



# Robert George James

SEP 4, 1923 - APR 27, 2022



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## Robert George James

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**R**obert George James, age 98, of Bethel Park PA, who resided in San Francisco CA, passed away surrounded by his loving family on Wednesday, April 27, 2022. Husband of 57 years to the late Elizabeth A. "Betty" James. Father of Marinell (Robert) Jochnowitz. Loving granddad to Sophia (Christopher) Antoun and Simone Jochnowitz and Ari and Adena Jochnowitz. Brother of Dorothy (the late John) Stanek, George (Elaine) James and the late Florence Szydowski. Son of the late George and Helen James. Uncle of numerous nieces and nephews with whom he was close.

Bob worked as a journeyman newsman on Pittsburgh television and radio for 54 years until his retirement in 2004 at the age of 80. He worked at radio stations WPIT, WWSW, and WJAS, (two different times) before finding a home at all-news KQV radio, for the last 26 years of his professional life. In television, he worked at Channel 11 (then WIIC) in Pittsburgh and Channel 10 (WFBG) in Altoona, as the anchorman for the 6 and 11 P.M. newscasts.

Bob was born in Newton Falls, Ohio. When he was five years old, his sister Florence developed infantile paralysis at age 2. He became his sister's protector, watching out for her, including taking her to school in a wagon. Years later, when she was in her forties, he learned how to drive with mechanical devices so he could teach her.

After graduating from Central Catholic High School, he attended the University of Pittsburgh for a year to study engineering. He interrupted his studies to join the Navy for World War II.

He was assigned to a patrol craft escort, a ship slightly smaller than a destroyer, that guarded ships from submarine attack as they cruised in the Atlantic, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean.

When the war ended, he enrolled in Duquesne University where he majored in journalism. He got his first experience as a newsman on the fledgling university radio station, WDUQ. After



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graduation in 1950, he attended a six-week radio and television course at Northwestern University.

His first job was in Steubenville, Ohio at station WSTV, but in three months, he moved back to Pittsburgh to work at WPIT, a small radio station.

WPIT gave him a good grounding: reading the news, doing commercials, and introducing radio evangelists, with whom, off-the-air, he sometimes got into discussions about belief and religion.

One of his more unique experiences involved abandoning his formal news voice and assuming the hip voice of a new persona, "Cousin Bob." For an hour, Cousin Bob, as disco jockey, spun rhythm and blues records, featuring singers like LaVerne Baker and Fats Domino.

For all of his serious stories, Mr. James often showed a lighter side. One of his favorites was a report on the opening of a new roller coaster in Kennywood Amusement Park in which he became the story much to the delight of listeners.

Taking his microphone on board, he described the ride with that objective newsman voice, only to interrupt his narration with his own howls and screams each time the car raced downward.

Mr. James, who retired because of failing eye-sight, joked it was a shame he had to quit, "My career was just beginning to blossom," he quipped.

"He liked to talk and he talked a lot," said his sister Dorothy.

Bob took his job seriously but he had no delusions about himself.

"I'm a news person, not a celebrity," he once said in an interview. "Some people like to think they are stars. I like to think I work for a living."

On his retirement, the city council presented him a commendation he received a commendation for his years of governmental reporting.

After he fell down the stairs in his Bethel Park home in 2016, his daughter convinced him to move to San Francisco. Even though he settled in a new city, Mr. James never left Pittsburgh,



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whose streets and alleys he wandered as a reporter. He read the digital edition of the Post Gazette to keep up to date on happenings there. And although he acquainted himself with the Giants and 49ers and Golden State Warriors to carry on a conversation with the natives, he kept track of his first loves, the Pirates and, especially, the Steelers.

At the age of 91, he was invited to be a panelist at a forum sponsored by the Society for Professional Journalists.

The high point came when a middle-aged woman in the audience stood and told him how much she admired him over the years and listened to him like a student for what she could learn for her own work as a reporter

"It was gratifying," Mr. James, still aglow after the event, told his brother. "To think someone would remember and appreciate something you once did so many years ago."

Visitation is scheduled for Friday May 6 from 2-4 and 6-8 pm at Jefferson Memorial Funeral Home. Funeral mass is 10 am Saturday May 7 at St Valentine's church, followed by interment at Queen of Heaven cemetery.



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Robert by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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