



James Patrick Conway

September 25, 1926 - May 11, 2022

James Patrick Conway

of Edina, MN and Cable, WI, passed away peacefully at home at the joyous age of 95. He missed attending the 40th International Convention of his beloved I.B.E.W. We have lost the kindest man on earth. Born to this life September 25, 1926. Born to eternal life on May 11, 2022.

Jim was predeceased by parents Edward Joseph Conway and Esther Elizabeth Conway, beloved wife Hattie Conway; children Pam, Pat McClellan, Jimmy, Polly; brothers Martin, Michael and Robert; brother-in-law Dwight Soucy. Survived by loving wife Mary Harrigan and the Conway family, sisters Gloria Sheehan (Phil), Barbara Soucy, Nancy Conway; sister-in-law Helen Conway; son-in-law Doug McClellan; grandchildren Meaghan McClellan, Mara Williams (Chance), great-grandchildren Harriet, Andrew and John Morris, Murphy and Magnolia Williams, and many wonderful nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and nephews, and his many loving Harrigan relatives and large circle of friends and Union Brothers and Sisters.

Born in Minneapolis, Jim attended Central High School, enlisting in the Navy after graduation in 1944 and serving in the Philippines in World War II. Jim followed in his father E.J. Conway's footsteps (E.J. was president of I.B.E.W. Local 292 for many years). Jim was initiated into I.B.E.W. Local 292 on March 1, 1947, later becoming a member of Local 953. He was appointed in 1956 as an International Representative for the Sixth District and in June 1979 as

International Vice President of the Sixth District.

In the fine tradition of Irish American labor leaders, Jim was ahead of his time, convening the first Sixth District I.B.E.W. Women's Conference in 1984, paving the way for women to advance in the I.B.E.W. He lived long enough to see the first female elected I.V.P. in the IBEW's 131-year history take the stage at the 40th International Convention in Chicago.

Jim stood out in a crowd. With his colleagues in suits and ties and close-cropped hair, in his early days Jim would show up to meetings in leather pants, long hair, dark glasses and turquoise jewelry. Enthusiastic and unconventional, his work ethic was unmatched. Jim was grateful and proud his whole life to be I.B.E.W., where he met many lifelong friends in the Brotherhood, including fellow Irishman and I.V.P. David Ruhmkorff. Even after retirement, he continued to persuade any non-union electrician he ran into of the advantages of becoming I.B.E.W.

Jim was deeply proud of his Irish roots and loved to put on an Irish brogue on St. Patrick's Day and on trips to Ireland. Jim brought joy wherever he went, grateful for every day, always living in the moment. He had a generous heart and loved his family and friends deeply and unconditionally. His life was an adventure, from being a Golden Gloves boxer in his youth and running for alderman in Minneapolis. He lived and loved each day with high energy. Always political, he never missed a vote, phone banking and door knocking for his favorite candidates, Wellstone and Franken among others.

Jim enjoyed over 40 years at his family's lake cabin, cooking and taking family and friends on pontoon rides, sharing Lake Owen with his family and special friends Oscar and Genevieve and other friends and neighbors. Jim traveled the globe by air, cruise ship, rail and tour bus. Some favorite places were Ireland, Portugal, Germany and Argentina. Jim loved the live theatre in

London, where his record was 8 plays in 7 days. Jim was proud to become a "Delta million miler" while mid-flight over the Atlantic, receiving the award from the captain in a champagne presentation upon landing. Jim was a lifelong downhill skier with favorite slopes in Switzerland, Austria, Lake Tahoe and Utah. An enthusiastic gambler, whether playing craps or poker in Hayward or Vegas or blackjack in Monaco, Cannes or Amsterdam, Jim was in his element.

Jim was a parishioner at the Church of the Incarnation, where he and Mary were married by Father Kevin McDonough. He always started his daily prayers with "Hi, God, it's Jim and Mary." He would proceed to thank God for our wonderful life and how lucky we were. He chose each day to see everything in a positive light. Nothing broke his lifelong positive spirit; even in his final illness, when asked how is your day, he responded "wonderful."

A lifelong music lover, he was especially fond of Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Willie Nelson, and blues and jazz - he knew the words to over a hundred songs. Many times he woke up singing his own songs, composing and rhyming as he went.

A beautiful, happy man, Jim was respected and loved by all. He was a hero to his wife and 'Boppa' to his grandchildren. This is James Patrick Conway in his own words, stated many times: "I never had a bad day, occasionally a bad moment, but never a bad day."

Mass of Christian Burial at the Church of the Incarnation, 3801 Pleasant Avenue South, Minneapolis, MN 55409, on Friday, May 27, 2022 at 11:30 a.m., with visitation beginning at 10:00 at the church. Masks required. Memorials, if desired, to Incarnation Catholic Church, Catholic Charities, or the Electrical Workers Historical Society.

To view the service: <https://www.incarnationmpls.org/jimconway>

Washburn-McReavy.com

Edina Chapel 952-920-3996

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 27. 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Incarnation Catholic Church
3801 Pleasant Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Mass of Christian Burial

MAY 27. 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM (CT)

Incarnation Catholic Church
3801 Pleasant Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Patrick Conway.* ”



May 26, 2022 at 08:05 AM

“ Farewell to my uncle James Conway, a remarkable man who lived a remarkable life, who passed away this week at the age of 95. A WW2 veteran and a longtime labor organizer and leader of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, he established the first IBEW women's conferences in the 1970s, and throughout his long life never stopped advocating for progressivism and workers.

I literally don't know the extent of his accomplishments, because there are so many of them. I only got to know Jim when he joined my family a few decades ago, at a time when he had already lived a long life, filled with more experience and loss than most of us will ever know. He and my aunt Mary were the best of partners, devoted to each other, and deeply in love. It's not my place to presume to speak further about that, but I think I can speak for the rest of the assorted Harrigans and Harrigan-adjacents when I say that Jim was an enormously invigorating person in our lives, and his mere presence was enough to make a room happier.

Jim had a marvelous upbeat attitude, happy and humorous, and had the gift of sincerity: When he asked you a question (and his curiosity meant that he did this frequently) he genuinely cared to hear your answer. He made you feel easy. He was a fine fluid conversationalist, but in a sincere way, there was nothing glib about him. My aunt Mary tells me that his union speeches were always extemporaneous; he never knew what he would say until he got up there -- they were effective all the same. I believe it.

I had the honor, once, of being in the audience when Jim was speaking on a very sad occasion. This was a circumstance that would have simply defeated most people. Too tragic, too personal, too dark. But somehow he got up there and he made it mean something. He was funny and sincere, no platitudes, no shuck-and-jive, no euphemism. I'd never seen anything like it and I've never forgotten it. This was someone who could take the worst stuff of human tragedy and somehow push it forward, make it work toward something better.

Jim was a wonderful person. I wish I'd known him better and I'll miss him. To quote Miles O'Brien: "He was more than a hero, he was a union man!"

<https://www.startribune.com/obituaries/detail/0000425684/?fullname=james-patrick-conway>

Pat Harrigan - May 16, 2022 at 06:43 PM