

Holton, KS



James (Jim) Samuel Birkbeck, 79, Holton, passed away on November 27, 2019, at Stormont Vail in Topeka, Kansas.

Jim was born on August 5, 1940, to Howard and LaVerne Birkbeck in Burlington, Kansas. He grew up on a farm in rural Burlington, graduating from high school there in 1958. He attended Kansas State University where he was a member of the Acacia Fraternity and played on the KSU football team for one season. He graduated from KSU in 1963 with a Bachelor's Degree and in 1964 with a Master's Degree, both in agricultural economics. He completed the Graduate School of Banking in Wisconsin in 1968.

On June 28, 1964 he married Mary Lou Bridenstine in Caney, Kansas. Jim's greatest strength came from his loving wife of 55 years.

Jim worked his entire 55-year career in Kansas community banking. He spent the first seven years of his career at banks in McPherson and Kansas City, Kansas. In 1972, he and his young family moved to Holton where he began employment with Denison State Bank. In 1977, Jim and Mary Lou purchased majority ownership of the bank and he was named bank president. He served as president and CEO until 2014, and he served on the bank's board of directors since 1972, the last 42 years as chairman. He was president of Denison Bancshares Inc., the holding company of the bank. He served on several bank and organization boards. He was a past director and chairman of Bankers Bank of Kansas. He was recognized for 50 years in banking by Kansas Bankers Association and Community Bankers of Kansas. He and the bank received a Community Leader Award from Federal Home Loan Bank-Topeka in 2017.

Community service and participation were very important to Jim. Among the many projects he gave time, energy and money to were Holton Community Hospital and Stormont-Vail Foundation, Heritage Walk around downtown Holton, Hoyt Community Center, Holton fairgrounds, and local schools. He served on the USD 336 board of education in the 1970s. He was an active donor and participant in various fundraising campaigns at KSU and Washburn University, served on the KSU Board of Trustees, and endowed scholarships at both universities. He was a member of Holton Rotary Club and twice named a Paul Harris Fellow. In Holton and Jackson County, he served on boards of the chamber of commerce, hospice, training center, industrial and doctor recruitment and others. In 2007, he was inducted into the Holton/Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame. He was a member of Evangel United Methodist Church and served on many committees.

Jim loved his Wildcats – Burlington, Holton, and KSU. He loved the land and farming. He loved Holton and chose it for his hometown and poured himself into making it a great place to live. He loved community banking and the wonderful people he worked with. Most importantly, he loved God and he loved his family.

Survivors are wife Mary Lou; daughter, Paula Taylor (Matt) and grandchildren, Ryan, Carson and Amanda Taylor, Holton; son, Patrick Birkbeck (Heather) and grandchildren Lauren and Alex, Topeka; and brother, Steve Birkbeck (Cherie), Clay Center, Kansas. He was preceded in death by his parents.

Funeral Service will be 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, December 4, 2019 at Evangel United Methodist Church in Holton. Family will greet friends 4:30 – 7:00 p.m. Tuesday evening at Mercer Funeral Home in Holton. Private Burial will be at the Holton Cemetery. Memorials may be given to Evangel United Methodist Church or the Jim Birkbeck Memorial Fund (to be designated for college scholarships for local students) c/o Mercer Funeral Home, PO Box 270, Holton, KS 66436. To leave a message for the family, please visit www.mercerfuneralhomes.com.

