary baseball player and he was recruited out of high school to play in a minor league affiliate of the Detroit Tigers. At the same time, he attended the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul Minnesota as an undergraduate, and he later earned his doctorate in Mathematics from Michigan State University. His specialization in algebraic geometry had unique applications to quantum and nuclear physics and he lectured at Los Alamos while teaching at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. It was there that he met his lifelong partner and loving wife Sarah, who was still by his side when he passed away. Dr. Derr had a distinguished career teaching at many universities throughout the US and abroad, and an impressive record of research and publication. He had a passion for music, especially classical and jazz. He loved being a professor, loved helping students, and he retired at CSU Pueblo as a Professor Emeritus of Mathematics. Dr. Derr never owned a cell phone, and he hated computers, but generations of Pueblo teachers remember him for making the complex understandable, and he passionately believed in every student's potential to learn. He was a man of deep faith who never missed Sunday mass until his illness progressed. He loved his family and is survived by his wife Sarah; sons, James (Wendy) and John; granddaughter, Elizabeth; brother, Patrick; and grandchildren, David and Erin Shipley. A Graveside service will be held 11:00am, Monday, June 24, 2024 at Roselawn Cemetery.

Reception to follow.

Cemetery Details

Roselawn Cemetery

1706 Roselawn Rd
Pueblo, CO 81006

Previous Events

Graveside Service

JUN 24. 11:00 AM (MT)

Roselawn Cemetery
1706 Roselawn Rd
Pueblo, CO 81006

Tribute Wall

GO

“ I met Jim Derr on his initial interview visit to USC. I liked him immediately, recognizing his intelligence, Sense of humor, kindness. I later met his parents, and understood him all the better. I think I was prepared to do so because of our common backgrounds, being both Catholic and from Minnesota. Jim was a great teacher and inspiration to his students, he was always a good friend and supporter. I was deeply saddened to miss his companionship as his illness progressed, It is difficult to see one whose mind you respected, whose heart you admired, begin to fail them. I will add Jim's name to the list of people for whom I pray for daily. May his soul rest in peace. Gil

Gil Orr - June 21, 2024 at 02:49 PM

MB

“ I only took one class from Dr Derr when he was still new to USC. It was an extraordinarily difficult class for me and many of my fellow students and was the last one I needed for the degree.

While he seemed gruff and often exasperated by our lack of understanding, I realize it was all for show as his door was always open and he was more caring inside than out. His wry sense of humor helped us all to persevere and get through the class. I wound up barely getting by (and always wonder how much of that was a gift!)

It was always a pleasure seeing him out and about in town especially when he used to take his frequent neighborhood walks. He could scowl like a military dog, but that puppy was always just below the surface. Thanks for the support!

Marty Bechina - June 16, 2024 at 02:04 PM

NJ

“ Nicholas, Naomi, Aksel, Jaxon purchased the Ful
I Of Love Bouquet for the family of Dr. James B
Derr Sr..



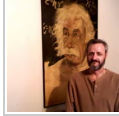
Nicholas, Naomi, Aksel, Jaxon - June 11, 2024 at 09:47 PM

RJ

“ Jim Derr was my good friend and mentor. Our offices were right
next to each other all those years and I benefited. Weekly
discussions about teaching, course contents, mathematical fields,
life, and always our interactions with students. I often think about
university systems for evaluating faculty. How do you have a system
that rewards Jim Derr’s profound contributions to students and the
mathematics department? He never graded papers at school; he did
that late at night. And he did grade papers! He often said, it is not
fun, and it is time consuming, but it is the best thing we can do for
our students. His office door was always open to students or faculty
who wished to talk to this contemplative professor. While other
faculty were off doing this and that, Jim was quietly sitting in his
office changing lives, one student at time. Year after year students
would stop by my office to tell me that Dr. Derr was the best teacher
they ever had. Once we had a nice group of students, but they were
simply not ready for a university education. They worked hard but
they just could not get there. I said, “Jim are we just wasting our
time?” “No! Roger we are getting them ready to raise kids who will
be successful in college.”

Roger Johnson

Roger Johnson - June 10, 2024 at 12:32 PM



I didn't finish my degree (sr. math) but wouldn't have ever gotten as far as I did without Dr. Derr. All my math friend who took classes from him thought he was great.

Scott Massey - July 25, 2024 at 06:46 AM

BM

“ *Barbara Matuzak lit a candle in memory of Dr. James B Derr Sr.*



Barbara Matuzak - June 07, 2024 at 12:53 AM

BL

“*Dr. Derr, The Derrminator, The Resident Philosopher* are some of the names I regularly heard Jim called in honor by appreciative students since I joined the University of Southern Colorado Math Department in 1993. Some students were said to be "majoring in Derr" as they prioritized classes Jim taught, or waited until he taught a class they needed. One the first departmental graduation breakfasts I attended featured a special award in honor of his teaching and mentoring initiated and given by graduating students.

I enjoyed and grew from many conversations and mentoring with Jim on many topics in math, teaching, politics, literature, science, morals, philosophy, baseball (of course!) and the Catholic Faith we share.

Prayers and thanks for your life, for all you love and all who love you, are with you Jim.

*Bruce Lundberg
Prof. of Mathematics
CSU-Pueblo*

Bruce Lundberg - June 06, 2024 at 03:12 PM