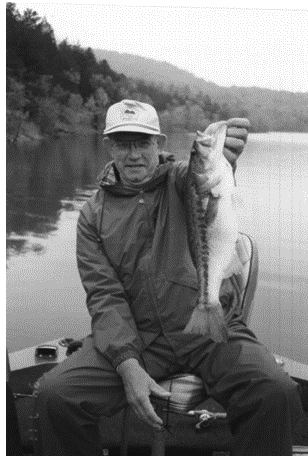


Jim Meeks, 1938–2017: Remembering a Fifty-Year Friendship

N. WILLIAM HINES*

Most of the papers in this commemorative issue of the *Ohio State Law Journal* will focus on various aspects of Jim's splendid academic career and his many professional accomplishments, and properly so. I intend to do something different. I want to tell you about Jim the person, his wonderful wife Priscilla for almost fifty years, his family, and some of the many fun things we did together during a friendship that stretched over half a century. There may be an excess of fishing stories in this tribute, but that is because Jim and I did a whole lot of fishing together.



Jim with a Big Ozark Bass

James Edward Meeks was born in 1938 and he was raised in a loving, middle class household in central Ohio. His father, Voras (who understandably went by Jeff), was on the road a lot, selling school books and academic texts for Harcourt-Brace Publishing. His mother, Frankie, was a traditional stay-at-home mom who devoted all of her considerable energy to raising Jim and his two sisters, Betty and Nancy. Both Jim's father and mother were well-educated parents who kept up with national events. They inspired Jim to become alert to what has happening around him and to become a voracious reader. They also encouraged his developing interest in the arts, including opera. Jim graduated from high school in Columbus in 1956, and attended Oberlin College where he played lacrosse, graduating in 1960. Jim was then accepted at Columbia University School of Law, where he established an outstanding academic record and served as an Editor of the *Columbia Law Review*. After graduating from

* Professor Emeritus and Dean Emeritus, University of Iowa College of Law.

Columbia in 1963, Jim passed the Ohio Bar Examination, and served as a Law Clerk to Judge Carl McGowan of the U. S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit during the 1963–1964 term of court. It was at this point in his career that Jim entered what would be a fifty-plus-year tenure as a law professor.

I first became aware of Jim's existence in November of 1962 when his name came up as a teaching candidate in an Iowa law faculty meeting. I had only recently joined the Iowa faculty as an assistant professor the prior May, having been hired by Iowa's legendary law dean, Mason Ladd. When I say Dean Ladd hired me, I am not using a euphemism; these were the days in law teaching when deans hand-picked their faculty members, subject to rubber-stamp approval after the fact by the tenured law faculty. The first time I met any member of the Iowa law faculty was when I showed up at the law school to start teaching my first summer school class.

Dean Ladd was in the habit of making annual pilgrimages east to what he regarded as the citadels of higher law learning (Yale, Harvard, and Columbia) to search for faculty talent. I was a graduate teaching fellow at Harvard when I was recruited by Dean Ladd in 1961; Jim Meeks was a senior law student at Columbia, editing the *Columbia Law Review* in 1962, when Dean Ladd came calling to offer him a teaching position at Iowa. Dean Ladd's practice was to carefully select his favorite teaching candidates and then present them at a law faculty meeting for a vote of approval, reciting their credentials and explaining his reasons for selecting them. I vividly recall the faculty meeting when Dean Ladd recommended the appointment of Jim Meeks as an assistant professor. Things were going smoothly until I politely raised my hand to ask whether it was such a good idea to hire so young a candidate who was still in law school, regardless of how strong the dean thought his scholarly potential was. Shouldn't we at least wait to see if he passed a bar exam somewhere? I was all of twenty-five years old at the time and had served less than six months on the faculty, but I was pretty sure of myself.

A senior colleague, Professor Sam Fahr, immediately spoke up to support the Dean's recommendation. Sam said, "This young fellow Meeks looks impressive to me on paper, and the one thing about which we can be confident is that he will definitely grow older." After the laughter subsided, Dean Ladd went on to explain that Jim had already accepted a prestigious federal clerkship with Judge Carl McGowan on the D.C. Circuit, so he would not enter law teaching until the fall of 1964. With this slight delay in Jim availability made clear, the faculty voted unanimously to approve the Dean's recommendation, and Jim officially became an Iowan. Professor Fahr's prediction was right; Jim did indeed grow older for the next fifty-three years. There is more than a little bit of irony in the fact that as the only person to raise a question about Jim's appointment, we quickly became great friends once he was in Iowa City, a friendship that continued for the rest of Jim's lifetime.

I. JIM'S TIME AS A PROFESSOR IN IOWA CITY

Jim enjoyed rapid success at Iowa, quickly climbing the rungs of the academic ladder to earn tenure and advancement to Full Professor. Jim was a popular teacher and colleague, and soon after arriving he began serving as faculty advisor to the *Iowa Law Review*. Although he regularly taught Torts, his early scholarly interests were in Anti-Trust law and Regulated Industries. As part of Iowa's relatively radical curriculum reform in the late 1960s, Jim and I collaborated to create a new required first-year course that we both commenced teaching. We called the new course "Resource Planning." This innovative course combined private arrangements affecting real property rights with public regulation of land use (think zoning), and also included emerging environmental law topics. We still teach this course at Iowa as an elective. Jim also teamed up with his law colleague Professor Dan Ellis, along with professors from engineering, geography, and business to create Iowa's first interdisciplinary course in "Energy Law" in the early 1970s. After playing several leadership roles on the faculty, Jim served ably for two years as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs under my decanal predecessor, Dean Larry Blades.

Jim and his family left Iowa in 1978 when he was appointed the Dean at the Ohio State University College of Law. Jim's colleagues, students, and friends at Ohio State know much more than I do about Jim's contributions to Ohio State and his activities in Columbus. Because we were fellow deans throughout his Ohio State deanship, I know that he served with notable success as Dean for seven years. When he stepped down as Dean, he joined the faculty as a beloved teacher, mentor of students and colleagues, and a valued scholar in his specialty subjects. In recognition of his professional accomplishments, Jim was named the Joseph E. Davis Distinguished Professor. Besides teaching and writing, Jim provided important advisory services to the law school and to the university for a number of years, both officially and unofficially. Jim formally retired in 2006, but he continued to teach one or another of his specialty courses until his deteriorating health condition prevented him from continuing in the classroom.

In October of 2017, I was a guest at the 50th Reunion Dinner of the Iowa Law Class of 1967. The members of this class were the first Iowa students Jim taught, instructing them in Torts in the fall of 1964. I knew Jim considered the 1967 class his favorite Iowa class, so it was not surprising that Jim had many admirers and a number of close friends in the class. Several of them present at this reunion noted his absence to me and inquired about him. They were saddened to learn that the progress of Jim's Parkinson's disease made it impossible for him to travel to the reunion, much as he wished he could have attended it. As often happens at these reunion events, the 1967 class members began exchanging tales about their old professors. Jim's name came up much

more than anyone else's, and most of the recollections concerned some memorable thing Jim had said in class or some kind deed Jim had done to help an alum when he or she was a student or later in their professional careers. One class member recounted how Jim had generously tutored him in Advanced Anti-Trust law for a semester to prepare him to join the U.S. Justice Department's Anti-Trust Division.

In a different vein, one 1967 class member reminded this classmates that law school in the 1960s was a high stakes venture that occasionally caused student resentments to run high. He specifically remembered rallying classmates to Jim's defense in a dark parking lot after a Phi Delta Phi party, when Jim was about to be accosted by a drunken student who had flunked Jim's Torts course. Those were the days when law schools admitted many more first-year students than they intended to graduate, and only two-thirds or less of the entering class ever completed law school. Our colleague, Professor Sam Fahr, who taught first-year Criminal Law, often boasted that he was the Admissions Director for the second year of the law school. At the end of these alumni reminiscences, we all raised a toast to the formative role Jim had played in so many Iowa grads' lives and to his good health, none of us knowing Jim's condition had become so dire and that he would pass away less than a month later

II. JIM'S PERSONAL LIFE IN IOWA CITY

Let me share with you some recollections about my wife, Jean, and my time with Jim, Priscilla, and their family during the fourteen years Jim taught at Iowa and since. In those early years at Iowa, Jim spent a lot of time with me, Jean and our three girls, bonding as well with my parents and my three siblings, to the point where we soon regarded Jim as an honorary member of the Hines family. Jim's close relationship with my family continued long after he moved to Columbus, mostly because of our fishing trips together, our joint travels, and our long-time connection to Star Island, our cherished summer paradise in northern Minnesota. In 1990, Jim and Priscilla joined members of my family and some of our college friends on a glorious two-week visit to Greece, enjoying an educational land tour followed by a fabulous cruise around the Greek Islands.



Jim and Priscilla with Star Island Neighbors
Traveling in Greece

Early on, Jim also became well acquainted with what we called the Baker Eight. This close knit group was composed of Jean and me, and three other couples, Larry and Janie Wilson, Asheville, N.C., Tom and Kathy Keefe, Denver, and John and Shari Layle, Kansas City. All three other couples were Jean's or my former college roommates at Baker University. They all married shortly after college and we have remained very close friends for nearly sixty years, often visiting each other around the country and travelling together on vacation trips. During their time in Iowa City, Jim and Priscilla became ex officio members of the Baker Eight, and renewed acquaintances with them every summer for over 40 years on Star Island in Cass Lake, Minnesota, where Jim and Priscilla have had a summer cottage since the 1980s. Three of the Baker Eight couples have long owned cabins on Star Island and the fourth visits regularly for weeks every summer.

Jim was a bachelor when he arrived in Iowa, which was rare on the Iowa faculty. Iowa City is the quintessential "college town" in "fly over" land, short on the amenities of larger metropolitan areas, but a safe place with great public schools; and an ideal place to raise children. Dean Ladd strongly preferred to recruit teaching prospects who had already formed their own families, believing they were much more likely to stay at the law school than bachelors. (I could say bachelorettes as well, but when Jim joined the Iowa faculty, it would be another ten years before Iowa hired its first female law teacher.)

Early in Jim's time in Iowa City, Jean and I resolved that Jim needed to sink deeper roots in Iowa. To us this meant that Jim should find a satisfactory life partner, get married and start his own family, so we set out to become matchmakers. After a couple of false starts, including the younger sister of our next door neighbor, Jean met Miss Priscilla Lohr at a kindergarten roundup. Priscilla was a U. of I. elementary education grad from Churdan, Iowa. She was roughly Jim's age, attractive, bright, sweet, and most importantly single and seemingly without a serious boyfriend in her life. Jean decided on the spot that Priscilla was a prime prospect to become Jim's wife. Shortly thereafter, she introduced Jim to Priscilla and thankfully the two of them clicked immediately. Jim and Priscilla soon became a couple, joining with us and other young law faculty couples in various parties and adventures.

During Jim's courtship of Priscilla, he lived for a year in Chicago where he taught as visiting professor at Northwestern Law School. (Later during his long career Jim also visited as a professor at the University of Virginia and at Boston University.) More than once that year, we travelled to Chicago to spend a weekend doing the town with Jim and Priscilla. Jim lived in a brand new luxury apartment located high in a apartment building overlooking Lake Michigan. Part of the attraction of visiting Jim in Chicago was just spending time in such a beautiful place gazing out over the lake. One of our most memorable outings with Jim and Priscilla in Chicago occurred when the four of us attended a dinner/theatre event at the Drake Hotel featuring the popular singer Peggy Lee. Every time I hear Ms. Lee's fabulous recording of the song "Fever" on TV or

radio, I flash back to sitting in the dark in the Drake dining room watching her amazing performance of her signature number.

Jim and Priscilla's engagement in 1968 was celebrated in Iowa City by a party in a private room at the University Athletic Club with four other young law faculty couples (Jean and I, Ron and Mary Carlson, Meade and Deborah Emory, and Gary and Gracie Goodpasture). You have no doubt heard the expression "drinking someone under the table." At this engagement party, most of the attendees spent time under the table at one point or another. Eventually, the party became too rowdy and the management asked us to leave. Fortunately, there were no later repercussions because the fog of drink made the party an evening few, if any, of us could remember with much clarity the next day.

Another memorable outing during Jim and Priscilla's engagement was a trip to Star Island on Cass Lake in North Central, Minnesota with our mutual friends, Ron and Mary Carlson. Officially, this trip was a further celebration of Jim and Priscilla's engagement, but the unofficial purpose was to see how Priscilla stood up to the rustic simplicity of Star Island, to which Jim had already formed a firm bond. The challenge lay in the primitive nature of my parents' North Woods cabin, with no running water, thus no hot shower, no indoor plumbing, only an outhouse, plus the cabin's resident bats, mice, and its mildewed bedding. Priscilla ended up sleeping on a sun porch, perched on a stack of four ancient mattresses. She made no complaint, and unlike the Princess and the Pea, she claimed she slept in complete comfort. As was predictable from her small-town Iowa background, Priscilla passed the Star Island test with flying colors. Soon thereafter in the summer of 1969, she and Jim were married and started their own family. I served as Jim's Best Man, and all three of our young daughters, then ages eight, six, and four, attended their first ever wedding courtesy of Jim and Priscilla. Our girls were so impressed it was all they could talk about for weeks before and after.

After three years of living in an Iowa City home a couple of blocks from us, in 1972, Jim and Priscilla settled into a new home in a rural residential subdivision five miles from town. The expansion of their family started with the birth of Kathy (1972) and then Jeff (1974). We saw less of them as child-raising consumed their time, but we still caught up with them regularly at law school events, Hawkeye sports competitions, and during annual summer vacations on Star Island. We also travelled in the same social circles related to the university. For example, we helped start a Gourmet Dinner Group in Iowa City with a number of young couples from other University Departments. The Gourmet Group met at a different couple's home, and each member brought an assigned part of the planned ethnic meal, Italian, Spanish, Asian, Polynesian, or some other ethnicity. Jim did little cooking, but in recognition of his expertise with wines, he excelled as the wine sommelier for the group, selecting just the right wines to serve with every type of exotic meal. Occasionally, the alcohol flowed too freely, and the parties sometimes got a little wild for a group of staid professors, but everyone always made it home safely and all the marriages endured.

III. SUSTAINING OUR FRIENDSHIP AFTER MEEKS LEFT IOWA CITY

The Meeks family moved to Columbus in 1978 when Jim was appointed Ohio State Law Dean. Jean and I stayed in fairly close touch with the Meeks after they left Iowa City. I continued to see Jim regularly at ABA Deans Meetings and various AALS events. We always exchanged newsy Christmas cards, and we saw the Meeks family during their occasional visits back to Iowa, during our occasional visits to Columbus, and for the past twenty years every March we got together in Florida. In the late 1990s, Jim and Priscilla began renting a gulf-side condo unit for a month on Marco Island, Florida, where they entertained visiting family members and friends from Ohio and Minnesota. Coincidentally, about the same time Jean and I started renting our own water-side place on Sanibel Island, about forty miles north of Marco. Every March the four of us would meet once or twice somewhere in the area for lunch or some other adventure. But it was the quality time we spent with the Meeks every summer on Star Island for over thirty years that most sustained our friendship.



Jim with His Fishing Gang at Lake of the Woods, Canada

Let me tell you a little more about Star Island, a magical place for both the Hines and the Meeks families. Star Island is located off the West Shore of Cass Lake, the ninth largest lake in Minnesota. Cass Lake is the second biggest lake in the chain of lakes that form the headwaters of the Mississippi River. The river flows into the west side of Cass Lake and flows out seven miles away on its east side. Not surprisingly, Star Island is in the shape of a star with four points; and it contains about 1500 acres of heavily forested land, with lots of mature white pine and red pine trees. The island is part of the Chippewa National Forest, and has the highest population of eagles in the lower forty-eight states. In the eighteenth century, the northeast tip of the island was home to a small tribe of Ojibway Indians. The first summer cabin on the island was built over a century

ago in 1910 and it housed the local Forest Ranger. This cabin still stands, but is now privately owned. Today, there are eighty-four summer residences on the island. One third of the summer homes are privately owned; the other two thirds are on land leased from the U.S. Forest Service. The island is interlaced with miles of hiking trails and features an abundance of interesting flora and fauna.

Star Island is somewhat unique because a beautiful 200-acre wilderness lake, Lake Windigo, lies in the interior of the island – a lake in the center of an island in a lake. Lest you doubt its uniqueness, Lake Windigo was once featured as a “geological wonder” in a “Ripley’s Believe It Or Not” book. Jim first accompanied me to Star Island in late spring of 1967. We drove up to the lake to meet my dad for a long weekend of fishing and male bonding. Jim was immediately captivated by the special character of Star Island. He was already familiar with this part of Minnesota, having visited relatives who lived on nearby Leech Lake several times in his youth. Jim made many summer visits to Star Island over the next ten years, first by himself joining us at our cottage, and later with his family. For several summers, Jim’s family rented a unit at Hooks Landing, an old-fashioned fishing resort two miles across the lake from our summer cabin. During those visits, besides fishing together while the kids played on our beach, we enjoyed shared evening meals almost every night.

Ultimately, in 1979, Jim and Priscilla purchased their own Star Island cottage on a sandy south shore beach, investing a small inheritance Priscilla had received from her Aunt Mary. Starting in 1980, they spent a month or more there every summer. Soon summer activities on Star Island became deeply imbedded in the rhythms of their family life. Jim’s leadership skills were put to use as Commodore of the Star Island Yacht Club, which raced small family sailboats around the island, and later as President of the Star Island Protective League, a non-profit organization that was the closest thing to local government on the island. Over the years, we were fortunate to enjoy many wonderful times doing fun things with the Meeks on Star Island, until Jim’s disability prevented his traveling there the last two years of his life.

IV. JIM WAS A RESILIENT SURVIVOR

It is still hard to believe that his Parkinson’s disease finally got the best of Jim. So many other health conditions that would overwhelm other people barely phased Jim. Of all the people I knew with bothersome health conditions, Jim was the most resilient at bouncing back from life threatening accidents, bad falls, Crone’s Disease, Diabetes, a heart attack, and multiple joint replacements. (Jim was the real Bionic Man.)

I still vividly remember my shock in August of 1983 when I received the phone call from one of Jim’s Ohio State faculty colleagues advising me that Jim and his family had experienced a devastating traffic accident on their way home from Star Island. The Meeks’ minivan was towing a boat trailer full of furniture when it ran off the road, ending up in a steep roadside ditch. Jim was in critical condition in a hospital in Danville, Illinois and it was not certain whether he

would survive his massive injuries. Priscilla was also injured badly with several broken bones. Thankfully, Kathy and Jeff had walked away from the accident with only minor injuries.

At the time of the accident, Jim was asleep in the back seat without a seat belt, and he was ejected from the van, which then landed on him. Besides a number of injuries to his limbs, Jim suffered severe damage to his abdomen, resulting in some life-threatening internal injuries. Surgeons removed Jim's spleen and did major repairs to his liver and other internal organs. If you ever noticed the ugly scar down the middle of Jim's abdomen, you would appreciate the seriousness of these injuries. Obviously, Jim did survive, and as soon as he was stable, he was transported to a top hospital in Columbus, where we visited him a few days later. Jim being Jim, he was already in recovery mode, making light of his injuries, praising his doctors and nurses, and already planning his return to the classroom.

Like many people, I dread going to a hospital for any reason. Jim, on the other hand, appeared to actually enjoy much of his time in hospitals, and he spent a great deal of time there over the years. Hospitals were almost his second home, and I never heard a discouraging word from him about them or the care he received. On our last Ozark fishing trip together, one night as Jim bent over to untie his shoes before getting into bed he dislocated his artificial left hip. He was in great pain, but refused any pain killers offered by the first responders. Jim was transported by ambulance fifty miles over winding mountain roads to the nearest hospital in Springfield, Missouri. When I picked him up from the hospital the next morning his hip was back in place and it was as if nothing unusual had happened. He was amazingly cheerful, and he was anxious to get back to the fishing. His only mention of the incident was an apology for costing me a half day on the lake to come get him.

Another scene relating to Jim's medical conditions stands out in my memory. It occurred on one of our last Ozark fishing trips together. Our fishing gang was having a leisurely lunch in a local restaurant. Jim was complaining to Dr. John Layle, then a practicing Internist, about how he disliked the severe dietary limits he had to observe owing to his active Crone's Disease and an advancing diabetes condition. He was telling John about these troubling health problems as he wolfed down a huge double cheeseburger, followed by a gigantic piece of strawberry- rhubarb pie ala mode, washed down by a large glass of sweet tea. (Jim never met a piece of pie for which he did not lust.) Dr. Layle could only roll his eyes, but I could tell what he was thinking: "Severe dietary limitations, my foot. Jim's Crone's and diabetes must be the most amazingly mild cases in medical history."

V. FISHING WITH JIM FOR OVER FIFTY YEARS

Until Parkinson's disease slowed him down, Jim was my most consistent fishing buddy, and we fished a lot. Jim and I went fishing together literally hundreds of times all over the United States and Canada. We fished together for

bass in farm ponds around Iowa City and in the Ozarks on Table Rock Lake, for trout in mountain streams in the front range of the Rockies, for snook and sea trout off sandy beaches of Southwest Florida, and for muskies in the Crowe River chain of lakes in Eastern Ontario. Most of our fishing, however, was concentrated in three venues: Table Rock Lake in Southwest Missouri, Cass Lake in North Central Minnesota, and Lake of the Woods in Western Ontario, Canada.

The very first spring he lived in Iowa City, I took Jim on a fishing trip to my favorite Ozark impoundment, Table Rock Lake. Table Rock Lake was then a brand new Corps of Engineers reservoir in the Missouri Ozarks, impounded just a few years earlier but already developing a reputation as a “hot spot” for bass fishing. Table Rock is a huge lake with 15,000 miles of shoreline flooding three river systems famous for float trips before the lake came along. Jim was familiar with trout fishing from seasonal visits to the family “Camp,” near Tallmansville, West Virginia, where as a boy he enjoyed outdoor activities with his mother’s adult relatives and several young cousins. But Jim was a neophyte bass fisherman. Considerable time was therefore spent in preparation for this outing, just learning how to cast a level-wind casting reel without creating a maddening backlash was a challenge. Jim never completely mastered this art, however, so he was affectionately known among our fishing friends as “Mr. Backlash.” Because his casting accuracy was always suspect, Jim developed one fishing skill the rest of us genuinely admired. He became a master at retrieving seemingly lost fishing lures from where they landed high in shoreline trees.

Wouldn’t you know, on his first day with me on Table Rock Lake Jim caught a 9.5 lb. bass, a much bigger fish than I ever caught in a lifetime of bass fishing. That bass was mounted and still holds a place of honor on the wall of the Meeks’ Star Island cabin. I immediately informed Jim that it was rookie luck; he just happened to be in the right place when that ancient fish decided to commit suicide. Later in the day, I warned Jim that if he caught another lunker like his first big bass, he might never be invited to go fishing with me again. This was obviously an insincere threat as Jim became my regular fishing buddy for countless hours on the water over the next fifty years.

On that first trip to the Ozarks in March 1965, we camped out in my leaky old canvas army tent. After two cold and wet nights in the tent, we went to the Marina café for a hot breakfast. We were so bedraggled that Mrs. Null, who ran the restaurant, took pity on us and kindly offered to let us take a free hot shower at the Shad Rack Resort, which she owned just up the road. After gratefully accepting her offer and enjoying the luxury of hot shower, we returned to thank her and inquire how much the room rates were at her resort. March was off-season and the room rate was \$12, or only \$6 apiece. On hearing this price, even though we were then poorly paid young teachers, we just looked at each other, nodded agreement, immediately broke camp and moved to the resort. We resolved then and there never to camp out again when a dry room with a hot shower and all the amenities was available so cheaply, and that was our last camping experience together. Jim and I ended up patronizing the Shad Rack

Resort every Table Rock trip for the next forty years, so Mrs. Null made a smart business decision in offering a hot shower to a couple of chilled campers.

Until he was no longer able to travel, Jim and I made one or two fishing trips to Table Rock Lake together every year. Often we were joined by former law students and an occasional law faculty member. Later, several members of the Baker gang became regulars on the annual Ozark adventure. More than once, we organized fishing groups of six or more fisherman for Table Rock trips. The quality of fishing in Table Rock Lake varied a great deal from year to year, depending on the lake level, climatic factors and whether the bass were cooperative, but we always caught enough fish for one or two sumptuous fried fish dinners. Measured by the good fun and fellowship enjoyed by all, the Ozark trips were always a great success. Jim last made the Table Rock trip in the spring of 2014, and except for the one night spent in a local hospital to correct a dislocated hip, he participated fully and caught his share of bass and crappie.

When Jim first visited Star Island in 1967, my family and I fished Lake Windigo exclusively because we were intimidated by the size of the main body of water in Cass Lake (15,000 acres) and we knew we could catch lots of bass and pan fish in the interior lake. On one of our early fishing adventures on Lake Windigo, we were accompanied by our former law student, John Rashke, who later joined us on many fishing trips, and by our friend Larry Wilson, another frequent fishing buddy. On this May trip, the four of us enjoyed one fabulous fishing day of bass fishing on Lake Windigo. The photo showing off the impressive stringer of big bass we caught and later released that day records one of our most treasured fishing memories. After a number of years, we finally began to master fishing in the main lake, which boasts one of the finest walleye fisheries in all of Minnesota. Now, with some confidence, we claim we can catch a walleye dinner whenever we want one. It is called “fishing” and not “catching,” however, for a reason. Sometimes the walleye just do not cooperate and we have to settle for grilled hamburgers. Fortunately, even hamburgers taste better in the North Woods.

In 1973, Priscilla’s widowed mother, Helen Lohr, married Dr. Rolland Morrison, a prominent doctor from Carroll, Iowa. Jim and I discovered a decade later that Priscilla’s new step father was an avid fisherman. His favorite fishing venue was Lake of the Woods, a huge body of water that straddles the Minnesota/Ontario border. One distinction of Lake of the Woods is that it is home to 1400 islands greater than an acre in size, giving it a shoreline larger than all of the five Great Lakes combined. In 1983, Dr. Morrison invited Jim and me to go with him on a fishing trip to Lake of the Woods to fish for walleyed pike and yellow perch. Dr. Morrison had already retained the services of a top local fishing guide who could safely navigate us through the maze of islands to prime fishing spots. We enjoyed fantastic walleye fishing. Jim’s 9-year old son Jeff joined us for this fishing excursion, and imitating his father, Jeff caught the largest walleye of the trip, bigger than any of us had ever caught. Jeff’s big fish won the resort’s prize for largest walleye for the month, and every year thereafter when Jeff joined us for the Lake of the Woods outing we had to check

at the resort's display board to make sure it still featured Jeff's "big fish" photo.

When Dr. Morrison dropped out of the Lake of the Woods trips for health reasons after a couple of years, we recruited some of our Ozark fishing buddies and Star Island regulars to join us in continuing this summer tradition. We continued to make at least one trip to Lake of the Woods every year for the next three decades, and always enjoyed spectacular walleye fishing. Jim last participated in our annual Lake of the Woods adventure in July, 2014. Thanks to the special attention paid him by Doug Freitag, our excellent guide, Jim had three memorable days of fishing, catching the biggest walleye and a good number of other "keeper" fish. The annual fishing trips to Table Rock and Lake of the Woods, and our summers on Star Island just have not been nearly as enjoyable since Jim became unable to participate in them.

VI. MISSING JIM

The reality that Jim was actually no longer alive hit me hard for the first time on a Saturday afternoon late in the fall of 2017. Amazingly, Iowa had just demolished Ohio State on the football field, and I picked up the phone to start to call Jim to gloat over Iowa's stunning victory. Then I realized Jim would not be answering the phone, and I would never be able to make such a call again. I had already lost Jim as a fishing buddy a couple of years earlier when his disability grounded him; now he was lost to me forever. The realization that Jim was no longer with us was very difficult for me to accept, and I am sure all of Jim's family and most of Jim's colleagues, friends and acquaintances reflect from time to time on how big a gap Jim's passing left in their lives.

Jim was successful in almost everything he undertook in life, not only because he was smart, honest, creative, caring and incurably optimistic, but also because he was blessed with outstanding people skills. He was a very good listener and possessed an extraordinary degree of empathy that enabled him to understand and relate to the problems a wide range of people brought to him. Jim was the ultimate "team player," who could work comfortably with anyone from anywhere on almost any type of venture, all the time making others around him feel like their contributions were the key to the success of the joint project.

Jim was definitely one of the "good guys"—the type of person when you were young your mother encouraged you to hang out with for your own self-improvement. I know this is true because my mother was one of Jim's biggest admirers, often encouraging me to bring him along to family events during the five years he was single on first arriving in Iowa City. Later, in summers after Jim and Priscilla married, summers when my parents were in residence at their cabin on Star Island, they always looked forward to Jim and members of the Meeks family dropping by to visit with my mom and my disabled dad. Jim and Priscilla's mother Helen were among my parents' favorite summer Star Island bridge opponents, and Jeff and Kathy became good friends with several of my nephews and nieces, who were their ages.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it dawned on me in the course of writing this tribute to Jim that it is more than a little autobiographical—in telling Jim’s story I was also telling much of the story of my own life. The parallels are hard to miss. I am only two years older than Jim, and we were both greatly blessed to live during the past eight decades, largely a time of unprecedented peace, prosperity and technological advancement in America. We both grew up in the Midwest, were nurtured by loving parents and relatives, were supported by a family culture that encouraged our highest ambitions, were afforded the chance to profit from a first-rate education, were fortunate in not having been called to military service, were surrounded as adults by devoted family and friends, worked for a lifetime at jobs we genuinely loved, and we both enjoyed an active retirement, until accelerating health problems intervened to cut short Jim’s life.



Jim with a Large Lake of the Woods Walleye

Jim truly was one of the most decent, honorable and caring people I’ve ever met. He richly deserved a much longer retired life than he was afforded, and a much less miserable ending than he had to endure. Jean and I join Jim’s family and his legion of friends in grieving his loss. I count it as one of the greatest privileges of my life to have known Jim so well for so long, and to have spent so much enjoyable time with him and his wonderful family. Knowing and interacting with Jim enriched my life in more ways than I can count, and I will forever be grateful for the opportunity to have enjoyed his delightful friendship on so many occasions for over fifty years.