

Non-Profit Community Loses Leader, Philanthropist James J. Biggins

James “Jim” Biggins, known by his friends and peers as a leader in philanthropic development and a generous philanthropist himself, passed away on January 7, 2005 in Sun City West, AZ, after a 15-month battle with stomach cancer. He was 76.

Biggins was the Chairman of the Board and past CEO of American City Bureau, Inc. (ACB), the oldest and one of the top fundraising consulting firms in the country located outside of Chicago, IL. His daughter, Leslie Biggins Mollsen and his son, John, are now co-owners and Co-CEOs of the firm.

“My father was a quiet leader who was fair, related well to others and was a generous role model,” says Mollsen. “He was a mentor to many—personally and professionally—and he will be greatly missed.”

Throughout a distinguished 43-year career, Biggins advanced through the ranks of American City Bureau, Inc. As one of the company’s most successful capital campaign consultants, he led countless campaigns across the country to exceed their goals and worked with hundreds of non-profit organizations, including religious, social and human service, educational and healthcare organizations. Biggins’ career culminated at ACB with his roles as an owner and Chairman of the Board.

The footprint Biggins left in the philanthropic community is immeasurable, having served on numerous boards including the World Fundraising Counsel and the Diocese of Rockford Planning Council.

“Jim Biggins was a leading force in philanthropic development,” says son John Biggins. “His leadership and strong example helped to shape the fundraising industry as we know it today.”

As ACB’s president, he was instrumental as an early leader in the American Association of Fundraising Counsel, the group responsible for establishing the highest ethical standards and code of ethics in the fundraising industry. Biggins was elected by his peers and served AAFRC as Chairman for three terms. He was also a recipient of the organization’s Distinguished Service Award.

“Jim Biggins, who I considered a dear friend, was always available to counsel and mentor the newer members of the American Association of Fundraising Counsel in order to assure that they felt comfortable in assimilating themselves and their firms in the Giving Institute (formerly AAFRC),” says George Ruotolo, Jr., Chairman and CEO of Ruotolo Associates, Inc. “He was clearly an individual who understood philanthropy, could provide counsel at the highest levels, and practiced this art as a professional and volunteer alike. The Giving Institute owes a great debt of gratitude to Jim for all he has done for the profession of

philanthropic consulting in the last 40 years. His legacy is clearly his firm and his family members that now lead American City Bureau. “

But, Jim Biggins' belief in philanthropy never ended with ACB. He was the founder of the St. Edward's High School Foundation and the St. Joseph Hospital Foundation, both located in Elgin, IL, helping them raise millions of dollars. As a devout Catholic, Biggins was committed to his church as well, St. Catherine of Siena in West Dundee, IL, chairing its capital campaign to raise over \$5 million.

While his work and his life took him around the world, his roots were in the Elgin area. Biggins was born on May 28, 1928 at the onset of the Great Depression. A local paper prophesized the type of child born on this date would be—witty, popular, ingenious, successful, like to be surrounded by many people, and lucky. Friends and family would say that he was all of these.

Adding to the list his strong drive to compete, Biggins was considered Elgin's first all-around athlete, having competed in basketball, baseball, football and track. He has been inducted into both the St. Edward's High School and the Elgin Sports Hall of Fame.

After graduation, he was appointed to West Point but chose to attend Marquette University in Milwaukee, WI, where he received his B.S. in Business Administration. Today, he is a Life Member of the University's President's Council.

His athletic prowess continued through college and won him offers to play minor league baseball with the Chicago Cubs and the Cleveland Indians minor league teams. However, the world was on the brink of the Korean War, and Biggins joined the United States Army, eventually leaving the service as a Corporal.

Jim Biggins lived a life that was full of stories illustrating a kind, generous spirit, intelligence, business savvy and fierce loyalty. But it is through the people who knew him, or perhaps only met him once, that you know his legacy is everlasting.

“Jim was such a giving person,” said John Paul, a lifelong friend from Elgin. “If you talked about a true friend, that was Jim. Jim never forgot anything. He was just a true friend. He was giving. Any success he had he shared with people.”

Jim Biggins is survived by his best friend and wife of 38 years, Carol, along with their two children and five grandchildren. His legacy lives on through all of them.