Evans Nordby
FUNERAL HOMES



James (Jim) Harry Bartsias

January 2, 1951 - November 2, 2026

Our forever star shines brightly at peace.

James (Jim) Harry Bartsias was a happy-go-lucky guy whose contagious booming laughs, kind heart, musical talents, and willingness to help others made him someone people loved being around.

Born and raised in Duluth, Minnesota, Jim was the son of James and Irene Bartsias and the oldest of seven children. As a young boy, Jim spent time helping his father, who owned the kiddie rides and concession stand at the Duluth Zoo. He drove the little steam train and helped sell popcorn and cotton candy. His grandfather was known around Duluth as Popcorn Harry, selling popcorn from his bus parked on London Road. Those early memories would come full circle years later, as Jim’s own grandchildren would come to know him for making the very best popcorn.

Jim married his high school sweetheart, Kathy Upton, on September 30, 1972. Their high school band director served as their matchmaker, bringing together two people whose shared love of music would become a lifelong bond. Many have described Jim and Kathy as examples of true love. A team. They were happiest when they were together, always holding hands. A lifetime of love, laughter, music, memories; a love story. They built a beautiful life and raised their three children in Esko, Minnesota. They were blessed with

ten grandchildren.

Professionally, Jim worked as a sales and marketing manager for Ralston Purina Company and served as president of SAGMRA (Grocery Representatives). He was also a dedicated community member, coaching soccer for his son and daughter's teams and serving his church as president of the congregation, a Sunday School teacher, and a member of the choir and praise band.

Music and family were always at the heart of Jim and Kathy's life together. They shared their love of music by leading and performing throughout the Duluth area in a 17-piece big band, a six-piece variety band, a trio, and as soloists. Jim was a past president of the Duluth Musicians Association and played in the Duluth Musicians' Union band and in many orchestra pits. His trumpet solos added a special touch to countless weddings, making those celebrations even more memorable. He will be remembered for his musical gifts, especially his love of the trumpet and guitar.

After retirement, Jim and Kathy embraced another adventure, traveling the country full-time in their RV for nearly five years. Jim especially enjoyed driving their 40-foot diesel pusher while towing a car. They made wonderful memories and lasting friendships as they crisscrossed the country, enjoying precious time together as the two lovebirds. The arrival of many new little ones in the family eventually influenced their decision to stop rolling and move to the Twin Cities, where they could be closer to eight of their ten grandchildren. Jim absolutely loved his family. Among their most treasured memories are the times spent together, especially when the entire family joyfully traveled to Disney World, stayed harmoniously under one roof, and all wished they could always live together like that. Another fun memory is when the whole family went camping together, sleeping in tents, under the stars.

Jim was a true handyman, capable of tackling just about any home repair. He was lighthearted, kind, dedicated, and always willing to lend a hand. His easygoing nature and infectious laughter brought joy to those around him. Above all, Jim will be remembered as a genuinely nice guy who made people feel welcome and, most of all, as a man who dearly loved his family.

His family will treasure the memories, the music, the laughter, and, of course, the popcorn.

Jim is survived by his wife of 54 years, Kathy; his mother, Irene Bartsias; his three children, Kadee Watkins, Wendi (Ryan) Pederson, and Jay (Molly) Bartsias; and his ten grandchildren: Matthew, Mackenzie, Madeline, and Mila Watkins; Aleeya and Levi Pederson; and Brynn, Adalyn, Caydence, and Brady Bartsias.

He is also survived by his siblings, Karen Nelson, Sandy (Mark) Vrklan, John

(Terri) Bartsias, and Jane (Brent) Weegman; his in-laws, Pat (Ernie) Kertzscher, Rick (Cindy) Upton, and Sherri (Rory) Johnson; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his father, James Bartsias; his brothers, Gary and Larry Bartsias; his brother-in-law, Randy Nelson; and his mother-in-law and father-in-law, Dick and Dorothy Upton.

The family would like to thank the staff at Solbakken Residential Care Facility in Plymouth, MN. for their loving care, as well as Jim’s devoted hospice team from North Memorial Health.

Funeral arrangements

A visitation will be held Monday, November 16, at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, 19001 Jackson St. NE, East Bethel, beginning at 1:00 P.M. followed by the funeral service at 2:00 P.M.

A recording of the funeral service can be found on YouTube after the date of the service.

Jim, your song has ended, but your music, love and memories live on.

Donations

Memory gifts may be made to any of these:

Giving Voice Initiative, a nonprofit organization that brings joy, connection, and community to people living with dementia and their care partners through the power of singing. Gifts in Jim's memory will help ensure that others can experience the friendship, belonging, and joy of making music together.

Donations may be made at **www.givingvoicechorus.org** or by mail at Giving Voice Initiative - P.O. Box 390225, Edina, MN 55439.

Or to AARP. Your support helps AARP continue advocating for Americans 50-plus on the issues that matter most, including Social Security, Medicare, prescription drug prices, senior poverty and fighting fraud. Action.aarp.org. Or https://www.aarp.org/aarp-foundation/ways-to-give/

Or to the Alzheimer’s Association. Honor A Loved One With A Tribute Donation To Advance Research And Provide Care. https://donorservices.alz.org

Visitation

Monday, November 16th 1PM

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 19001 Jackson St NE, East Bethel, MN

Driving Directions

Funeral Service

Monday, November 16th 2PM

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, 19001 Jackson St NE, East Bethel, MN

Driving Directions