



Dr. James S. Vinson

May 17, 1941 - June 27, 2025

Dr. James Spangler Vinson, age 84, of Conway, passed away on June 27, 2025, at his residence. He was born on May 17, 1941, in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, to Wilbur Sylvester Vinson and Anna Minick Spangler.

James is survived and deeply missed by his beloved wife of 58 years, Susan; daughters, Suzannah and Elizabeth; son-in-law, Eric; five grandchildren, Shaina, Zachary, Samuel, Siena, and Jackson; his chosen sons, Ignacio and Alex; and many dear friends that were like family.

James was a lifelong educator and learner. He graduated Phi Beta Kappa from Gettysburg College in 1963 with a degree in Physics before earning his Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Virginia in 1967. He went on to a distinguished career in university administration, serving at McMurray College, the University of North Carolina at Asheville, the University of Hartford, and Trinity University, before retiring as President Emeritus of the University of Evansville in Evansville, Indiana. He loved academic life and often taught 8 a.m. Introduction to Physics classes—even while serving as President. Innumerable students, institutions, and academic organizations benefited from his leadership, support, and counsel.

James had an unquenchable curiosity about the world and a lifelong thirst for knowledge. Some of his greatest joy came from traveling with his wife,

daughters, and dear friends. He visited all seven continents: he swam in the Antarctic Ocean, studied rhinos in Kenya, tracked mountain gorillas in Rwanda, swam with dolphins in New Zealand, visited excavations in Italy and Greece, toured the Old City of Jerusalem, and whitewater rafted in the Grand Canyon, among many other adventures.

He took an active role in the lives of his grandchildren, spending countless hours playing with them in the ocean, reading to them, taking them on adventures, and snoozing beside them after a day of fun. When asked to describe their grandfather in a single word, they offered: wisdom, laughter, light, accepting, positivity, happiness, and jokester.

He led a big, bright, and full life. His legacy reminds us that we control our attitudes and our actions—and that laughter is the best medicine.

The family is planning a celebration of life. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Musselman Library at Gettysburg College. James was a faithful supporter of the library's Special Collections. Contributions can be directed to Friends of Musselman Library at tinyurl.com/gbfoml or select another library fund at: <https://www.gettysburg.edu/musselman-library/about/giving/>

Please sign the online guestbook at www.goldfinchfuneralhome.com

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Conway Chapel, is serving the family.

Tribute Wall

GS

“ *Susan and family,
We are so sorry to hear of Jim's passing. He
was a loving and kind man and we are so
grateful to have known him. Sending Love
and Prayers for comfort are with you all!
In Love and Friendship
Gary and Colleen*



Gary and Colleen Stringer - July 15, 2025 at 09:55 AM

LK

“ *We are so sorry to hear this news and are sending our sincere
sympathies to you, Sue, and family. It was truly our pleasure to have
met you and Jim on the cruises and to have had the opportunity to
visit you at your home and then again, last fall in Canada.
Remembering laughter and stories shared around the dinner tables.
Thinking of you,
Linda & Joe*

linda kreuzer - July 12, 2025 at 08:40 AM

TS

“ *Deepest sympathy to the family. We will miss our wonderful friend .
So glad for times spent together & memories shared. May God
bless.
Tom & Sharon*

Tom & Sharon - July 08, 2025 at 09:12 PM

KA

“ *Our sincere condolences for the loss of your loved one. May treasured memories and earnest prayer bring comfort for family and friends at this time. Psalm 94:17-19*

Kathryn - July 01, 2025 at 05:02 PM

RC

“ *I appreciated his positive attitude and recent visits to and support for Gettysburg College. Ron Couchman, a fellow classmate*

Ron Couchman - July 01, 2025 at 09:27 AM

PV

“ *We will miss our dear friend and neighbor. He was a wonderful man!
All our love,
Polly and Joey*

polly vereen - June 30, 2025 at 12:36 PM

JH

So sorry for your loss, Jim was a fine man, knew him from Asheville and they stayed at The Oceanaire Motel for years, condolences to all the family, sending lots of love Julie Harpe

julie harpe - July 01, 2025 at 09:10 AM

DB

Our memories to times together at Gettysburg College will long be remembered.

Donald Burden - July 04, 2025 at 12:08 PM