



James Benedict Merkl

March 23, 1948 - January 8, 2025

In loving memory of a friend to all

James "Jim" Merkl

March 23rd, 1948 - January 8, 2025

Visitation will be held Friday, January 17, 2025 from 4:00pm - 7:00pm at Washburn-McReavy, 1827 Coon Rapids Blvd, Coon Rapids, MN.

Funeral will be held Saturday, January 18, 2025 at 11:00am at St. Joan of Arc Church on the gymnasium side, 4537-3rd Ave S, Minneapolis, MN with luncheon to follow at the church. Visitation will begin at 10:30 AM

They have a limited size parking lot that fills quickly. Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the start of the funeral. When parking on the neighboring streets, please be considerate of the neighbors and do not block driveways, intersections or park in on-street handicap posted area.

In lieu of flowers & plants, memorials are preferred.

"Champlin Sinclair, this is Jim...."

James "Jim" B. Merkl, born March 23, 1948, in Minneapolis, MN, to Elaine and John Merkl, was the first of their 11 children. Raised with all his siblings in a small two-bedroom home in the North Minneapolis neighborhood, he was instilled with the values that family is everything, and he carried that with him every day. Jim would go on to make a big family of his own, but the word "family" also meant more to him. He made everyone part of his family, whether you knew him for a lifetime or a day.

Jim married his first wife, Valerie (Ottem), straight out of high school and they had two children, Jennifer and Christopher. While this young love would not last, the friendship and family would endure.

In the late 70s, Jim and his brother John started working at a small gas station and repair shop on the banks of the Mississippi. It is now what we know as Champlin Sinclair, the oldest running business in Champlin and a beacon of goodwill for anyone who ever stepped through the door. There would always be a group of people gathered in the small office discussing all topics and all opinions were welcome. If you had something weighing on your mind, Jim would give his full attention to anyone that needed an ear to listen, much to the chagrin of his workers. He wanted to know everything and thought the best way was to learn from other people. Jim wanted to teach as well -- he would explain the problem with your car, what had gone wrong, how to fix it, what part was needed, and then also give you a lesson in philosophy, religion, and science along with it somehow. He would also make sure your car got fixed, the tank topped up and you got a donut and a coffee on your way out.

A second marriage to Jane (Ross) followed the first, and two more children, Sarah and Lucas, and a stepson Robert (Ted), joined the family. While this marriage would also end, Jim was happy to keep everyone close.

His first wife, Valerie had also remarried and had another child, Melodie. The families remained so close that it seemed like everyone was related. And to Jim, everyone was. By this point, Jim had joined AA, and this family and his faith helped him recover from alcoholism. He did his best to never miss a Friday night with them. He was also a longtime member of St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church, where he loved listening to the gym band on Sundays.

In the late 90s, he met the love of his life, Diana. When they married in 1998, a stepdaughter, Jacquelyn and stepson Richard joined the family. Diana joined him in the gas station and made sure the books were in order and Dino the Dinosaur was dressed appropriately. He loved having his sons, daughters and grandchildren work with him at the station, giving lessons in life, love and mechanics.

Jim loved being on a Harley. Any motorcycle, really, but a Harley was the best. He really loved riding in a group, surrounded by people, talking and bouncing ideas off everyone. The talks didn't have to be about motorcycle maintenance and often didn't have anything to do with engines, but instead could be conversations about what made the world work, what made people work, what religion, art, and politics had to do with human emotions. There wasn't a topic that Jim didn't want to talk about, and he often thought it fun to tease people into a fluster just to get them thinking.

Jim seemed to do his best thinking on a motorcycle. He would invite anybody and everybody to join him on a Sturgis trip through the Badlands. Sturgis was never the ultimate destination, it was the stops along the way that would include lessons in awe and inspiration, even if it was places that everyone had seen a million times. Wall Drug, Corn Palace, and Crazy Horse would be seen with a new perspective when with Jim.

He led these groups up mountains, through the Needles highway, and through the Black Hills. Everyone followed, knowing Jim would not let them down, and that he would take care of them. He was an inspiration and wanted everyone to know how wonderful life could be regardless of who you were, where you came from or what your troubles might be. All were welcome. So follow his example and hit the road, strike up a conversation with a stranger, feel the wind in your hair.

Jim leaves behind his beloved wife of 26 years, Diana; siblings, Bob (Mary Jo), Catherine (Scott) Herberg, John (Evonne), Mary (Mark) Anderson, Jeanne, Ray (Sue), Paul (Marcy), Julie (Tom) Stone, Tom (Mark); children, Ted, Jennifer (Travis), Chris (Jesseca), Sarah (TJ), Luke; stepdaughter, Jacquelyn (Dustin); Grandchildren, Derek (Kelsey), Krystal, Daesha (Chase), Téa (Dylan), Brianna, Jimmy, Wyatt; great grandchildren, Gracesyn, Asher, Aria, Manhattan; He is predeceased by his parents Elaine and John Merkl; brother, Jerry; stepson, Richard.

The road is calling and I must go...

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 17. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Coon Rapids Chapel
1827 Coon Rapids Blvd.
Coon Rapids, MN 55433

Visitation

JAN 18. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic
4537 3rd Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 18. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

St. Joan of Arc Roman Catholic
4537 3rd Ave South
Minneapolis, MN 55409

Tribute Wall

AW

“ *What a terrible surprise! Jim was a great person. Hee was abble to fix many of my problems. He said my 84 Corvette looked "like a rocket". I will never forget that. I will always miss Jim. Great personality.great sense of humor and a smile to match.*

Allan Westover - February 17, 2025 at 02:25 PM

AH

*I am sorry to hear about Jim.
I felt the same about him and always was such a friendly guy. He always seemed so genuine and such a warm smile when he greeted a person too.
He will be missed by many and I am going to be one of them.*

Allan Haugstad - February 18, 2025 at 06:37 AM

ZK

“ *Zachery K. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Benedict Merkl.*

Zachery K. - January 18, 2025 at 01:13 PM

YA

“ *Your friends at Rite Away Auto. purchased the Ar rive in Style for the family of James Benedict Merkl.*



Your friends at Rite Away Auto. - January 16, 2025 at 12:33 PM

CB

“ Jim was a friend to all of us who frequented his Sinclair, taking good care of us and our cars! His hearty hello and big smile made us feel like he cared and I know he did! My family is going to miss him and we ask him to rest in power!
Much Love and Admiration from the Batalden family

carla Batalden - January 15, 2025 at 09:45 PM

MD

“ Megan D. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Benedict Merkl.

Megan D. - January 15, 2025 at 07:04 PM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Benedict Merkl.



January 15, 2025 at 03:30 PM

YA

“ Your family at AP planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Benedict Merkl.

Your family at AP - January 14, 2025 at 12:07 PM

YA

“ Your family at AP purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of James Benedict Merkl.



Your family at AP - January 14, 2025 at 12:07 PM

DW

“ Deb Woodard purchased the Your Light Shines for the family of James Benedict Merkl.



Deb Woodard - January 14, 2025 at 12:01 PM

BA

“ Bill, Jane, Ted, Sarah and Luc, Andrew and Amy planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Benedict Merkl.

Bill, Jane, Ted, Sarah and Luc, Andrew and Amy - January 13, 2025 at 02:18 PM

BA

“ Bill, Jane, Ted, Sarah and Luc, Andrew and Amy purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of James Benedict Merkl.



Bill, Jane, Ted, Sarah and Luc, Andrew and Amy - January 13, 2025 at 02:18 PM

JT

“ Jodi, Jodi, Julie, Julie, Kim, Tif purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of James Benedict Merkl.



Jodi, Jodi, Julie, Julie, Kim, Tif - January 12, 2025 at 11:40 AM

JT

“ Jodi, Jodi, Julie, Julie, Kim, Tif planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Benedict Merkl.

Jodi, Jodi, Julie, Julie, Kim, Tif - January 12, 2025 at 11:40 AM