

He Was All About Love



James F. Strange
February 2, 1938–March 23, 2018

God's Place

In 1975, Dad nearly died from a dose of a drug similar to Penicillin while in Israel on an excavation. About 10 years ago he wrote out for his family his recollections from that experience. Following are excerpts. We share them with you so that you can rejoice in knowing Dad was utterly assured of God's place for him in eternity.

...Meanwhile the pain did not know that it no longer had permission to rage. Every joint in my body ached in exquisite harmony. Apparently the medications also gave me hallucinations. Streaming, multicolored lights raced past my head on both sides with an overwhelming roar. I could not hear anyone talking in the halls or in my room as long as the lights roared by. I could not hear my own breathing either. And then suddenly and without a clue to help explain it, the roar and the lights would wink out, and I could see and hear everything that was happening in the room, which was really nothing at all aside from my own labored breath. It was a bare, government hospital room in dull yellow paint. My head was slightly elevated, so I could see south out of the window. The scene was lovely, and the evening shadows were lengthening, perhaps in honor of my departing. But the pain, lights, and roar trumped sightseeing. I have no idea if anyone ever looked in on me.

Gradually I became aware that there was a small crowd of people assembling to my right, looking at me. I could only see them when the lights and roar stopped. I could not turn my head, so I don't know how I was seeing them. At some point it dawned on me that the woman standing in front was my grandmother, my mother's mother, "Big Mama." I had lived with her for a year when I was passing from seven to eight years of age. I was surprised to see her, for we had not had a close relationship. She was dark-headed like she was when I was eight. She was short and slight. And who was that tall man to her right wearing a black suit with a big black bow tie? He looked a little Lincolnesque, but with a broader face. And the others? I didn't have a clue. I assumed and still assume they were relatives.

I don't know what was between me and them, but I knew I couldn't get to them or even talk to them. Maybe it was a river or ravine. Not that I wanted to talk to mostly strangers. What grabbed my attention, aside from the beautiful garden-like scenery, was a town or city in the middle distance behind them, at least when the lights were not roaring by.

The houses were flat roofed and golden colored or reflected golden light, and the walls were translucent. At least I could tell that there were people in there, and they were busy doing something important. They were not simply standing around. It was the most beautiful place I had ever seen, and somehow I knew it was God's place. I wanted to get there in the worst way, as though it were a long-lost ultimate goal. In fact, I think it was a long-lost goal. But the abyss or whatever it was blocked me.

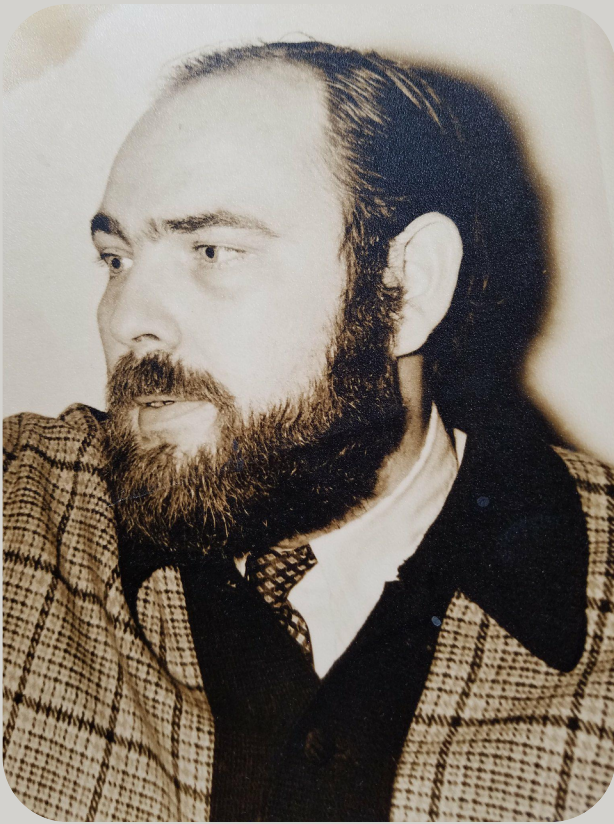
Suddenly, to my delight, I could go! Whatever was blocking me disappeared, and I went. I felt wonderful! I soared over Big Mama's head and flew straight into the scenery. I was doing my best to get to the city or whatever it was, and I am sure I was smiling. I felt so well physically that it was impossible not to think that I had a strong, well body, or perhaps I was a strong, well body. Warm feelings of peace swept through me, and it was not too much to say that I was experiencing love like I had never experienced it. The sights, sounds, and even the flowers were overwhelmingly beautiful. Instantly I was aware that I never wanted to leave.

I was completely unprepared for what happened next. A chorus of three or more male voices told me I could not stay. I had to go back. I was stunned. How could I go back? In the same instant I saw Carolyn and the children, and I realized that I had to go back. That was it. I had to go back. So back I went, though I admit it was with reluctance.

How long did all this take? I really do not know. When I was soaring over Big Mama's head, time did not apply, even though I was experiencing continuous action, which implies time. Was this like any other place I had ever visited? Well, more or less, though I did not feel the thump and bump of recognition of a place visited before. It was far more vividly beautiful than any park I had ever marveled at. The main and most intense part was being at peace, being completely whole physically, and being drenched in love. It was a spiritual experience that I had not anticipated at all.

I more or less unceremoniously slammed back into bed. The pain, lights, and roaring returned. The strain of time reasserted itself.

Yet somewhere in that disappointment I realized dimly that I was going to make it. By daybreak the lights and roaring abated, and I was aware that a young woman was sticking her head in the door inquiring of me. Eventually—I have no idea how long it was—others came in and tried to coax me to come and eat. (I was too weak.) Finally the doctor came in and



announced matter-of-factly that I would survive after all. I just grinned at him weakly. ...At the end of ten days I was back in the field with my cane and a whole trunk full of transformative memories.

...This experience and the awe that went with it stayed with me vividly, though I told no one about it for years for fear of ridicule. The opening of Psalm 42 still brings tears to my eyes. It is an incandescent text: "Like the hart thirsts for rivulets of water, so my soul thirsts for you, Oh God." Nothing is the same as it was before. Some things are more luminous and powerful than they ever were, like the eyes

of a small child; others have lost their glow, like position and honors. My fear of death certainly said its goodbyes. ...I have spent the years since 1976 trying to integrate this experience into my mind and soul. There is no doubt that I will. Perhaps I have, at least partially.

If I Had Known

By Shannon Morrissey

March 2018

I would have stayed up all night
Until I had finished your three books,
So I could shower you with questions,
And details others may have overlooked.

I would have arrived an hour early.
To decorate your black leather chair
So it was a throne worthy to honor
The wonderful man who sat there.

I would have begged for lessons
In Latin, Hebrew, and Greek
And learn about every single person
That your traveling led you to meet.

I would have shown you my gratitude,
Thanked you for your brilliant mind,
For in my life I had never met a man
So humble, so wise, and so kind.

But you would have wanted none of this,
You never desired our praise
So you kept your identity secret
Hiding your accomplishment and fame.

I would have strummed my guitar and played a song,
Asked you to sing anything you knew.
I would have hugged you tight and said goodbye
If I had known it was my last day with you.



Poem by Shannon Morrissey

Transcribed and frame created by David Luciomable

In loving memory of Dr. James F. Strange

“There are only war veterans in Heaven; those who have fought a good fight for the
Kingdom of God.”

To: Strange Family

From: Shannon, David, Jaxten, and Emmie

The above poem was lovingly written by the four undergraduates in Dad's "Jesus' Life and Teachings" class. They presented it in a crocheted frame to the Strange Family. Dad was especially fond of these students, lamenting to Mom that he needed time to "teach them the importance of love." We would say that was accomplished based on the poem, Dad. They loved you.

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Remembrances of Friends, Colleagues, and Students

Susan Ackerman:

Jim was such a larger-than-life figure—a giant, really—that it is hard to imagine the Near Eastern archaeological community and ASOR without him. I have so many memories of him on the ASOR Board, both of his distinguished service, for so many years, as Board secretary and then for more years still as a Board-elected Trustee.

Indeed, Jim was in many ways the ideal ASOR trustee, as he exemplified all those w's that it is said one wants of a board member. *Work*, certainly, as arguably, no one worked harder, especially through the sixteen years that Jim served as secretary (that's sixteen years by my reckoning, but I may be undercounting.) *Wisdom*, also, without a doubt, as Jim's long institutional memory kept us grounded in our past, even as he was never afraid to try new things or champion new ideas or approaches.

As for wit, well, what can I say? There are some Board members on whom one sometimes wants to impose that obscure dictum in Robert's Rules of Order that allows a given individual to speak only once to any matter under discussion, but Jim's comments, delivered with warmth and charm in that wonderful laconic drawl, always eased whatever tensions were in the room and made things go easier. And the wealth that you and Jim have gifted to or pledged to ASOR in the past few years as been one of transformative impact, both in terms of what the Strange and Midkiff Families Excavation Fellowships have meant so far and will continue to mean going forward to young people just beginning to explore archaeology and in terms of the funding of ASOR's new home-to-be, come (we hope) 2019. I wish Jim could have lived to see that milestone—and to stand with his beloved friends and colleague as we cut the ribbon.

So, yes, Jim will be, and is already, sorely missed.

Susan Ackerman
President
American Schools of Oriental Research

Randy Akers:

Jim was a giant of a man, and such a vacuum now with his passing. I cherish our moments together as a family during our dig moments in Israel. They are etched in my memory and heart. Jim did so much for me to help me start teaching at USF as well as joining the Florida Humanities Council. (I have now been in that business 35 years!) Such fond recollections.

Cynthia Allyn:

When we lose those we love, we have grief, but that grief is the price we pay to have had the pleasure of loving someone who was so worthy of our love. Someone who cherished it, and us, and always nurtured it. We were the lucky ones. The blessed ones. Your wisdom, your love, your towering spirit of gentleness, they shielded everyone who knew you. I grew up with you as a part of my life, watching in awe at your intelligence and finding a comfort in being around someone who was equal parts Indiana Jones and Santa Claus, yet still his own person, incomparable to any other. You were a beacon in the dark, a light shining the way for the souls crashing on the shore of religion. You never judged, nor assigned value to one over the other. Every person who approached you was freely offered your attention, and though you were the most wise, you never flaunted it. Your wisdom was like a trickle of rain, blanketing everything you did and everyone who came into contact with you with refreshing knowledge, yet it was never condescending. Your deep bass voice, your jolly laugh, and your smiling eyes always put one at ease, as if we had been friends forever.

I will never forget the time I spent on your tour in Israel. I chose to go there over Japan because I didn't know how the political climate would be by the time I got to go again. Little did I know, that decision would be one of the best of my life, because I got to see Israel through the eyes of someone with a deep-seated love for the country and its people. I would get to see Israel with the experience and knowledge of one who has spent decades learning its history, and I would get the true account of the historical sites we visited.

I grieve—I grieve for me, as I will miss hearing you speak, and laugh, and learning from you. I grieve for your children who will miss having such a wonderful and loving father to talk to and love on. I grieve for your wife, who spent most of her life loving you and being a part of your team and will have

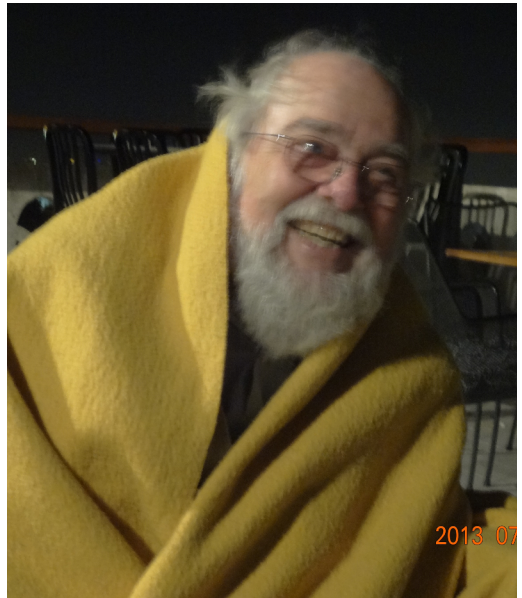
to forge ahead while still carrying your love inside her. I grieve for your friends who will miss the times you spent together, talking about the condition of the world and discussing religion and other important topics. But most of all, I grieve for the world, those that never got to meet you, to know about you, or to learn from you, because those are the ones who have missed something great, who have lost out on knowing one of the most humble and intelligent men around. I am comforted there is no more pain for you. My only hope is that you left us knowing how much you affected my life and my vision of God and his history.

Isaiah 42: 1-9 — [The Servant of the LORD](#)

“Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will bring justice to the nations. He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; He will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth. In his teaching the islands will put their hope.

This is what God the LORD says—the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out, who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, who gives breath to its people, and life to those who walk on it:

I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.



I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols. See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you.”

Catherine R. Alvarez:

I was blessed to know Jim for over 20 yrs., first as a professor, then mentor, colleague, and through it all my dear friend. As a single mom after a painful divorce, he helped build my self-esteem as a student going back to school and extended spiritual guidance that transformed my life. I am forever indebted to him. My heart is broken, and I will miss him terribly. Jim was like a spiritual father to me and like a spiritual grandfather to my son when we visited Bayshore Baptist. Dell deChant and all of us that played racquetball with him will cherish the memories, the way he used to chant like a monk on the courts. Of course he would never curse, so he used to blurt out the cutest expressions when he felt emotion, like "Holy Lightning!"

...I had no idea Jim was ill. I would have wanted to tell him how much I appreciated him as a former student and colleague... The world seems less bright today, as he made it a much better and more loving place. One thing I promise to do and what he would have probably preferred is to pass on the love he extended to me toward others. You have my solemn vow, I will always strive to do that and make him proud.



Stephanie and Mike Baldwin:

Stephanie: Dr. Strange had a great heart, a world of knowledge and a spirituality greater than I have ever met! It was a blessing to join him and Carolyn in Israel. My husband and I felt Like VIPs joining a celebrity among his peers in the Holy



Land. We learned so much in such a short time. He will be so greatly missed.

Mike: We will miss Jim dearly! He was such an inspiration to all of us and to me especially, he always had so many insights and always had time to talk

about our shared interests! ...We were fortunate in our lives to cross paths and from time to time have that same opportunity to share experiences with “quality” people and Jim was one of those really great people in my life. Stephanie and I will miss him and his wise counsel. All our love and appreciation for all that Jim has brought into this world!



Clyde Barr:

Dr. Strange was not only my Sunday School teacher, but a fellow bass who I sat next to in choir for years, and a dear friend—perhaps the finest man I knew. As far as I’m concerned, he was the smartest man on the planet, but was as humble a man as I ever knew. I take his passing as I would a close family member. I loved him as I have loved very few men before.

Megan Rogers Belzer:

My family has been close to the Stranges since before I was born. To me church family has always been the same as blood family. When I was a child I saw Dr. Strange as a warm, loving, almost magical man. His arms always opened with smile that made me just want to squeeze him tighter. As I got older I began to really see how amazing he was. It seemed like he knew everything! As an adult I fell in love with being in his Sunday School class. He is one of the very few people who could get me to sit still and listen. I just wanted to absorb every word he said.



Church feels a little different now. It's like he's still there. He's in the chapel, the choir loft, the fellowship hall, he's outside the sanctuary with his arms still open for a hug. If I close my eyes I can hear the chuckle of his laughter and see the welcoming smile on his face.



My heart hurts that I won't see him here on earth again, but my heart is joyful that he is with our Lord and Savior.

I am so grateful that I was blessed to know him, learn from him, and love him.

Spencer Bolesta:

There is only a 2,000 character limit? I could write books. James F. Strange, Jim, was simply the greatest man I ever met in my 64 years. He was my academic advisor at USF, my professor, my mentor, and my friend. I will miss our birthday lunches (mine is the 10th). But, I look forward to our meeting in Heaven one day. He set my foundation in so many ways, but most especially as a Christian man. Eternally, I will be grateful. I am sorry for the loss, but know he is in the presence of our Heavenly Father. Thank you, Jim, Dr. Strange, for all you mean to me and to so many more.

...

Dr. Strange, I know you are now in heaven. I will see you, again, one day. If someone reads your FB page from your family, I just want them to know how important you still are in my life. You were my academic advisor at USF, my professor, my mentor, and my friend. My admiration for you is extremely deep. The academics were important because they set my adult foundation. But, the friendship was greater because it helped me become the man I am, today. Thank you, Jim, for all you are to me, and to all the thousands of other students you touched in your life. I know Jesus because of you. That, I thank you for the greatest because it allows me to be with Jesus for eternity. This could be a 10,000-word missive, but I won't do that. Just know, we will do our birthday lunches again, in heaven. God bless you.

Jess Bonds:

Dr. Strange was my mentor. He inspired me during my undergraduate years at USF when I happened to wander over to Cooper Hall one day, an aimless junior looking for purpose, and asked him to help me focus on something meaningful. His response was: "How about the lawyer's question in Luke, Ch. 10?" Later on, in an Albertson's parking lot of all places, he encouraged me to apply for the graduate program in religious studies. And further down the road, he served on my doctoral committee. He was always there. He is the reason I teach. We corresponded for years, and after awhile, he began referring to himself as my "erstwhile mentor," but I never turned loose. I couldn't turn loose. He was an exceptional man, an everyman: father, Sunday school teacher, distinguished professor, biblical archaeologist, linguist... In summing up his life, I think of Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father in Heaven."

R. Gayle Bone:

MEMORIES OF DR. JAMES F. STRANGE

It was my privilege to be the Minister of Education at Bayshore Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida, in the 1970's. Little did I know when this "Strange" family joined the church that they would have a profound influence on my life and ministry. Jim, Carolyn (who became my favorite hugger) and a tribe of precocious children came aboard. I could share a story about each of them, but I will stick primarily with Jim, Carolyn and James Riley. I will just mention that some of their children and my children were the same ages and shared many activities together.

First of all, I remember Jim the man. Here, this university professor, who could speak multiple languages fluently and read multiple other languages with ease was one of the most humble, quiet, unassuming persons I knew. He led his family well. He sang in the choir. For a time, he attended a Sunday School class where he was taught by a layman with a fraction of his knowledge of the Bible, but learned from him because he was still teachable. Jim and Carolyn were deeply involved in the lives of other couples and impacted them with their simple commitment to their faith in Christ.

Next, I remember Jim the archaeologist. I knew he was a professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida who had a deep love for Biblical Archaeology. Mysteriously, he disappeared for a month or so each summer to "dig" in Israel. I loved to hear his reports of the summer digs. So in 1978 when I led my first group of 50 plus people to Israel, I asked Jim if he would be my co-host and teach at each of the sites we visited. He graciously agreed. When my guide met us at the Allenby Bridge as we were coming from the country of Jordan, he said he had met Jim in Jericho for coffee and Jim was waiting for us. I could tell the guide was not sure he was happy that I had someone who was going to usurp some of his time explaining everything at each site to the group. I must say the guide was very knowledgeable and proficient, so I could understand.

The guide would share his information at each site and then Jim would speak. By the end of the second day, the person standing closest to Jim to listen to

every word was the guide. He knew that by the end of that week he would have learned important information and would be a better guide for the rest of his life. Before the week was over, the guide did an unusual thing and invited my family and Jim to dinner at his house in Bethlehem. I knew it wasn't because of me. He wanted more time with Jim.

That trip triggered a love for Biblical Archaeology in me. I wanted others to learn from Jim, so I asked him to teach a Sunday School class at church called, "Archaeology and the Bible." He graciously consented. As you can imagine, the class was packed. It was so popular that it morphed into an on-going class where he taught books of the Bible, great doctrines of the Bible, etc. through the years, long after I had moved to another church in 1979. Many years later Bayshore Baptist Church asked me to come back and lead a two-day Sunday School teacher training workshop. The most faithful attendee was Jim. The professor who could have taught me so much was showing his support and still had a willingness to learn. He never lost his humility.

In the fall of 2014, a pastor friend at the church where I now attend asked me what was still on my bucket list. I said, "I have taken 6 groups to the Holy Land. Now I would like to go and dig for a week and have an experienced archaeologist take me through the City of David." He responded, "That is on my bucket list, also." I immediately thought of Jim and said, "I have this friend in Tampa, Florida, who has been digging in Israel for about 40 years. He is no longer leading digs, but I will call and see if he might know of someone who will accept us for a week." So I called Jim. He said, "Sure, you should talk to James. He is a professor of Religious Studies at Samford University and is leading a dig in Galilee." James was so gracious to receive seven of us pastors and retired pastors at his dig in the summer of 2015. To my delight, Jim and Carolyn were there assisting James. It will always be one of the highlights of my life until I am able to join Jim in heaven. To see him in his element sitting in a chair in the middle of the excavation of a synagogue in Shikin sketching the site is forever etched in my memory. As an aside, I will say that I saw another side of Carolyn. She was in charge of the hotel, food, transportation, etc. for the team of volunteers and ran everything like a machine . . . with authority.

This past fall, my two children and I took a quick nostalgic trip to Tampa. Through the efforts of Tom and Janet Allyn we shared dinner with Jim, Carolyn and a few of the old friends. Even though Jim and Carolyn were

hoping for more time here, it was a strength to all of us to sense their unwavering faith that the apostle Paul expressed in Romans 14:8, “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s.”

Michelle Demeter:

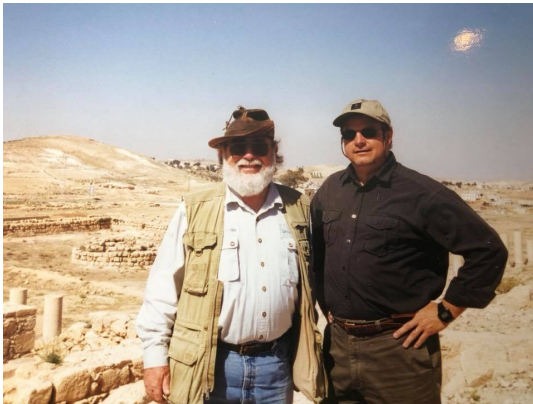
I never had the privilege of taking one of Dr. Strange’s classes as an Religious Studies undergraduate, so when I enrolled in his Formative Christianity in my first term of grad school, I was a bit nervous and hoped I hadn’t made a huge mistake taking a class so far out of my academic wheelhouse. To my relief, my fears were allayed as I successfully tackled the immediate challenge of the dense readings due each week, contributed to class discussions, and, perhaps most importantly, appreciated Dr. Strange’s kindness and support as I transitioned from undergraduate to higher-level academic work. Dr. Strange’s welcome demeanor was especially evident any time anyone passed his office door, which was adorned with humorous newspaper clippings and a cover from a *Doctor Strange* comic. While I truly treasure the academic training I received studying with him, it is Dr. Strange’s compassion, support, and humor that stayed with me all these years and will shape my fond memories in years to come. ~ Michelle Demeter, ’99, ’06

Chris Cadenhead:

When I think of [Jim], I am reminded of something that Richard Foster once said about Dallas Willard. Foster was fresh out of seminary when he came to serve as pastor of a church plant somewhere in California. Dr. Willard and his family were already active members there, and the two formed a friendship. Looking back on that experience when Willard died, Foster said in an interview that Dallas Willard “pastored from the pew.” That is what [Jim] did at Bayshore. He had a profound intellect that could have been intimidating or overpowering to others (including pastors like me), but he did not use it that way. Instead, he used his gifts in a gentle and humble way to strengthen and encourage his fellow believers. I always felt a great reassurance just knowing that Jim Strange was there, knowing that he would help take our congregation into deeper intimacy with God. No pastor could ever hope for more.

In seminary I took a year of Hebrew, and to be honest I don't remember a lick of it. Of course, that doesn't stop me from occasionally trying to impress people by making reference from the pulpit to something in "the Hebrew text." It is usually something I came across in a commentary, and I can be fairly certain that few people who are listening to me will question the veracity of what I tell them. They don't know Hebrew, and couldn't care less about someone who claims that he does. That wasn't the case when Jim Strange was sitting in the congregation. I remember one particular Sunday when I offered up some half-cocked insight about an Old Testament text that I thought I remembered reading once upon a time. I am sure it sounded brilliant. The only problem is that what I had remembered was wrong; I had not bothered to go back and check my source. I don't know that it fundamentally changed the meaning of what I was preaching that day, but no true Biblical scholar could sit there and listen to a preacher bumble his way through sacred Scripture. After the first service was over, as Dr. Strange passed me in the hall, he leaned over and said quietly in my ear, "You might want to go back and check your text." And with that, he was off to teach his Sunday school class. I made a beeline back to my office to figure out where I had gone astray, and sure enough, I discovered that I had stated something incorrectly. By the time the second service came along, I had it all sorted out.

That gentle, guiding presence defined my experience of Jim Strange. He was an intellectual and a spiritual giant, but he never used those capacities to intimidate or belittle others. He was always interested to lifting up and encouraging and helping people to gain genuine knowledge and insight. I never had the privilege of sitting in one of his lectures, but I can imagine how rich that must have been for his students. I don't know that he ever thought of



himself in this way, but Jim functioned as a pastor to me. His friendship and leadership was a source of comfort for me. I will never forget an email that I received from him one day. It simply said, "During my prayer time this morning I felt a special burden for you. I don't know why, but I want you to know that I held you up in God's presence this morning."



There is nothing more important that anyone could ever do for a brother or sister in Christ. I am blessed to have known this wonderful man of God.

Adrienne Candellini, RN:

It was truly an honor and a privilege to be a member of Dr. Strange's healthcare team. He was an extraordinary man and will live on in my heart.

Kathy Castor:

The passing of Dr. Strange will be felt among many who were touched by his presence and contribution to our community. His nearly 50-year career at the University of South Florida is remarkable. Dr. Strange was also a distinguished scholar with numerous scholastic articles published throughout his tenure. His hard work did not go unnoticed, receiving the USF "Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award" and the USF "Professional Excellence Program" award.

Dr. Strange was not only a man of service, he was also a man of faith who shared his love with others through his day-to-day activities and through his church. He will be greatly missed, but his passion for teaching archaeology and faith will live on to inspire many generations to come.

Kathy Castor, United States Representative, Florida, District 14

Sam Cicarello:

Dr. Jim Strange

I attend Bayshore Baptist Church. Like a fingerprint or a snowflake, every person's story about how they came to attend that church is unique. It just so happens that my "door" to the church came by way of a Sunday School class taught by Dr. Jim Strange.

My aunt Josephine had heard about the class; I don't know from whom. She attended several times and what exactly she told me I cannot recall, but I remember her saying something about this teacher who was a professor and who spoke multiple languages. Obviously my interest was piqued, because at

some point my wife and I went to this class.

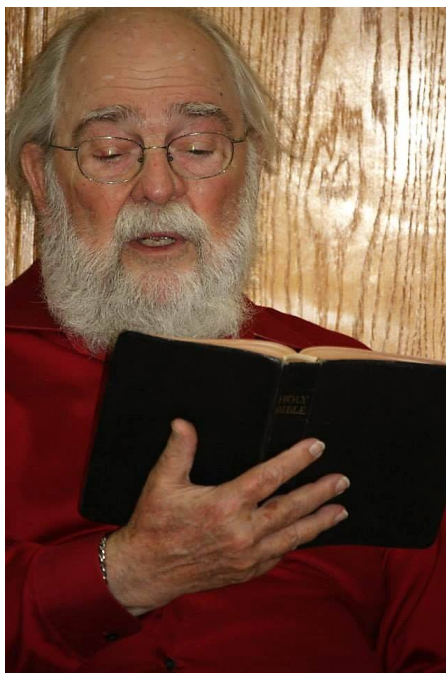
We would slip into the chapel and try to blend in unnoticed. From the start I was intrigued. The cozy class with the red carpet and the stained glass window and the wooden pews became a weekly refuge, one hour out of 168, when our attention could turn away from the temporal to the eternal. I quickly became enamored with Dr. Strange's teaching, wit and demeanor. I felt recharged, strengthened and encouraged.

The 167 hours of the week is when we worry about many things. But few things are really needed, indeed only one. Perhaps we can call this hour "the good part," which informs and gives meaning to the other 167. Just ask Martha.

Initially, my wife and I only went to Sunday school. At some point, we made the pilgrimage east, to the sanctuary, and began attending the church service, joining on the last Sunday that Gary Bagley was the pastor.

Stranger Things

Memories, at least for me, don't flow in one direction. Instead, they are disjointed; related, but not chronological. When I think about Dr. Strange, lots of memories pop into my mind, overlap, and lead to something else. I can picture myself sitting in the chapel, Dr. Strange behind the



step, reading from the Greek New Testament. His deep and melodious voice would frequently be punctuated as he cleared his throat. He had a habit of cleaning his glasses with his neck tie. He was partial to the black leather vest, although the iconic image of Dr. Strange is a photo with a tan field vest and a brown brimmed hat, thoughtfully gazing at something in the distance.

Before the lesson, there was always a time for prayer requests. I loved the way Dr. Strange would pray for the individual requests, asking that God would grant healing, hope, wisdom, peace; comforting words expressed in a manner that, in many ways, were the beginning of answered prayer. One day, Randy Ashcraft came to speak to me about teaching my own Sunday School class. I reluctantly agreed, knowing that I would then not be able to go to Dr. Strange's class. I have modeled the prayer time in our class after Dr. Strange's example.

I recall a story that I heard him tell on more than one occasion. It was about someone who, one day, saw a friend pay a visit to church. Surprised, this person asked his friend, "What brings you here?" The response was quick, and not what he expected to hear. "Sin!" The fact that Dr. Strange told this story speaks a great deal to me. It encapsulates both the simplicity and the profundity of the gospel message. Not something that a sophisticated intellectual may be expected to espouse. But this sophisticated intellectual certainly did, and did so unapologetically.

Dr. Strange conducted the business meetings at Bayshore Baptist Church. Among his other talents, he was an expert on Robert's Rules of Order. The meetings were, well, orderly. They were also typically brisk, informative, and, as much as a church business meeting could be, enjoyable. Most of the time, the meeting would conclude by Dr. Strange telling us all to "grab a hand and sing Blest Be the Tie That Binds."

Lots of memories bubble up from a trip to Israel in 1994. As a group from Bayshore gathered one evening, talking about what we did that day and what we were going to do the next, I recall him gesturing at a small village, a collection of lights perched on a quiet hillside on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, "A city on a hill cannot be hidden!" Yes, the surroundings made the words of Jesus come to life, just as Dr. Strange intended. I always called him Dr. Strange. Never was comfortable with calling him Jim.

Dr. Strange pointed out the worn steps leading to the Temple Mount in the Old City. "These steps are worn down by centuries of foot traffic. Jesus himself walked on these steps." He led us by a church on the eastern slope of Mount Zion, just outside the Old City. "That is the Church of Saint Peter in

Gallicantu.” Sounded exotic! When translated from the Latin, it sounded a bit more pedestrian: Gallicantu means cock-crow. One imagines Peter’s remorse as the sun peeked over the horizon on that day.

We traveled to the lowest point in the world near the Dead Sea (1,291 feet below Sea Level), and scaled the heights of Masada (we all took the funicular up to the top, except Windy and James, who both had to show off by hiking to the summit).

Dr. Strange had to remind us that Masada was a butte, a hill with steep sides and a flat top. Masada was the scene where a group of Jews made a last stand against the forces of Rome. From the top, one could look over the sides and still see where the Roman General Flavius Silva made his camps, and marvel at the siege ramp, still there some 2,000 years later, constructed by moving thousands of tons of stones. Imagine those Jews witnessing this building project, ominously approaching the crest day by day, contemplating what lay ahead.

According to Josephus, when the Romans breached the fortress, the 960 Jews were dead, preferring to be servants to God and no one else. As we stood on the solemn ground, Dr. Strange recounted additional details. Josephus records that since Judaism prohibits suicide, the defenders drew lots to kill each other in turn, down to the last man who would be the only one to take his own life.

Other memories: the Mona Lisa of the Galilee, a beautiful mosaic discovered in a Roman Villa in Sepphoris, the city excavated by Dr. Strange for many years. After visiting Sepphoris, the group was to go to Nazareth, which, as we gazed toward it, was just “right over there.” It was probably Randy Ashcraft, in a moment of macho euphoria, who suggested to the group, “You go on ahead. We will walk to Nazareth!” I suppose I was swept up in the moment, because as the bus roared off in a cloud of dust, Randy, Graham, Harold Hart, and I began the trek to the hometown of Jesus, perhaps even treading the same path he would have taken. It was an eventful journey. Let’s just say that unlike your side-mounted rear-view mirrors, in Galilee, things are farther than they may appear.

On that trip to Israel we had the advantage of seeing the Holy Land with the best possible tour guide who happened to be our brother in Christ. He and Carolyn had been to Israel many times. We were the beneficiaries of their familiarity and experience and relationships. We visited all of the requisite places, Qumran, the Garden Tomb, the Wailing Wall, the Church of the Holy

Sepulcher, just to name a few. It was a special trip. We baptized several of our group in the Jordan River, including Bill Webb, who earlier, told the group as we were having lunch at a restaurant in Bethlehem, “They are throwing rocks out there!” The itinerary



was jam packed, and the oldest member of the group, Irene Connelly, was indefatigable, and very well prepared. The going joke was, "If you couldn't find it in Irene Connelly's purse, it did not exist."

Alex reminded us that Dr. Strange would often use the phrase "Far Out!" He also was partial to "Holy Cow!" And his deep "Amen" had gravitas. But maybe his most effective means of communication was non-verbal.

He frequently would look me in the eye and ask "How are you doing, how is Windy?" As I responded, he would regard me, really listen, measure the words I said, and then come in for the hug. Dr. Strange was a hugger.

Tom and Susan Chamblee:

We are are so very sad and Susan and I are so grateful to have been in Doctor Strange's Sunday school class and to have known him. His teachings, knowledge of the bible and his warm personality made me want to attend his class every Sunday. His Bible study teachings coupled with his archaeology was fascinating and uplifting.



I really enjoyed also talking to him as a fellow Texan about Mexican food and good Tex-Mex salsa. We will miss him so much. The whole church and I students & professors at USF will miss him too. He did so much for the church both of you.

Hardy Clemons:

Dr. James F Strange has been a distinguished professor of religious studies and archeology, teacher, dean and professor of New Testament studies at the University of South Florida. I know all of this and more! And I have known him as person, a marriage partner, parent and grandparent and a faithful churchman and friend and Christian leader for all these years.

I salute him and miss him already as he graduates to his new calling in the Kingdom.

Kay Clements:

It has been just six years ago that we met and in that time, living at the Hotel Galilee, we have spent more time together than I have spent with my own family. In that time I've come to feel that you, Jim and James are my family too!

The life and family that the two of you created are enviable. I must admit that I do not envy your difficult experiences—being pregnant on a dig, rearing toddlers at the Albright! —Your life together was intellectually stimulating, adventuresome and above all, loving.

Do you know that at Shikhin Jim often looked up, beaming and smiling, when your van came in sight and said, “Look, it’s Carolyn Strange!” He looked so happy. Many times he interrupted your departure to lean through your window to kiss you.

Beverly Cushman:

I find it difficult to put into words how much Jim and you have meant to me in these past years. I often think of the moment he and David knocked on my carrel door in the USF library and he asked if I would like to go to Israel and do archaeology. His invitation opened so many wonderful adventures.

I appreciated his care for the volunteers, always checking that we were doing well even as he shared his passion for the work with us. Pottery readings were fun as well as informative. I learned so much from him, and for that I will eternally be grateful.

He was a good man, and he loved his Lord in ways that were unspoken but obvious. I am so thankful that I knew him. I will miss him. The world is less whole without him in it.

George Davis, Ph.D. J.D.:

I had the fortunate experience of taking every class Jim Strange taught at USF from 1974–1977. What an interesting and caring individual. I remember going through crisis about faith and facts and he was kind enough to pick up an “on point” book one weekend

and give it to me. Insightful, kind and I'll never forget his genius and care at that crossroads of my life. Several years ago I wrote him a letter to thank him. I'm sure he got 1,000s of similar letters, as that is a reflection of who he was. Thank you Jim Strange!!

Corky Deaton:

I only knew Dr. Strange for a brief period but his enthusiasm, knowledge and spirit will remain with me. I will always cherish the memory of the night with everyone at the Western Wall and dinner in The Old City.

Dell DeChant:

Jim Strange & the Surprising Chariot

There are many tales to tell of Jim Strange, and there are many I could tell myself. As I mused on various events that could be related, and had more than a few smiles in the musing, I settled on this one as particularly expressive of my friend.

As some readers know, Jim and I played racquetball from 1998 to 2017. We had a blast. Typically, we were joined by students and faculty for these games, and for many years Jim and I as a doubles team would defeat most other teams. Some of our more legendary playing partners were Justin Jones, Don Surrency, Frank Ferreri, Dan Belgrad, James Cavendish, and Heather Murphy (now Remek—who introduced us to the game).

From time to time, after games, Jim would need a ride home or to a location where Carolyn would meet him, and I was always happy to give him a lift. I usually had the better of my two old cars with me (a Toyota Tercel). It had a radio, air-conditioning, seatbelts, and was watertight. One night, however, I had the other car—a Datsun 210. Younger readers can research this vehicle on the internet—but mine did not look like the images you'll find online.

There were no seatbelts, the radio didn't work, the shocks were shot, seats were torn, and it leaked in the rain. In fact, the floorboard on the passenger side had rusted out. You could see pavement through the rusted-out gaps. Of course, there had not been a passenger in that car in years—until that one night Jim needed a lift.

As fate would have it, it was a dark and stormy night. Rain was coming down in sheets, thunder and lightning, high winds—Florida in the summer, you know. Jim and I made it from the gym to the car and got pretty soaked in the process. When Jim got in, I told him, “Professor, you’ll have to put your feet on the wheel well because the floor board is rusted out.” He took it in stride, propped up his feet, and looked for the seatbelt—no luck. The car listed a bit to the right when Jim got in. Shocks were shot.

So there we were: me and the Distinguished University Professor, internationally acclaimed biblical archaeologist, theorist of material culture, former Dean of the college, Chair of the department, a man I respected tremendously and loved. I looked over at Jim, and because he had his feet on the wheel well, his knees are about touching his chest. He looked uncomfortable—and I felt uncomfortable for having to put him through the indignity of riding in my derelict vehicle.

I started up the car, and begin the journey to meet Carolyn, driving carefully through the driving rain. Needless to say, the wipers did not work well, either.

We finally get to the location where we were to meet Carolyn—right in front of Pro-Copy—by the way, a business operated by our friends Eric and Joan Statham. “Oh there she is,” said Jim, seeing Carolyn’s car. He was happy to see her. Before he got out, I apologized for the car, the rough ride, the uncomfortable conditions, and frankly the danger. “I am sorry to have put you through that indignity, Jim, you deserve a better ride than this.”

Jim laughed, patted me on the shoulder and said, “When you need to get somewhere in a storm, any vehicle is chariot, and every journey better with a friend. Be careful driving home.” Those words were a gift to me that night, and so much an expression of his essence—appreciative, supportive, and reassuring. He also had the ability to transform a beat-up old car into a chariot through his words and his presence.

Kimberly Dilts:

Of course most of my thoughts of Papa Strange are inextricably linked to his large, loving and zany family, but I feel especially lucky to have seen Papa S. lecture in the field. In 2001, I was lucky enough to join the dig at Sepphoris. Seeing Dr. Strange in his element was a deeply moving experience—his

knowledge, passion and scholarship were just sights to behold... His deep love of that place, and of its history was infectious—to hear him speak about the history of Galilee was to feel it come alive. But on a more personal level, I cherish that memory because it gave me such insight into the family that I so deeply adore. They're such a shining example to me of how loving a family truly can be—and getting to dig with them made me feel like I got to share in a yearly ritual that they experienced together over decades, complete with the pre-dawn wake up calls and Squincher breaks. I will always think of Papa Strange this way—as the real Indiana Jones who led generations of explorers on a journey through history, one spadeful of dirt at a time. I'll think of the delight with which he lectured each evening. I'll think of the endless pottery. But I'll also think of his patience, and kindness and his deep, silly guffaw. He remains to me the best example of what it truly means to be a man of God. And he gave the best hugs. I love you, Papa Strange. And I will miss you.

J. P. Dessel:

I feel like I have known Jim most of my life and in point of fact I almost have. I don't even know how we first met, but when I was still a grad student, Jim was always very kind to me—hailing me by my first name at the meetings, the Albright, and elsewhere. Over the last twenty years we got to know each other a bit more as we often found ourselves together at ASOR trustee meetings, in the field at Sepphoris, and at the meetings (usually by the book tables). I will miss seeing Jim in his vest and hearing his kindly drawl every November.

Bill Dever:

Jim and I—and the family as well—had been together in many ways almost 50 years. Jim began with me at Gezer in the 1960s, and then we dug together in the Hebron Hills in 1971. We shared many seminars together. I always regarded Jim as a good friend and a staunch ally. I shall miss him sorely! And his loss will be felt by our whole discipline and by his innumerable colleagues!

In particular, I remember Jim as a man of broad learning, but also of deep faith. I could never manage that combination, but I admire the fact that he could. Jim had integrity—the best possession.

Beth and Ward Drennen:

Even though we never met him, we are so grateful for the life, love, and influence of Abuna. The impact he had on Emily in the summer of 2016 was deep, soulful, and will stay with her all of her days... We know Abuna's legacy is lasting but above all he rests in the arms of our eternal Father!



Patrick Finelli:

He was a giant in his field and a star among USF faculty and biblical archaeology worldwide. I remember that he and his cohorts played racquetball for many years around the same time as Denis and our Fine Arts colleagues. I lost my father a couple of years ago and I know the feeling is profound. He will live forever in our memories and the legacy he left behind.

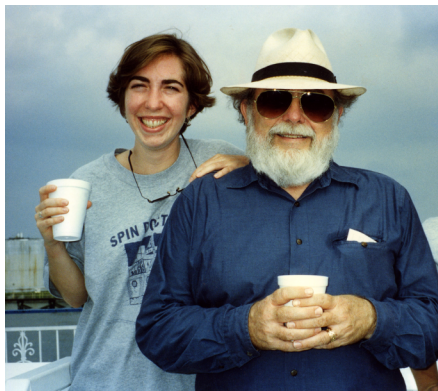
Fit4Life Team:

Jim made a great difference for so many people. We enjoyed his presence and humor. He will be missed.

I feel so honored to have known Jim! He was truly the most kind individual I've ever met. No matter how he felt, he always radiated this contagious joy and light! He was a blessing to many.

Zvi Gal:

We all know and appreciate his life work in Galilee and I was privileged to closely follow his work when I had become the chief archaeologist of the north. His contribution to the archaeology of Galilee has been and will be of utmost value.



Erhard S. Gerstenberger:

I am an old friend of Jim since old Yale days in the early sixties: We lived on the Yale Divinity campus and were quite close to one another. ... The news of Jim having passed away hits me hard... Although we have not had much contact in all these years, Jim has always been present in my mind. I liked him because of his warm friendship, good humor and professional, colleague-partnership.

Teryn Gilbertson:

Dear Abuna,

Over 20 years ago I came to you as a humanities major under the direction of Amy Sparks. You were an inspiration and ultimately I joined the Sepphoris dig in 1996 where you, Carolyn, Mary-Lynn, James, and Joanna all took me in as part of your dig family. I have considered all of you family ever since.

I defended my thesis in 1999 and joined the religious studies department in pursuit of a second master's degree, but expressed my interest in a doctorate in archaeology, which you always encouraged. My terrible scalping incident in the car crash of 2001 set me back, but I muddled through

my classes, taking everything you offered. As a graduate assistant, I was assigned to Gail Harley and then Paul Schneider, but it was always you who set the bar for what I hoped to accomplish. I did not finish that degree because the anthropology department finally got its archaeology track doctorate, and you encouraged me to be true to myself and join Rob Tykot's nascent list of PhD-hopefuls.



Because of your influence and tutelage, I am Dr. Gilbertson today. You saw me through to the end, even acting as my outside chair for my defense. Every aspect of my graduate career in education has been thanks, at least in part, to you. You even wrote recommendations for my graduate certificates, of which I hold three today.

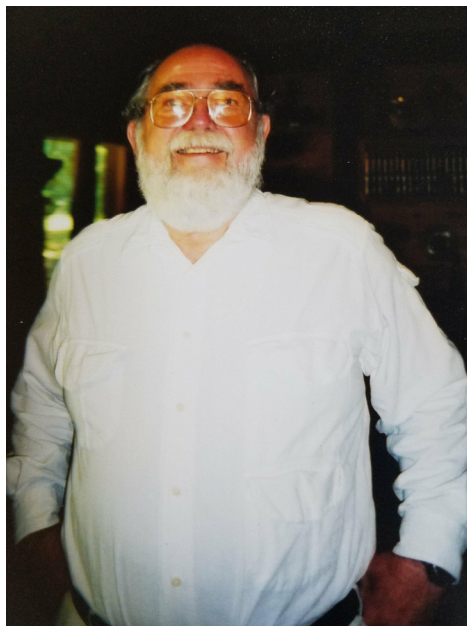
I can never thank you enough for all that you have meant in my education and in my life.

Love always,

Teryn

Sy Gitin:

I was terribly sorry to learn of Jim's death. It is loss not only to his family, but to his many colleagues and friends, as well as to the field of archaeology to which his contribution will be long remembered. I have many fond memories of my own beginning in 1971 at the excavations of el Kom, and then during his numerous stays at the Albright.



Larry Goodman:

Remembering Dr. Jim Strange

Can it be possible that Dr. James F. Strange, "our Jim," is actually gone?

No, he'll never be gone. Oh, he has certainly "changed addresses," as Billy Graham said, but he'll never be gone. For in my mind and heart he lives on every day.

I suppose one could write a book about all the places we still see Dr. Strange in our hearts and minds. Don't you see him, in his Bayshore Baptist Church Sunday School Class of 46 years, with Carolyn taking roll? It's an Easter Sunday, for example, and he's opening the class in prayer. He asks the Lord to "multiply faith, love and hope" for each of us. Then he draws the layout of 1st

tombs while describing that culture in his resonant, professorial voice. Later, he may read directly out of his Greek New Testament while answering questions from the class. And oh, if you were there in the 1970's, you could even receive college credit for all of this.

Then, we see him in the University classroom, doing much the same, teaching many different subjects to thousands of students over the years. For example, in the "Historical Geography of the Holy Land" course, he'll describe the impact of Ancient Palestine on the Middle-Eastern map as the "postage stamp-sized land-bridge which connected the continents of Africa and Asia." Our project will be to make an informative map of Palestine. When I finish mine, he'll say, "Well that certainly has a lot of data."

And now we see him as the decade-long University of South Florida Dean of the College of Arts and Letters. He is highly respected by both students and colleagues as more than just an academician, professor and administrator. He is beloved for his kindness and concern for each person he dealt with, plus his common sense, wit and wisdom. You see, though imperfect—if he walked on water he would sink just a bit—Jim modeled Jesus in his everyday life.

In later years at USF, as Dr. Strange moves into the even more specialized and prestigious academic area of Hellenistic Studies, we see him being honored in many ways. For example, there he is as the principle speaker at his 40th Anniversary USF faculty-staff luncheon ceremony. There, he relates how when he had seen some of his east Texas childhood friends, they asked him if he was still reading all those "fancy books." He closed his talk by simply saying with a smile what he related to them: "Yup, I'm still reading those fancy books."

We still see him in his "dig outfit," wearing the leather fedora used in his many decades of archaeological research, especially that of 1st century Sepphoris, near Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. His team's discoveries show the significant impact on the knowledge of Jesus' early life. It revealed that Jesus would have surely done carpentry work with his earthly father, Joseph, in a metropolitan area. Thereby, he would have been exposed to a sophisticated environment including a Jewish synagogue and its library. We recall how one of the treasured findings in Sepphoris was that of a nearly-perfect mosaic tile floor. The discovery was later featured as the cover story of that season's USF Alumni Magazine.

We also still see in our mind the stories of Dr. Strange's team recovering a replica of the Ark of the Covenant just when the film, "Raiders of the Lost Ark" was released. His longevity of scientific contributions, teachings, and extensive writings on Biblical archaeology had worldwide impact and marked him as one of the revered scholars and authorities to have ever graced the University of South Florida. Because of this, we see Jim appearing on local television, plus receiving phone calls from the New York Times and other media outlets about such then-timely subjects as the Shroud of Turin or Noah's Ark. Later, he would share some of his responses with our Sunday School Class, a fun and informative bonus for us.

Meanwhile, at Bayshore, we see him and Carolyn involved many significant events over the years despite their 30-plus mile round-trip trek from home in Temple Terrace. For example, there he is, conducting a typical Passover Seder meal at church, or speaking to numerous groups around the area. (He probably felt at home when addressing Jewish gatherings, since he looked more like a rabbi than most rabbis.) We can also see him mentoring a Bayshore youth pastor in New Testament Greek on Sunday afternoons. Then, one ominous Sunday, he's standing before the morning congregation to express the Church's critically low funds, obviously chosen of Bayshore's most respected laity to present that thorny announcement.

Now we see him in a series of Sunday nights in the 1980s conducting a Christian meditation class. There, he instructs us to sit quietly, eyes closed, completely relaxed, as we imagine Jesus coming down an outdoor path toward us. "Now, Jesus is touching you lovingly on the shoulder," Jim would say in his deep mellow voice as he touched each of us on the shoulder. We would say in our hearts, "Thank you, Jesus," and in a very profound way, whether intentional or not, the "Dr. Strange Jesus" and the "real Jesus" had merged.

Finally, we see him in the Bayshore choir, singing with his deep bass voice. Whether it was a hymn, choral anthem or Handel's "Messiah," Jim relished and reveled in choir because it was for him a relaxed-but-focused time of praise and fellowship. Even another choir director once said, "I wish we had HIM in our choir!" Sitting near or next to him was a special honor and pleasure. You just knew that he was in a "zone of delight" while participating. I still see and hear so clearly Jim and his son James singing during one Sunday morning a rousing bass-baritone duet of "Brethren, We Have Met to Worship."

We can't forget, however, during all these years that you could never mention Dr. Strange without mentioning Carolyn and the family. How he loved his family! Carolyn was always there. She herself held key Bayshore roles over the years, and whether it was in the Sunday School class, at gatherings in their home, or on archaeological digs, Carolyn was the not-so-secret ingredient in Jim's life. As mother, wife, and key administrator, she helped keep the family ship on course, as the children, Mary Elizabeth, James, Katherine and Joanna, grew in wisdom, stature, intellect, and admonition of the Lord over the years.

In the end, I'll never know how James Francis Strange juggled all the family life, church, and academia. There he was at USF teaching, "deaning," researching, writing, advising students, attending out of state conferences, and off to Israel for summer archaeological work. Then we see him in all the Bayshore Baptist activities: teaching the large Sunday School class, Wednesday night choir rehearsals, performances and concerts, deacons' meetings, pulpit committees, mentoring youth ministers, attending weddings and funerals, and all the while living many miles from the church.

The last time we saw Dr. Strange was at the memorial service for Bayshore associate pastor, Dr. Tom Pinner. Jim, now thinning in physique, was sitting in a shaft of sunlight that lit up his head like a halo. His entire head glowed like an angel. What a perfect way by which to remember him.

Then, on this past Resurrection Sunday, April 1, when it came time for the choir anthem, my wife, Kathy, leaned over and whispered sadly that "Dr. Strange is not there in the choir!"

I said simply, "Oh yes he is!"

His inspired chuckles to himself...his life...his love...his teachings...these will always resonate in us. His serious, but smiling bearded face, those kind, loving eyes, that gentle, deep, mellow voice...his entire persona will always pulse in our soul.

He'll always be with us, and is now, even at this very moment.

—Larry P. Goodman, academic and Sunday School pupil, choir mate and longtime friend, profoundly touched forever by the life of Dr. James F. Strange.

Dennis Groh:

Jim Strange (“Abuna” to the Arabs and to many of us who wanted to honor his Baptist ordination with the Arabic version, “Father”) was the consummate ASOR field archaeologist. He could do things in the field few people in our professional history could do. We can continue to read his voluminous publications, watch him lecture in his various videos and recorded series, visit places now on display where he directed the excavations; but sadly we will never see again the magic he could work as the most skilled field person I have ever seen in scientifically and “artistically” teasing an ancient site into being again—a man whose archaeological gifts made him the perfect choice to be “present at the recreation” of a piece of Roman or Late Roman antiquity.

After years of digging with, and under Jim, first as part of Eric M. Meyers and Jim’s Meiron Excavation Project in the Upper Galilee, and then as one of Jim’s Associate Directors for many years at The USF Excavations at Sepphoris, I know something of the golden skills that have been lost to us and to future generations as we watched him working in the field.

After decades of bringing my graduate-professional and Northwestern Ph.D. students to learn and excavate on Jim’s projects, I spent my last ten years at another of my alma maters, Illinois Wesleyan University. When I brought a large group of undergraduate students to Sepphoris in 1997 and they got a look at Jim in the field for the first time in all his digging gear, they came over to me and asked me: “Are you really an archaeologist?” Answering in the affirmative, they...pointed at Jim in his hat and many-pocketed vest, shirt, and trousers and said: “he’s an archaeologist. Look at his outfit. You don’t even have an outfit like that.” I explained that Jim’s appearance was his own look and the outfit allowed him to have both hands free when he needed it and to produce the proper tool from his pockets when needed. I carried a leather shoulder bag (likely because my first teacher in stratigraphy, the great Larry Toombs did). They sniffed their disbelief in my capacity and walked away, still fixated on Jim.

Actually, my students discerned correctly how remarkable Jim was. Well, we need to say goodbye to that palpable Jim and talk about some of his extraordinary gifts.

Jim brought to the field and to research an extraordinary gift for languages, which enabled him to examine and correlate sources for use in expositing the data. One day Thomas R. W. Longstaff of Colby College (Jim’s other

Associate Director) and I were discussing with Jim an archaeological problem in Field V at Sepphoris (the large public basilica) when a French tour director came up and asked Jim some questions in French. Jim politely carried on a brief conversation in French; just as he finished a German came up and asked for some information and Jim repeated himself in German. Then an Israeli colleague came up and queried Jim in Hebrew, which Jim answered in kind. Just as we were about to continue, one of the Arab workers needed directions, and an Arabic conversation ensued. Finally, Jim turned back to us ready to continue our discussion. Suddenly he shouted, "What language am I speaking?" "English," we replied. "Oh good," Jim said. "That's where I wanted to be."

As the adopted son of Jerry Donald "Rip" Strange, from an early age Jim grew up with a thorough knowledge of surveying and drawing-to-scale. The architect of a sister excavation at Sepphoris came by one day to explain to Jim that the elevations of our structure did not match with theirs, and Jim needed to correct his. Jim looked at his drawings and said "I think you are about a half a meter off." After looking at our plans, the architect asked if he could borrow them and went off to correct his drawings.

... Jim had an extraordinary ability to record any even subtle visual changes in normally repetitive mundane objects or even places that we might see every day.

So it was that Jim, Tom, and I were coming down the hill that leads from the Acropolis at Sepphoris to the flat lot where the buses are parked every day. Jim suddenly noticed a couple of weeds that previously had never appeared on that spot and said "look how 'peaky' those weeds are." Well, we said, it is the "dry" season. Jim replied "yes, but we aren't deep enough into that season that the plants should get no water, unless . . ." And we all said "there's something directly under the surface keeping the water out."

Out from behind Jim's Harry Potter vest comes his trowel, and he begins to scrape the surface. What Jim uncovers in a couple of minutes is the base of a sweetheart column and a wall attached to it. Before we are done chasing that (in several seasons) the huge Field V public basilica has appeared, festooned with lovely mosaics. Ah . . . how we shall miss those restless, un-equivocating eyes!

Edited and revised from a post on the ASOR website April 3, 2018
(<http://www.asor.org/news/2018/04/remembrance-strange-groh>).

Judith Hall:

My phone rang and rang the day the news of Dr. Strange's death hit. My daughter who works at USF, my son who had heard me talk about what I learned, my friends who often had received tidbits of his lectures. They all knew how much a part he played in my thinking. He was one of two professors at USF whose impact on my life, thinking and education was immeasurable. (The other was John Camp.)

I took several of his classes as a 40 year old undergraduate in the late '70s and loved every minute of it. Later after I retired I signed up for every class I could take with him under the senior waiver program. I was always so amazed at how real things became when he spoke. How fast he could draw some place or object or map...and make us "see" it as he saw it. When my friends asked why I was going back to college, my answer was...I would NEVER get enough of listening to Dr. Strange.

Sometimes we commiserated with each other over hip pain walking to class...or one time when I was disgusted at a student who hooked up an extension cord where Dr. Strange could have tripped over it, and I started bringing a LONG one to class and hooked it up in back for the guy to use ...and Dr. Strange finally looked at me and said thanks...and I really didn't realize he knew it was me.

He taught me to think beyond what was written on a page. He made everything he taught so fascinating. This morning as I read what was written in ASOR, and in the new article in the newspaper the statement that he was much loved rang so true. I am including myself in this group.

Don and Laura Henley:

I recall your family attending Bayshore in the early '70s and y'all immediately stood out for your faithfulness and leadership. Your children were well-behaved and all of you were engaged in the activities and/or workings of the church.

One of the most pointed memories I have of Dr. Strange is speaking at Tampa Bay Community Church the Sunday following Bruce Myrick's resignation. The scripture and message were based on "he who is without sin cast the first stone." It was so appropriate and put into perspective how the church needed to face the future. I've related the circumstance and message many times.



I appreciate you and your family and will miss Dr. Strange with his insight, compassion, and notable speaking and singing voice. You and he will long have an impact through those you've touched over the years. We will live with memories and continue to pass along life lessons we learned from y'all. Like me, I'm sure there are many whose lives you've affected unknowingly. Thank you for the examples you've set and for sharing your lives with us.

George Hobgood:

My good fortune was to have been a high school classmate of Jimmyat Tyler High as well as a college classmate at Rice. Over the years we

have occasionally corresponded about what I had read about his archaeology efforts. He certainly had a very interesting and worthwhile career, and I will miss hearing from him. Blessings.



The Hoffman Family:

What a true blessing to know Jim! [He] was a pillar at Bayshore. A part of the fabric that formed and shaped our mission “Loving God and Serving others for Jesus.” He lived this statement as he touched people at church, work, and even family. There is no doubt he will continue to keep this alive at the right hand of his creator. We know that when God Welcomed Jim He had the biggest smile on His face and probably a few questions.



Dawn Hutchinson:

I have many fond memories of Dr. Strange. I wanted to share that he is largely responsible for me considering graduate school. I tell my own students this story a lot:

During our first meeting, he was looking over my transcript and gave me a knowing nod and smile and said, "I see that you are an artist."



I said, "Oh, you mean that my undergraduate degree was in Music Composition?"

"No," he said, "I see that you did extraordinarily well in the classes that you enjoyed and poorly in the classes that you didn't care about."

"Well, yes, that about sums it up," I said, a little apologetically.

"Do you want to study religion?" he asked with a smile.

"Well, yes, I am very interested in it," I said.

"You'll do just fine here," he said.



And I did. I loved USF and I went on to Florida State for my PhD, and I now teach religious studies at Christopher Newport University in Virginia. All thanks to Dr. Strange's confidence in me.

(David) Oli Jenkins:

Jim Strange

Because archeology is such an embodied activity, it's fitting to begin with my memories of Jim's body: his infectious, resounding laugh; that soiled brown hat; his beard, and his Santa-like eyes that saw everything and twinkled with curiosity; his singing that filled a room while it filled our hearts; his voice—at once authoritative and unspeakably kind. After all, it's his body that we long for now.



It was that voice that woke us at 3:00am in the Galilee every morning: “Rise and shine! More people die in bed than anywhere else,” he would shout as he went door to door through the A-frame houses in Meiron or down the hallways in our Nazareth hotel. It was that voice that reminded us—no matter how sore we were from lugging dirt the previous day—that what was in store for us that day was worth getting up for. In the middle of the summer heat, Jim was asking us to shine.

Throughout the morning Jim would wander from square to square, telling stories, examining our balks, gently noticing that we had dug through critical evidence, teaching us how to read the dirt, helping us form a little community of diggers and students, inspiring our most careful work because the discovery was a sacred act. As he interpreted the evidence we unearthed, he reminded us that real people had once lived in that space filled with dirt and rocks—people who likely worked hard from day to day, people who lived complicated lives surrounded by threats and foreign rulers, people who contributed in their faithful ways to the preservation of faith itself. Jim could turn a dreaded task of breaking rocks and schlepping dirt into something deeply personal, even holy. The coins we touched, the bones, the pottery, the other artifacts of life connected us to our ancestors who helped preserve our faith. Jim helped us to appreciate archeology as a human science, as a religious act.

One day after we had eaten lunch and bathed, I returned to the site with Jim. We had elevations and drawings to do. I was eager to get this time alone with him, because these were the best moments of the dig when Jim would become the brilliant teacher and mentor we knew he was. I was thrilled to sit at his feet. As we approached the site we noticed some local teenage boys were also on site and had begun destroying one square. We were outnumbered. Without pausing, Jim stepped out of the van, extended his hand toward them with a gesture I had never seen before, and starting shouting something in Arabic. I was dumbfounded when they stopped, turned and ran away at break-neck speed. "What did you just say to them?" I asked. Jim replied, "Oh, I just put an old curse on them." "How in the world did you learn traditional Arab blessings and curses?" I asked. "Doesn't everyone know them?" was his reply. "They're so useful."

The hundreds of us who were privileged to have spent summers with Jim knew him as Abuna. Technically that refers to the Easter Orthodox Patriarch, but for local Palestinians, Abuna referred to "father," the kind of father a village needed to hold itself together as a community of neighbors and friends; the kind of father who can love his children (and neighbors' children) into their best selves; the kind of father who models a life of goodness and faith. Without knowing the meaning of "abuna," new students on each dig could intuit that we called this brilliant, joyful man in the soiled sun hat "abuna" because he would father us through a summer experience that would transform us into better people, not just better educated students.

Jim was one of the first true scholars who encouraged me as a future scholar. He was a pastor who encouraged me as a future pastor. He was an astute, world-renowned archaeologist who believed in my skills in the field. His belief in me, coupled with his loving kindness, fathered me into my future, as he did with so many others. For this and for his unspeakable generosity, I give thanks for Abuna and celebrate the gift he will continue to be in our lives.

UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH FLORIDA

Stephen R. Lasse:

As a philosophy graduate student I was privileged to take two courses from Dr. Strange. He was the most dynamic professor I have had. He created a wonderful classroom environment to fully explore our academic topic.

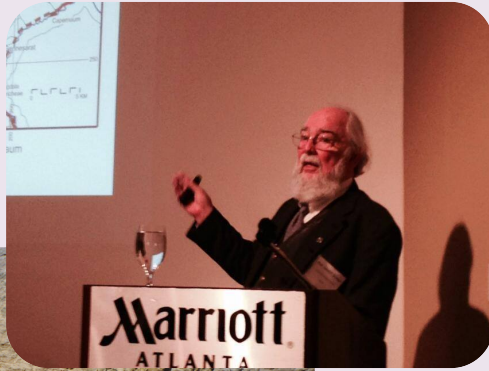
The most important lesson he taught me was his personal example: how to employ my faith in Christ in scholarly research and how to grow my relationship with the Lord through my academic projects.

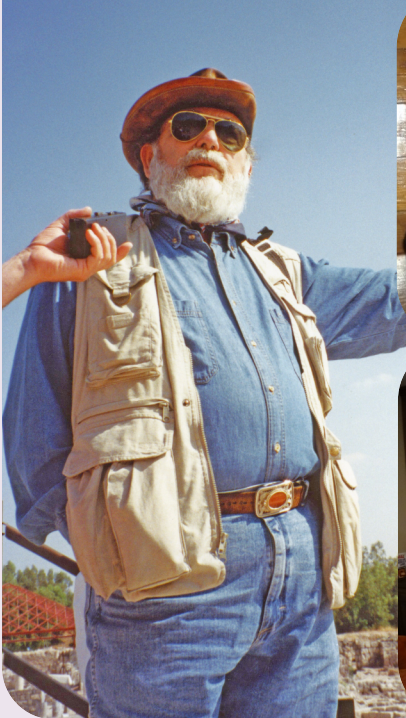
In a small way I share in the grief of your loss. I take comfort in the thought that while I can no longer enjoy his presence in this life, I will someday soon join him in the presence of Christ.

Brandy Leasure:

This man was one of the most influential human beings I have ever had the pleasure of meeting. He was my Biblical archaeology professor, but unlike some professors, he truly cared about his students. I was a full time student, Mom of 4, who didn't even have internet at home and this man gave me so much respect and understanding. He would remind me that my children should be first and if he could help me ever, he would. Well, he did. I had a house full of children (and husband at the time) and they all had the flu. I couldn't make it to class to take my exam. I ran to the Starbucks and emailed him quickly and he replied simply with his phone number. I called him back and he offered to pray for my family and made special arrangements for me to complete my exam without repercussions. This same man allowed another female student to bring her 1yo baby to class so that she didn't have to miss her presentation. This man was exactly the type of person that I hope my sons grow up to be one day. He will forever be known to me as the Godly man that showed respect to all those around him.

Rest In Peace, Dr. Strange.





Elizabeth Meadows LeDuc:

I loved Dr. Strange. My parents loved him too. We are lucky to have had fathers who were true Christian servants.

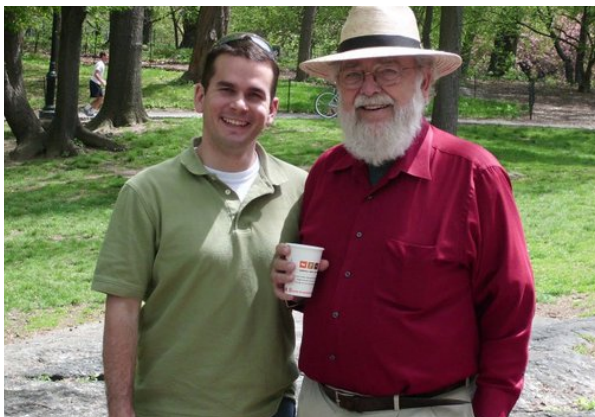
Joshua Marks:

Jim was one of the best people I've ever known and he treated me like a son, a blessing I can spend the rest of my life trying to earn, and that will be a life well spent.

His memory is a blessing.

Joshua and family:

Meredith, Lincoln, William, and Lily



Ryan Martin:

I was a student of his over the last two semesters, so I am disappointed to only have known him for a short time. I came into the program as a working professional civil engineer taking his Biblical Archaeology class in the Fall of 2017. I had not heard of him or known much of the field until I considered taking his class in the Fall. The little bit of exposure to him that I was able to gain during that semester as a part-time student has inspired me (whether he knew it or not) to continue on as a full-time student in the program in hopes of following in his footsteps a little bit.

Also, I heard Dr. Strange share this story in class a couple times so maybe others will add to it. Dr. Strange seemed to be at such a high level in regard to the things he knew. It was like he was in his own league. As a student, that's how he appeared to me. What was refreshing was how he found humor in his mistakes and found enjoyment in sharing them with us. I enjoyed the story that he shared with us about how he was asked to be an expert lecturer at a church in South Tampa. As he tells it, he was running late and was hoping that they would still accommodate him. He arrived at the church and proceeded to walk down the aisle and take his seat on

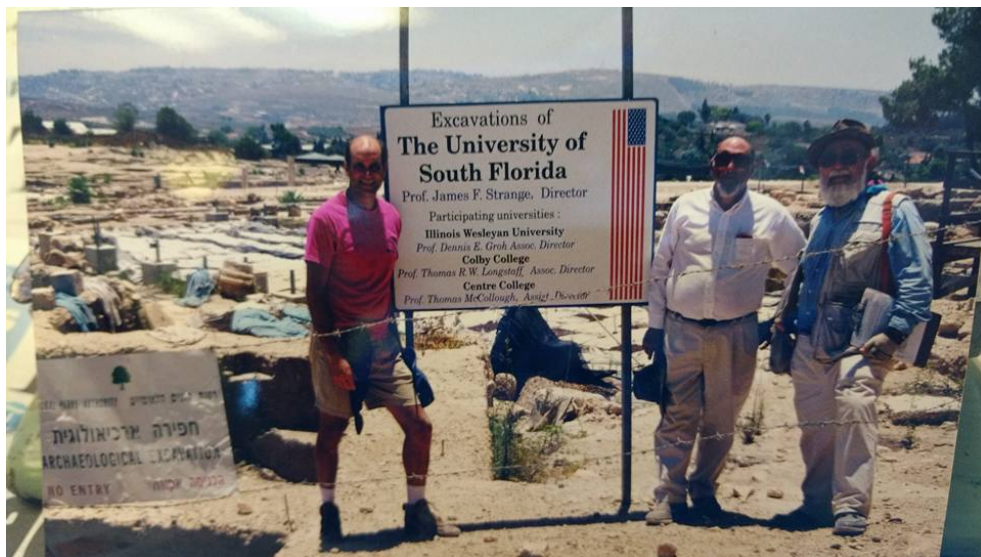
next to the pastor on the pulpit. While the people attending the “lecture” were finishing up a hymn, the pastor leans over to him and whispers “What are you doing here?” Dr. Strange says “What do you mean? I’m here for the lecture.” The pastor says “What lecture?” Dr. Strange says “Isn’t this Bayshore Christian?” The pastor says “No. This is Bayshore Methodist!” Dr. Strange leaves and makes it in time for his lecture!!



I just love the humor and humility with which he was able to look at himself.

Tom McCullough:

I find myself at a loss for words to properly express my sense of loss at [Jim's] passing. I truly loved him for who he was and for all he meant to me personally and professionally. May we all find consolation in our faith and our memories. Mary Lynn said she smiles to think of [him] joining Doug and Termite...heaven will never be the same.



Carol Meyers:

There are two Hebrew phrases that are said when someone dies, and we offer them now:

First, Baruch Dayan Emet, translated: “blessed is the true judge,” a shortened form of a prayer that acknowledges that God has an ultimate redemptive purpose for our lives.

And second, zikhrono livrakha, translated “may his memory be a blessing.”

We hope you find solace in the former; and we can tell you for sure that, for us, our memory of Jim and all our ventures together over so many years will be strong and we will feel blessed to have had him as part of our lives... Word of Jim’s passing came just as we were checking first proofs of the final publication of our excavations on the western summit of Sepphoris. We immediately decided to dedicate the publication to Jim. When we returned the proofs to the publisher, we were told a dedication page could be added. It reads:

This publication is dedicated to the memory of

JAMES FRANCIS STRANGE

1938-2018

with whom we shared a passion for the Galilee and its past.

Eric Meyers:

...We have all lost a dear, dear friend and you of course a Patriarch and husband and father. Jim and I go back exactly 49 years this summer (1969) when we met at Tel Gezer and somehow found each other there in the Judean Shefelah. That's how he got hooked up with me and the Upper Galilee Project. We became fast friends that summer and have remained so ever since.

We founded the Society of Galileans because we knew that something special had happened there two thousand years ago that we wanted to replicate and follow, and of course you know what I mean: Galilee as the place where early Judaism and Christianity took root.

When I talked on the phone yesterday to you all I delighted in some of the special memories from those early years, and there are lots more. So let's remember them now and let them combine with all your family memories you cherish.

We will all carry on the tradition, and no pressure, but the younger generation will inherit quite a lot to carry forward.

Yehi shem mevorach,

May Jim Strange's name be for a blessing.

Eric and Carol Meyers:

James F. Strange: An Appreciation

James F. (Jim) Strange was our close collaborator for more than a decade and has also been a dear friend for more than four decades. This double relationship goes back to the late 1960s at Tel Gezer where Jim and Eric first met. That initial acquaintance brought an awareness of our shared interest in the archaeological recovery of early Judaism and Christianity and led us all to the Galilee. From 1970 to 1981 we excavated together at four Upper Galilean villages, all with synagogues: Khirbet Shema', Meiron, Gush Halav, and Nabratein. We also broke with the usual practice of excavators leaving their families behind; we brought our own families with us to the field and encouraged senior staff to bring their spouses and children.

Thus our relationship deepened not only with Jim but also with his wife Carolyn, who served as Registrar for several seasons at Khirbet Shema' and Meiron (and subsequently had other roles on Jim's later projects), and their children. Sometimes we even had a "kids' tent" for the offspring. As soon as the children of the Stranges, Meyerses, and other staff were old enough to lug a gufah or manipulate a sifter, they were put to work in the trenches. For the Strange family (but not ours!), this early field experience apparently had a profound impact, for several of the young Stranges are now themselves professionals in archaeology. Perhaps there could be no greater testimony to Jim's passion for archaeology, which we have always greatly admired, than the fact that he has passed it on to the next generation of his family.

Much of the preparation of the final reports in those early years was done in Durham, and Jim came often to stay with us at our home and work with us on the publications of our excavations and also on the book that Eric and Jim wrote together: *Archaeology, the Rabbis, and Early Christianity* (Abingdon 1981). When we were not with him in the Duke library or at our offices, we were at home laying out pottery and artifact plates—a task that had to be done manually in those days—on our dining room table. Because all of this was time consuming, Jim was with us so often, sometimes for weeks, that our daughters thought of him as a regular member of the family. At one point, our younger daughter, accustomed to seeing Jim every day in the summers and also during the weeks he stayed with us when working on publications, introduced him to others as her "second daddy." It's no wonder we often call him fondly "abunah," a phrase coined early in the Upper Galilee years when we had to explain to our Druze workers that Jim was a man of the cloth and an archaeologist.

An important component of our Upper Galilee digs was our Field School, which, in addition to the field work, included daily pottery reading and registration, evening lectures and seminars, and weekend tours of our sites and also of others in the region. Jim was an indispensable part of the process: he drafted our invaluable and much used "Manual for Area Supervisors"; he explained our various procedures with characteristic wit and wisdom as well as good-humored patience; and in the lectures and tours he conveyed

to both students and staff his deep knowledge of the region and its history. Moreover, he was savvy with the technology of recording as well as of digging; as a result we began to use a computer to record data as early as 1980.

Just as important, Jim's keen eye for ceramics contributed enormously to the development of a ceramic typology for the Hellenistic through Byzantine periods. In the 1970s, the pottery of these periods was not well known. Thus one of the chief aims of our years together was to lay the groundwork for a serious, stratigraphically focused approach to the archaeology of the Greco-Roman period; this endeavor would be based on a solid ceramic typology. We accomplished this goal in our years together in no small part because of Jim's expertise. Another objective was to excavate small Jewish villages, especially ones with synagogues, rather than the urban sites favored by so many archaeologists at that time. Very few synagogue sites had been excavated in the years since the German team of Kohl and Watzinger conducted soundings at number of synagogue sites at the beginning of the twentieth century. By excavating four sites with synagogues, we were able to contribute to what became a rapidly growing and flourishing field—the excavation of classical-period sites in Galilee.

After excavation of those four Upper Galilean village sites, we turned to Lower Galilee and the great urban site of Sepphoris. Although we parted ways and organized separate excavation teams and established different research goals, at heart we all remained faithful Galileans. We all still feel a special kinship to Galilee, especially to the Galilee of early Judaism and Christianity. For, through surveys and field trips as well as excavations, we had become familiar with virtually every nook and cranny of the region.

We shared many archaeological and academic experiences with Jim, and we are delighted to be offering our appreciation to this volume celebrating his many notable contributions to the fields of archaeology, Galilean studies, and the history of ancient Judaism and Christianity. But what is most vivid and what has united us through the years is the close friendship we forged with Jim and his family in our digging days. This special relationship continued in no small measure because of our participation in meetings of the American

Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR). Indeed, ASOR has been the instrument that has enabled us to see each other regularly after our field work together came to an end. At the same time, our loyalty to ASOR over the years is in no small measure a byproduct of the strong feelings we developed together in the field.

Jim Strange will be sorely missed. May his memory be for a blessing. Excerpted and slightly revised from his recent Festschrift: *A City Set on a Hill: Essays in Honor of James F. Strange*. Edited by Daniel A. Warner and Donald D. Binder. Mountain Home, AR 72654: BorderStone Press, LLC, 2014. Posted on the ASOR website April 3, 2018 (<http://www.asor.org/news/2018/04/remembrance-strange-meyers>).



Brooks Mitchell:

It is so unusual to meet those of my same “type” and so I was very lucky to meet you both. I remember first noticing Jim as you sat on the floor next to me, watching some very bawdy rendition written by David Campbell of an old Greek play, as I recall, and you were laughing. I thought, this is

someone I would like to meet.

It was a couple of years later when I wanted to sign Merritt up for the expedition into Israel that I talked to you in person, the summer of 1986, probably, when there was great commotion in the Middle East, and I asked if it was dangerous, and you replied, “I’ve never even been shot at!” The second-year news here one day was of bombings in Jerusalem and I called you and told you. You said you and the group had spent the day in Jerusalem and had heard none of that.

And then you saw to it that Merritt and Scott both had the best wedding services possible! Thank you both for that.

The two years Merritt spent with you and Katherine and Joanna digging up ruins did much to shape her worldview. And perhaps is why my grandsons have as much DNA from North Africa, the Caucasus, Mediterranean areas and even European Jew as Merritt’s nearly total Celtic DNA.

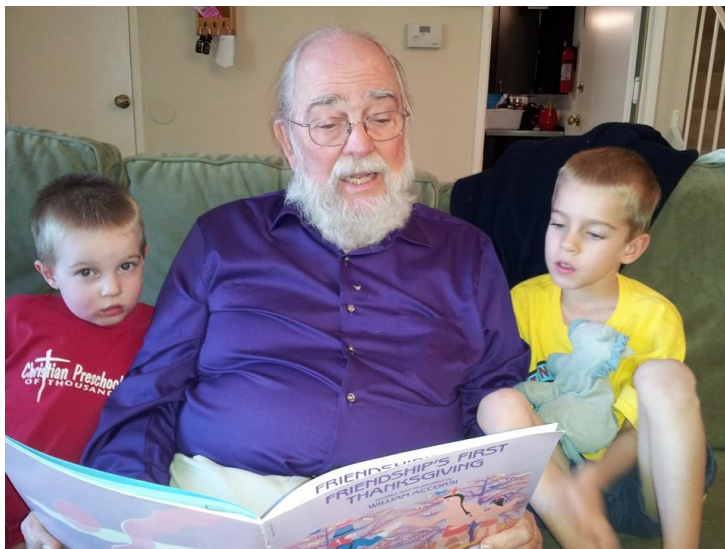
And I recall how we sat in the office of the Dean of the College of Education, telling him he had a building filled with would-be teachers, and we had a bunch of willing students that we could leave there each day, having run out of any other ideas about them, for them to do whatever they liked with them. But he wasn't buying it.

And then there was finding each other attending the same program about life after life.

And then there was the REC program that Carolyn shouldered most of the work of. So many wonderful memories.

Mozella G. Mitchell:

Jim Strange was a dear colleague of mine for over 30 years in the Religious Studies Department at the University of South Florida. We all loved him and revered him for his enormous contributions to the field of study, the teaching profession, the department, the society, and the world. His designation as Distinguished University Professor was well deserved. We will be eternally grateful to Jim for all his achievements and contributions, and his support for us as colleagues in the University. His Family is our Family, Carolyn and all the children and grandchildren. You are all well loved and cherished! May God wrap loving arms of comfort around you.





Leslie Little Moore:

I shall never forget Jim visiting my sick husband in the VA Hospital on Christmas morning in 1978 before I could get there. I had two little boys that needed Christmas gifts and “Santa” surprises before I could leave for the hospital. That was such a special thing for Jim to do. I’ll always cherish that gesture. What a special man he was!

Rev. 21:4

Linda Mulvany:

[Dr. Strange] was a great teacher. When I took archaeology in Seminary, his work was featured throughout the textbook. I learned a lot from him about grace and diplomacy when I took "The Bible as Literature," not just from the content, but from his classroom leadership. He has really left a legacy.

Robert Pawlowski:

Jim Strange, renowned biblical scholar, was a gentleman who led his colleagues with decency and good nature.

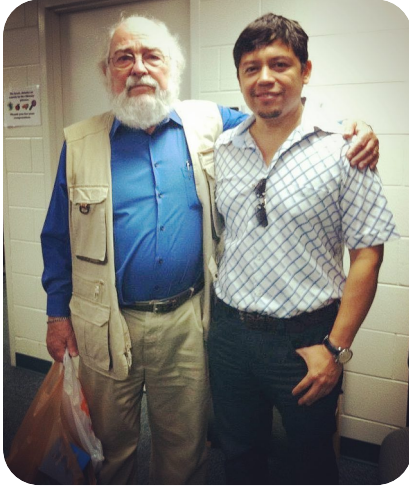
Rev. Trudy U. Pettibone:

I was Dr. Strange’s undergrad student from 1992 to ‘95. I think I took about every course he taught. I was planning to go to the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville for an M.Div. Dr. Strange tried to talk me out of going there, due to the newer conservative turn of the seminary. I went, but have wished that I had stayed at USF for my graduate work.

Another special memory is when I sent a copy of my first book to Dr. Strange. In my cover letter, I happened to note that I was fighting breast cancer. I was very surprised to receive a personal phone call from my all-time favorite professor.

César Ponce:

A luminary has left our midst... this man was a pivotal influence in my life when as a young seminary-minded kid I came looking for a “real Christian Scholar,” he patiently answered the call, took me in and started answering my beginner level questions with his characteristically disarming matter-of-fact style. He became my scholarly father. His door was always open to me as a student, but above all, as a friend. When I was



struggling to find direction, he became that much needed example of what a true human being should be. Words cannot fully express the high regard and love this man evoked in everyone he touched. Some called him Abuna, Jim, James, etc. He could play a mean game of racquetball. He kicked my butt when he invited me once, lol! You will be missed Prof Strange. Thank you for touching my life ... you will forever inspire me to be a better scholar but above all a better person. Hasta pronto papá Jim! Te voy a extrañar...

Richard Preto-Rodas:

When I assumed a chairmanship at USF from another state in 1981, I was fortunate to find that Jim Strange was my dean. He was as kind and caring a gentleman as he was a consummate scholar in his field of biblical archaeology. I can never forget his patience and generous insights in conducting administrative meetings with his staff and faculty. The university was very well served by a man like James Strange, and his family can temper their inevitable feelings of loss and regret with the assurance that Jim Strange attained the respect and admiration of all who knew him.



Alex Ramos:

I wish I could be there in person to say this to you, but writing will have to suffice. I wanted to let you know how grateful I am to have met you and to have learned from you at the Shikhin excavations over the years. I was glad I always managed to find a seat at the pottery reading table in the afternoons so I could watch in awe as you made identifying and dating the pottery look easy. I'll also never forget the drawing lessons in the field. But just as important to the skills and knowledge you brought to the digs was the effect you had on morale. Hearing your stories, jokes, and wise cracks in the field, on the roof, and at meals kept my spirits high. Your laugh automatically made us smile. The days you were absent from the field always felt a little empty. I'm sure I'm not alone in thinking that it will never be quite the same without you. Thank you for always making me feel like I was part of a big, extended family during my times in Israel. I will remember those times always.

Stephanie Stidham Rogers:

I was hired as an Adjunct Professor in August of 2017, and I only knew Professor Strange for the final months of his life. Still, his unique blend of kindness and academic excellence made strong and memorable impression upon me. After my first few weeks of teaching, I decided to tentatively knock on his open office door and introduce myself. I had no idea what to expect! As we all know, eminent University professors come in all different shapes and sizes, some more amenable than others, and caution is often advised. I



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I was pleasantly surprised when he gave me a friendly smile and invited me to sit down. I immediately felt welcome and comfortable and started telling him a little bit about myself and my academic background after he asked. He shared that he has a much-loved daughter who is also currently working as an adjunct professor, and that I reminded him a little of her, because I'd taken some time off to spend with my family.

After that day, I always felt that I could drop in with a mundane question about the classroom and how things are typically done at USF, and in this way he helped me to adapt to the uniquely friendly culture of the department. Once around the holidays I stopped by his office and said, "This is the most civil Religion department I have ever encountered, and I suspect that it is all your fault!"



Sue Ross:

Thoughts about Dr. James F. Strange

Getting thoughts together about Dr. Strange is easy. There are so many things to share. Writing those down is difficult, for each thought brings the realization that he's not here. It's something faced almost daily, though, as his office is next to mine in the Religious Studies department at USF.

Dr. Strange had several names. For older staff members and younger students he was Dr. Strange. To those in the Israeli digs he was Abuna. To his USF colleagues, church family and friends, he was Jim. I first remember him as the Dean of the college I worked in. He was a distant authoritative figure for me then, the person in the elevator that started to sing, startling the students and delighting the staff. I would laughingly tell my supervisor about the students' reaction, for she had worked with Dr. Strange previously, and both of us agreed that Dr. Strange should sing in the corridors as well as the elevators. But it wasn't until I began working in the Religious Studies department nearly 13 years ago that I came into direct contact with him on a daily basis. At that time, my office was directly across from his, in a narrow hallway on the 3rd floor of Cooper Hall. With that close contact, I began to see just how much he was revered by his students. His 3rd floor office amazed me. Tiny as it was, it was literally floor-to-ceiling filled with books. He casually told me that he and his son had built the shelving to accommodate his always expanding library. That was Dr. Strange; he was so casual, modest really, about his great abilities and gifts.

In 2011 our department moved to the 4th floor of Cooper Hall. Dr. Strange was given a choice of offices, and he chose one adjacent to the departmental workroom, and to me. His new office couldn't accommodate the hundreds of books he had, and he gave away many to the departmental library, students and colleagues. Still, with all those donations, his new office was filled floor-to-ceiling with books. And his new office, as was his former one, is in the middle of departmental activity!



Did you know that Dr. Strange had the ability to turn off all of his hearing and observation skills when he was deep in research and/or writing? Students, faculty and staff were all up and down that small corridor; additionally the office workroom was adjacent to his, adding to the noise. I was concerned at first and offered to shut his office door to cut down on the noise. Of course I should have known better, for it took me several times to even get his attention. He didn't care one way or another if the door was open or closed.

What a researcher! But that's just one facet. When he taught, his students listened. They took notes and absorbed the knowledge, especially the graduate students. Those that went to Israel on the digs came back with a deeper appreciation of their studies and their time with him. And of course there's the administrative/service portion of his abilities, the part I didn't see up close, but was told by others who worked directly with him and for him. During his tenure as Dean, 3 colleges were combined to create the College of Arts and Sciences that exists today. He's held titles of College Dean, Departmental Chair, Director of the Hellenic Center, and Departmental Graduate Director, and was awarded a Distinguished University Professorship.

There are so many Dr. Strange memories within the department that I'm sure all cannot be accumulated. But here are a few things that stand out:

Coffee. Dr. Strange loved coffee and had a preference for strong, full-bodied coffee. There was (and still is) a departmental coffee pot, and when I first came into the department, I was instructed by another staff member on how

to make coffee to his liking. I once made the coffee much milder, thinking that so much coffee was made throughout the day no one would notice this pot. He noticed, asking me if something was wrong with the coffee pot. I stopped that in a hurry! Since then, I've trained many student assistants to make coffee the Dr. Strange way.

Dunkin Donut holes. Dr. Strange often brought in a box of Dunkin Donuts' donut holes, handing them to the young student assistants to distribute. For them this was such a treat! I personally think it was his way of thanking them for making the coffee to his liking.

Speaking different languages. Just how many languages did he speak? I've been told that at one time he could speak 20 languages, though he admitted in later years he was a bit rusty on some. I've gone to him many times to translate passages for students as well as myself. More often than not, he already knew the passage, and would give me a brief history or meaning the author wanted to convey.

Calming. Dr. Strange wasn't an angry person at all. He could get a bit exasperated, but never actually angry or mad. With the close proximity of our offices, most of his conversations were within earshot, so I knew he wasn't without challenges. Through it, though, he remained calm and level-headed, bringing a calming effect to whatever he was involved in.

Kindness. This is a word that Dr. Strange embodied in our workplace. He was fair and rather strict with his students. He was the leading departmental authority of rules, governance, policies, and procedures, and through it all, his kindness is what shone through. He cared for us all. I personally believe it came from his unwavering faith.

And speaking of faith, Dr. Strange did not preach his faith, for none of us are allowed to do so within a state university system. But he didn't have to; he lived it every day. Speaking strictly for myself, it was a comfort to have such an example of someone so committed to his faith and beliefs. He made me want to be a better person. Guess you could say he brought out the best in most of us. I personally give thanks for having the opportunity to share time with him, and I value those life lessons he gave and he taught. Thank you Dr. Strange. And thank God for you.

Sue Ross, Office Manager, Department of Religious Studies

Joe Seger:

The little devotional book I've been reading off and on in mornings opened today with this, "Compassion is daring to acknowledge our mutual destiny so that we might move forward all together into the land which God is showing us." Knowing where you are on your journey makes me all the more aware of our "mutual destiny" along paths we have shared down through these many years. And especially of the richness of our interrelationship starting when you turned up at Gezer, and along the way during BAR seminars, at SECSOR meetings, and indeed in meetings and service work for ASOR, not to mention "in the field" meetings at Sepphoris and elsewhere.

Your career success speaks for itself and my god now with James R. you have established a dynasty! Maybe more important, you have always been a friend who could be counted on and I thank you for favoring me to be in your graces.

Hershel Shanks:

So very sorry to hear about Jim Strange. I admired him very much. I just feel compelled to send this email. One of my earliest archaeological memories is of you two [Eric Meyers and Jim Strange] together. I always wanted to stop and see him when I passed the sign to his school when we went to Florida. He was so fortunate to have a son of the same name follow in his footsteps. Big Jim was also a unique thinker.

Virginia Skeeter:

Dear Abuna,

I am sending you a little something to keep you company.

Thank you for all the opportunities you provided for learning and the human experience, sharing your knowledge, passion for Biblical Archaeology, and especially your family. Life would have been good but it is like icing on the cake for these years since 1996. Many prayers your way. I know the Lord is with you.

This is not goodbye but "See you later."

To Strange from Odd with love

Lora Sorkin:

Eric and Joan Statham:

Dr. Strange was such a fine man—so kind and caring. He was a gentle soul with a wonderful spirit. His intelligence goes without saying—brilliant. He was a joy to know. I feel like I am a better person by knowing him. May he rest now in his forever home—heaven.

Jimmy Thomas:

I remember the Strange family who moved into our Town 'n' Country neighborhood in the 1970's. They lived in the home at 4901 Cresthill Drive, catty-corner across the street from us at 8004 Springside Lane. I remember the parents, whom I knew as Dr. and Mrs. Strange. I remember playing with their older children, Mary Elizabeth and James, and I remember their toddler, Katherine, and their youngest, Joanna, who was born while they lived there. They began attending Bayshore Baptist Church about the same time they moved into Town 'n' Country, though I don't know which came first!

While Dan Griffin was pastor at Bayshore, I remember a church production that included his wife, Marilyn Griffin, and Jim. The story took place in the time of Jesus' earthly ministry. Marilyn played a character named Joanna. I do not remember the name of Jim's character, but I believe he played an old and crippled man. I remember Jim's character reminiscing to Joanna about his child when he or she was very young, and how he bounced the child on his knees while he sang "The Donkey Song," which he reenacted for Joanna with great joy and laughter, ending with the line, "Hee Haw, Hee Haw! All the way home." Later, I remember Jim recounting a personal anecdote from one of the performances. In the script, Joanna asked his character, "Do you think He is the Messiah?" And Jim's character was supposed to respond, "Is that what He said, Joanna?" But instead, Jim lost the line and said, "I don't know." Jim then noted that Marilyn was able to recover and continue through the scene as written.

I remember the children's musical, "100% Chance of Rain." Jim played Noah. At one point, Noah was considering whether to obey God and build the ark. This segued into the tango-inspired song, "Don't Put Off Until Tomorrow What You Can Do Today." Jim's son, James, appeared on the stage and, acting as Noah's conscience, reasoned with him on the great logic of getting on with his assignment. By the end of the song, the two were engaged in a wonderful baritone duet, ending in the joyful tag, "Olé!"

I remember that on more than one Sunday morning, Jim and his son, James, opened the worship service at Bayshore with a wonderful duet of “Brethren, We Have Met to Worship.”

I remember Kathy Mills, daughter of Herman and Gloria Mills. Kathy grew up in the Bayshore youth group about the same time as Mary Elizabeth, James and myself. Kathy had a bright smile and a beautiful soprano voice. Kathy dealt with several medical issues and passed away as a young woman. I remember the graveside service for Kathy. Following the service, I noted that Jim was still trying to process Kathy’s death. He confided to someone near me that he could think of “no reason” why someone so young had to die.

I remember that after I began wearing fedoras, Jim met me at church one day with the greeting, “Nice hat.” I thanked Jim and I returned the greeting. In the years that followed, as we were both prone to wearing hats, we often greeted each other in this way.

When Jim talked to you, he was typically gentle and warm. And rarely did he embellish. He greeted you and he told you what he wanted to tell you, or he asked you what he wanted to ask you. When he ended the conversation, he said goodbye. And in his brevity, Jim gave greater value to that which he did say.

When Jim talked to God, which we call prayer, Jim’s conversational manner was the same. His typical address was, “Lord God,” and then he got on with it. Jim did not pray as if God were just entering the room, but rather he acknowledged that God had been present the whole time and had heard everything to that point, which was true. As when speaking with others, Jim kept it brief. When something needed to be said, he said it. When he needed to be silent, he was. And Jim let the words and the silence speak for themselves. When Jim was done, he moved quickly to the “amen.” But Jim knew the conversation with God never really ended.

Merritt Mitchell Wajeel:

I write this with great sadness knowing that Abuna is no longer in our world. I just wanted to say to you how much of a role [he] played in me becoming the person I am today. From my first experiences with him over two seasons (’87 & ’89) in Israel to having him as a professor teaching one of my favorite classes, to our family friendship over the years your family and father have

played an integral role in my life and development. I will always remember his wonderful singing voice, his fatherly advice in critical moments, his humor, and his passion for his family and his life's work. He led an inspirational life that touched many lives. He opened my eyes to the world with my experiences in Israel and shared his wonderful generosity in marrying Sam and me. To this date, I have friends comment on how wonderful our wedding was. He made it wonderful. The love and light he shared with all of us lucky enough to have spent time with him will always be remembered. He made a difference in the world and we will always treasure our memories of him.

Daniel Warner:

Going to miss him greatly, was a great friend like he was to so many. His picture hangs in my study wall as a reminder of what I wanted to be like. Never forget the many hours we spent together in his office at USF and home. Was exciting to have him as a business partner too.



Mark and Tanya Zettek:

What an amazing man who touched so many lives in an incredible way. You are blessed to have had a father like this. He accomplished much in his lifetime. We hope many more of his observations and writings will be published. He had a wealth of information. His talents were definitely used for the Lord and multiplied. What a treasure. May his legacy continue here on earth. Now he is enjoying seeing first hand many of whom he studied. We look forward to spending time with him when we all get home.

Xiao Zhang, MD:

Dr. Strange was an amazing person. He was kind, witty, always positive and strong in spirit.

Remembrances of Family

Dave Jones:

...[Uncle Jimmy] had a tremendous profound affect in my life. His love was extraordinary and everyone that met your dad saw that Agape Love he would exude. Those beautiful blue eyes would telegraph a powerful love that truly was Christlike. Uncle Jim actually was key in the influence of my love for magic and the art of legerdemain. I will never forget how mystified I was when as a child [he] made a simple sewing thimble vanish into thin air. I have been hooked ever since. Every single time the families would get together I wanted my uncle all to myself. I never ever felt I could get enough of [him]. He will be greatly missed by every single person that knew him! I feel so honored to be his nephew. I am so very grateful to have known him. I actually feel my life was better knowing my Uncle Jimmy.

Terry Jones:

At 8 years old, were sitting on the hill in Memorial Park overlooking the concert stage as a symphony was playing and you and I were sitting in the summer evening grass of Houston. I was in seventh heaven because I was having one of my favorite events of my young life, as my uncle, my favorite person in all the world was yet again taking me out as he took time off from his studies at Rice University. The symphony had ended the second movement and was preparing to play the third when some on the hill started clapping. You smiled and said, "Silly people." In that moment you laid the bedrock foundation of my thinking; that just because people were ignorant of protocol, and are thinking differently, it didn't make them evil or bad or stupid or not caring about the people around them. They were just being silly. And in that simple moment you taught me the foundation of how I looked at the world from then on and how I understood people. That empathy and tolerance was the mainstay of love and peace in life. Although we seldom spoke through the years repeatedly you were my rock, my guiding star through difficulties and challenges and there aren't enough words sufficient to say thank you and to tell you how important you have been in mine and so many other lives. I love you Jim. Peace be with you.

Vonna Knapp:

April 21, 2018

Dear Uncle Jimmy,

Before I drew my first breath the events of your own life placed you in a loving and influential position in my life. You were there to welcome me into this world, one of the first to hold me, one of the first to impart the life, love and joy that was uniquely you. How could I not be smitten from the start? Then the day came when my young heart was broken when you chose the beautiful Carolyn from West Texas to be your wife, but I forgave you when you brought wonderful cousins to me as a peace offering. Mysterious (Holy Cow...that's not English they're speaking!) and smart, they carry on the legacy of your love for learning, life and sharing, each in their own marvelous way.

Visits with you were filled with wondrous stories of your life and work in Israel. Oh, how I longed to go, along with my best friend who sat with me at Mom's kitchen table dreaming the same dream. On one of those rare visits I sought your council on "how do you solve a problem like my mother...your sister." With wisdom, and surely coming from first-hand experience, you helped me understand that I was blessed with a "Super-Mom" for a mother, and she was wired to be exactly who she was; pushing me to the front, loving it when I was in the spotlight, but always wanting the best for me. Thank you for confirming what I already knew in my heart.

Even though the bar was set high, with you as the measure of the kind of guy I could spend my life with, it finally happened. I was going to marry my best friend, the one who for years sat at Mom's kitchen table sharing life, song and dreams with me. It was only fitting for you to be there to officiate. Thank you for making the sacrifice to be a part of one of the best days of my life. What a celebration! Only God could know that on that same day twenty-seven years later you would be called home, to perfect Shalom. Our anniversaries will now not only celebrate the life we have together, but the life, love and blessing that was you; our beloved Uncle Jimmy. We're looking forward to seeing you at the wedding of weddings...soon. Maranatha!

Your loving niece,

Vonna

Tim McKenna:

Long ago, I was maybe 8-ish. Uncle Jimmy was going to go jogging. Well I wanted to go and thought it would be cool to do so in my older brothers hiking boots which were several sizes too large. Maybe 500 yards into it I already had huge blisters. I head home accompanied by Uncle Jimmy. I remember feeling sheepish but he helped me out, putting bandaids on my blisters and having a discussion with me on the importance of proper fitting shoes. His simple lesson to me I passed on, saving many a potential miserable scout. Thanks Uncle.

Joanna Carissa Strange:

We have shared some special times together, you and I. The benefit of being the youngest is that there was always a little more time for me. We refinished that old dresser I bought at the Salvation Army on MacDill, remember? Well, you showed up at 8am to refinish it at my house while I was still asleep. It was a little early for me, at the time a college student.

I took you with me to Guatemala to see Tikal for my 30th birthday. Just the two of us, traveling around, seeing Mayan ruins, eating local food, taking chicken buses. Such a good week. We traipsed across the pitch black park in Tikal to eat at the local "Comedo" - we didn't want "tourist" food, we wanted to eat where the locals did. We walked in the darkness, lighting our way with cell phones. On the way back, we sat in the grass, laid back and looked at the Milky Way in all it's beauty. We took a crazy 8 hour bus to Santiago Atitlan where we adopted a cat for a few days and "honored" the local god with a few dollars. I was proud and a little embarrassed that you bought a Spanish-English dictionary so we could find tampons. By day three your Spanish was pretty good. Too many stories to tell here, but I will write them down for Leo. Promise.

You came to visit me right after Leo was born. The post-partum was so bad that the doctors told me I could not be home alone with Leo for at least 8 weeks, so you came over for a few nights on your way home from Israel. You held that sweet baby when he was just a few weeks old. That meant so much to me. You made seeing him your excuse, but I know how worried you were about me. I can do anything with you beside me, Dad. Anything.

Remember when I planned mom's 50th birthday? I told you to write the checks and I planned everything in meticulous detail. I don't know if you did what I said because you didn't want to fight my 10 year old self or because you wanted me to do something constructive with my time, but whatever the reason, the party was a fun, smashing success.

I loved roaming the halls of Cooper Hall. My status as Dr. Strange's daughter was pretty cool. Only now do I realize that it was less because you were Dean and more because you were so adored and loved by students and faculty alike.

You and me, in Chicago for the National Catholic Forensic League Grand National Tournament. As Florida people, we did not quite understand Chicago's two seasons of "Winter and August" - so we froze at the Cubs game and I cam home the owner of a ridiculously expensive pair of sweatpants and a sweatshirt. I was never a cubs fan and this changed nothing. Then, once the tournament was underway, you held me as I cried when we did not advance past the quarterfinals. I'm still amazed that you enjoyed judging those things as much as you did.

You'd hold my hand and skip, whenever, wherever. I stopped asking in recent years, but I know if you could, you would. The last time I saw you I cuddled up to you on the couch and put my head on your chest. You at 80, me at 40. Age meant nothing. You were still my daddy—ever the cuddly one.

You loved all of my friends like they were your own. Kimmie, Josh, Haydy, Errin, Taylor, Sharon - the list goes on and on. You'd take us out to dinner or lunch, offer advice, drive us places. Oh man, the night you drove me and Josh and Kimmie to Haifi bus station to get on the overnight to Eilat as we made out way to Jordan. Did I ever tell you that stupid bus backed into another bus and we waited a few hours to board a second, less wrecked bus? You and mom started our trip with a delicious dinner at The Herb Farm - the setting sun painted the valley below Mount Gilboa in colors of gold and a hawk soared in the air. It was magical. Every experience with you was magical.

You attended almost every thing I did. When you were in Boston for an ASOR meeting, you took the train to North Shore Music Theatre to see *The Three Musketeers* which I Assistant Directed. You came and saw my final performances in my honors thesis classes as well as any other class performances I was required to have. To New York to see my first Fringer performance, to Key West to see *Lucky You* which I Assistant Directed. You did not seem to care what I did as long as I was happy. I remember once

asking you what I should do when I grew up, and your response was that I needed only be compassionate and kind, nothing more (I think you assumed I would get a job somehow). I know the short films I have made are a little too dark for your taste, and I know that some of the plays I was in were also a little dark, but you never offered judgment of that sort. You simply offered me your opinion on the quality of the work - thank you for that. My siblings already think I am pretty weird, I appreciate you did not express the same thoughts.

And Pumpkin. The cat mom fed and adopted, but the cat who took to you like a duck to water. If you were sitting, he was draped over your leg. Wherever you were, he would come running. If you sat too quietly, all you had to do was move the lamp and the clanging would set him on a beeline straight for you. You always loved animals and Pumpkin was no exception. He adored you with eyes reserved only for you. I mean, he liked the rest of us, but you were his world. Always the animal lover.

You understood when I wanted to carve my own way. Being "Dr. Strange's daughter" at USF was a chore in the Humanities, but in the theatre department no one (except professors) knew who you were. It was our little secret and I got to grow and flourish as myself. None of my colleagues had taken a class with you, none of them knew you were just half a mile across campus. I got to be me.

We did so much together. Boomerang throwing, canoing, traveling, but my favorite thing to do with you was to be silly. I don't know if everyone knew how silly you were. Any of the silliness the Strange children exhibit comes from you. From silly words to bad jokes to general inanity, all from you, Dad. Later on, as you got a phone where you could text you were able to expose more people to your brand of silly, but we got it every day from you. Dads can be silly too.

And the trivia - oh my the trivia. From the possible meaning of the word "biscuit" to the angle at which streets are planned. There was never a dull conversation or a moment where a "Jim Strange-ism" was not present. Often, we all burst into fits of laughter while you looked befuddled - but more often that not you knew what you were doing and just enjoyed the ride.

Your ability to say anything with a straight face has meant more than one student wrote down a bad joke as a factoid. You could fool everyone - for a while. Well, you fooled Marylynn for her whole life, but most of us finally got

wise. Although I did really believe if I unscrewed my bellybutton my legs would fall off well after I should have.

I will cherish those 4am days when it was just the two of us, answering the final final FINAL question about the building at Sepphoris. We were the only two left to finish out the 1 meter we'd decided to dig. We'd get up, swing by the bakery to get hot freshly baked pita, drive to the field and begin our day. You and me, alone, in the quiet, just patishes, dustpans, glass (lots of glass in that drain), trying to get the answer to your life's work. There will always be questions, you reminded me, but answering this last question gives us a much more holistic view of the building. That was a good week.

But I am also angry. Not at you, to be clear, but I am angry and jealous that my beautiful son will have no clear memories of you. I feel cheated and I am jealous of my siblings' children. You would not want me to be this way, but I am. If we had this conversation, you'd wrap me in your arms while I wept at the injustice. You'd hold me so tight. I want Leo to know you—not as the larger than life figure you are perceived to be, but to know where I get my silliness from, my cuddliness, my love of animals, my sense of social justice and my willingness to stand up for those who are less fortunate—if he knew you he'd see why I cry when the cats kill a mouse and why I hold him so so SO tight all the time. I want him to see the me that comes from you.

I don't get to live that reality, however, and so I am left with this massive, gaping hole. A part of me has also died, not forever, but some part of my childhood, some part of me that is lighter, sweeter, more prone to laughter, is gone. It was a part that was so deeply entwined with you that it left when you did. That's ok. I'll still be me, but different.

I have said, repeatedly over the last almost month (it's almost been a month???), "I don't know how to exist in a world without my dad," but I am trying to embrace the idea that you DO exist in the world, just not in a form that I can touch or see. Your birthday is still yours, your anniversary with mom is still that, you're just not here in a way we understand, but I do not believe you have gone.

There is so much to say, so many things left unsaid (but, thank God, "I love you" was NEVER one of those). Lots of the things left unsaid are certainly in the realm of, "Dad, WHY did you install this adware on your computer?" and "Dad, please do not buy another gadget. You won't use it—remember the iPod Nano?"—but most are the questions I cannot ask, the worries I cannot

express, the stories of Leo I cannot tell.

At the end, I told Jonathan I would take your place if I could. I would take your pain, I would take your discomfort, I would take your death. You'd never let me do it, but I would have done it for you, Dad. In a heartbeat. You still had so much more to show the world.

I remember asking you last year why you chose to fight the cancer when the odds were stacked against you. You told me that you had so much more to teach your students. That we, your children, were off in the world, being who we are, doing our thing, but your students still needed guidance, love (sometimes the tough kind), and they needed to be taught everything you had for them. You could live 1000 years and not teach enough students.

My grief is still so raw and angry. It perches at the end of my vision, blurring everything. W.H. Auden wrote this poem that may seem dark, but, to me, it is exactly how I feel:

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message 'He is Dead'.
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last forever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now; put out every one,
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun,
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood;
For nothing now can ever come to any good.

—WH Auden

I know if we were talking about this, you'd let me honor that part of me that wanted to crawl into a hole and die, but then you'd tell me that I would need to emerge and love again. So I am making this poem by Wilhelmina Stitch my goal:

Said she, 'I will not live with grief from morrow unto morrow.
My heart cries out for some relief, 'Good-bye, my little sorrow.'
She closed the windows of her home and pulled down every blind.
'I'm going forth,' she cried, 'to roam. You, Grief, can stay behind.'
'And I'll be gone the livelong day, expect me back to-night.'
Grief wanly watched her go away into the warmth and light;
With quickened step and brightened eyes she mingled with the throng.
Instead of pale Grief's moans and sighs she heard Endeavour's song.
She saw a sister, crossed the road and asked her how she fared:
Then helped to lift her heavy load and in the burden shared.
Throughout the day Self was suppressed whilst Service took its place.
When she returned at night to rest—of Grief there was no trace!
But Joy stepped forth and sweetly said,
'May I now be your friend instead?'

Love you Daddy.

Katherine Strange Burke:

I don't have a coherent set of stories or memories, but rather a collection of disparate thoughts to share that I have set down over the last few weeks.

I love the way my dad would hold on to silly words that Joanna and I made up as children. Long after we had dropped them, Dad was still saying, "Pookydust, pookydust, pookydust!" with a flourishing hand gesture to try to get a red light to change to green. He would still swear "Oh grot!" every now and then, and James heard him exclaim "Sheestamonga!" from his hospital bed in his last days. He always was a lover of interesting words.

Dad liked to do woodwork, but he didn't have much time for it. I wonder how he even managed it in our three-bedroom apartment near USF? When I was 8 or 9 we worked on the porch, building a bed for my doll Kathy. He designed it with slots, tabs, and pegs—we used no nails or screws. I also helped him build a set of bunks for me and Joanna. He designed them to be taken apart and used separately when we were older. The posts were held with pegs, so that they could be easily separated. He would have loved to have built our own house, since he had wonderful ideas for its design, but alas, it was too expensive.

My image of God was strongly informed by my relationship with my father, as it probably is for many. For me, that meant that not only does God usually have a beard in my imagination(!), but also is a figure of real comfort and love. My own father was a good mirror for my heavenly father, and I am grateful for that.

One morning when visiting from college or grad school I came downstairs to find Mom and Dad sitting opposite each other with Bibles, journals, and books of spiritual reflection, having their morning devotional. I had never witnessed this as a child (I doubt they had time), but they had managed to make reading, reflection and prayer a joint daily activity. I sat down to listen and they encouraged me to participate. I was thrilled to be a part, and on every subsequent visit I did my best to join them in this. I learned much about my parents' thoughtfulness and compassion.

I am also grateful for the time Dad spent with my children, throwing balsa wood gliders from the back porch into the yard, folding paper airplanes and throwing them in the house, taking them out to throw boomerangs at USF park. Two years in a row, he and Mom came down to our excavations

in Jaffa, Israel, and took care of the boys so that Aaron and I could work. He did everything from putting on sunscreen and supervising outside play, to reading to them, holding them, and singing to them. (I think he left the diapering to Mom!) These are precious memories. The last few times he was with them, he threw various flying toys with them outside, and was available to supervise scootering around the cul-de-sac from a shady seat on the driveway. Although I wish they had gotten to know him better, I do cherish these times that he spent and am grateful that he was a present and involved Granddaddy.

Dad wrote his own poetry, both for his own enjoyment or catharsis, and to express his love for others. I have a poem of several stanzas that he wrote me decades ago. He hand-lettered it in his beautiful calligraphy and had it framed for my birthday. Now, in it he did mix up some old family stories about Joanna with those about me, but that's OK. Mom and the rest of us always had the more precise memories of which children did what. The poem still hangs on my bedroom wall. I wrote one for him recently:

Not merely a collection of memories
Nor a collage of snapshots.
Not the echo of a beloved voice
Nor a diary of anecdotes.
Not a treasure of colorful sayings
Nor a repertory of favorite melodies.
There is something in my heart that sings,
Something in my heart that knows
Truths that only come from him,
From knowing him, from loving him, from being loved by him.

It's funny, but I comfort myself now as I suffer my dad's loss by imagining Dad comforting me. He would hold me close, my head under his chin so I could feel the scratch of his beard, one of his arms around my back and the other cradling my head and stroking my hair. I would hear a soft rumbling, "Katherine," through his warm chest. He never tried to talk me out of upset or grief, but simply let me feel it—knowing that he was there with me.

James Riley Strange:

I do not have words for the task. Vocabulary, parts of speech, syntax fail. I will write what I remember of one of our conversations about things that matter: love and forgiveness.

Once after Laura and I married and I had gained a child, Sarah, Dad admitted, “I know that when you were little I could be angry and gruff, and that I wasn’t around much.” In my mind this happened in the coffee bar of the Galilee Hotel in Nazareth. Perhaps that is one of the things that spurred him to speak, for he was referring to his annual trips to Israel that began the summer I was five. He may have said more, including “I’m sorry.” I heard this confession as an apology in any case, and I took it seriously, sensing it was important to him to say these things to his adult son. After a moment to compose my words, or thoughts that could guide speech, I said something like, “Dad, I remember times when you were angry, and of course I remember you being in Israel a lot. But I do not remember you as an angry or absent father, I remember you as loving and present.” It was either in that conversation or later that I told him, “I want you to know that when I try to be a good parent, you are my model.” In my memory I say that to Mom and Dad together. If I didn’t, I should have. After time, memories become like dreams. Details slip and shift.

What remains is love and forgiveness. Many people have offered comfort by speaking of the “wonderful memories” I have. I have more than memories. I have models.

Mary Elizabeth Strange:

Stories of My Father

Dad’s Brilliant Idea

Perhaps many of you are unaware of how smart my dad was. He was so smart, in fact, that he was a member of Mensa International, “the high IQ society.” Although early on when he attended a couple of meetings he uncharacteristically ungraciously noted though the members might have been smart, they were mostly “ignorant, uneducated yahoos.” He softened his stance later on, but I digress.

Anyway, one year the whole clan converged over July 4th weekend—I believe this was 1996—which was highly unusual given that the senior Stranges

normally would be in Israel about this time every year. So Dad decided we should all go look at the fireworks in the city of Tampa—but which ones? Then he came up with the MOST BRILLIANT, THE BESTEST, MOST AWESOME PLAN EVER!!! We should all head over to the top level of the Tampa International Airport parking garage where we would be able to see ALL THE FIREWORK DISPLAYS from all over the city! We all agreed that this was indeed a WONDERFUL NOTION THAT COULD ONLY HAVE sprung full-grown from Dad's partially bald head, so we piled into two cars (minus my mother for some reason) and drove over.

We parked, got out, and walked over to the low wall around the garage and looked out. True, there was 360-degree view of all of Tampa and St. Pete across the Bay, and you could see fireworks. However, when you are miles, and miles, and miles away from something, it does not appear very large on the horizon. In fact, the firework displays were all about 2 inches high from our perspective. It was like watching a teaspoon of glitter being flung from Barbie's dreamhouse with little tiny, tinny “ping, ping, pings.”

We all stood there looking out, then looking at each other like the bunch of yahoos that we were. After a moment my Dad uttered “Well...haaayellll...” in his best East Texas drawl. My brother remarked, “Who's stoooopid idea was THIS, anyway?!” (knowing full well it was Dad's). Then all of a sudden we began to laugh. Great paroxysms of laughter, so hard and so long that I actually peed on myself and had to make a mad dash for the bathrooms inside the terminal. My family followed. When I got out, we all stood around staring at each other for a few moments, and then finally my Dad said, “Let's go home and get some pie.” Now, THAT was a good idea! So we did.

I Abandon My Parents in Paris

First off, I should state that I should have known this simple, salient fact: One should NEVER GO to a world-renowned historic (and sometimes romantic) city such as Paris with one's grumpy, elderly parents who need regular naps. It sucks the romance right out. Secondly, one should REALLY NOT book a hostel in August that apparently is frequented by 60-thousand Italian school children with their teachers on their annual see-another-European-city school trip, which requires them to get up every morning at 6 a.m. and speak a lot of loud Italian below your window whilst having their morning espressos.

To be fair to myself, this was the early days of booking things online (late 1990s) and it was difficult to get a sense of the atmosphere and general environment of any accommodation. I was going for inexpensive, but not a dive.

Anyway, this hostel, like many European hostels, kicked out its clientele after breakfast (10 a.m.) until afternoon to clean. So Mom and Dad had to wait until 3 p.m. to go back for a nap. A NAP. While we're in Paris FOR 4 DAYS TOTAL. NAPS. I vow I will nap when I get back to the U.S., which I have seen many times in my life and don't feel bad about missing while I nap.

The first day we head to the Louvre. Now, for those of you not acquainted with my father, he had been doing archeology in Israel for about 3 decades at this time. ...Where he had been digging up A WHOLE STINKIN' BUNCH of Roman art and architecture. What does he want to see at the Louvre, which is just burstin' with art and architecture from many different lands in many different historical periods...wonders of the world most magnificent and fine? You guessed it—Roman art and architecture! Because he wants to compare. Compare...what? So the Louvre's statue of Venus has a chip in her boob, but the Rockefeller's (in Jerusalem) doesn't, so ours is better? "Oh look at that oil lamp, it's just like the one we dug at Qumran, but ours has a nicer spout." *Blah, blah, blah, blah.* And I'm thinking, *What the...? Is this some sort of weird archaeological one-upmanship?*

Then they head back to the hostel for A NAP. A NAP. IN PARIS. WHERE WE HAD 4 DAYS! COUNT 'EM, 4!!!

I WANT TO SEE EGYPTIAN ANTIQUITIES! I WANT TO SEE THE IMPRESSIONISTS! *I WANT TO SEE ANYTHING THAT ISN'T ROMAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE.*

So I do the only thing I know to do. I go off to the Musée D'Orsay alone where I stare at the impressionists for hours to my heart's content, hike up the Champs Élysées, climb the Arc de Triomphe, get yelled at by a waiter in French because I ask, in French, for the vegetarian menu (hahaha!), take the elevator up the Tour Eiffel—you know, the regular tourist stuff. At night I come in very late (10 p.m.!) as quietly as possible, because despite THE NAPS, they still have to go to bed early.

For years my parents complained I "abandoned them" in Paris. I'm a very bad daughter.

Dad Takes a Midnight Stroll and Meets a Family Member and a Stranger

In Spring of 1980 when I was 18 my father had an Albright Fellowship in Jerusalem, Israel, and I wanted to join him there. So in May, my mom dropped me off at the Tampa airport where I took a flight to Kennedy in NY, then another flight to Israel with another plane change in Paris. My seatmate was a very nice young man on the NY to Tel Aviv flight who had just graduated from college and was on his way to a year in Israel to study Hebrew and Torah at a Yeshiva in the old city in Jerusalem before heading to medical school. Since we were heading toward the same place, I suggested we travel together (plus I needed help schlepping my excessive luggage around). He had never traveled internationally, so was happy to have a guide!

We got to Tel Aviv at 10 p.m., and I couldn't get my Dad on the phone at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem to ask why he's not there to pick me up. I rang and rang and rang the Albright. Nothing. Avram had the name of the Yeshiva and a phone number but no one answered there either.

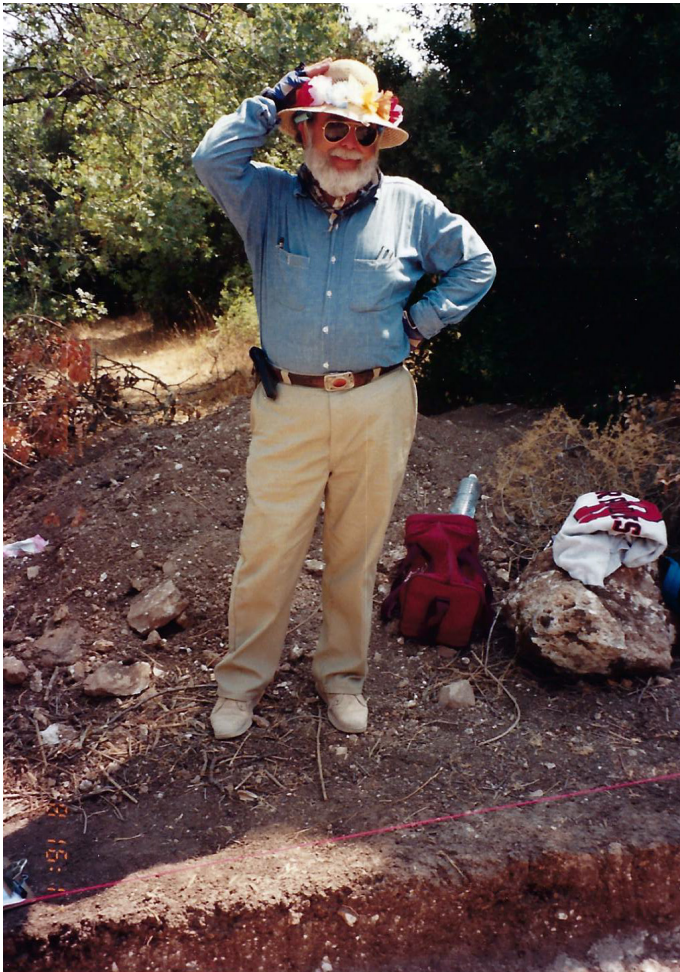
So at 11 p.m., since my father didn't raise any of his daughters to expect to be rescued but to do their own rescuing, I finally found a bus that's headed to Jerusalem and got me, Avram, and our luggage on the bus and headed there. I assured Avram that my Dad will let him stay the night and then help him find his Yeshiva in the morning.

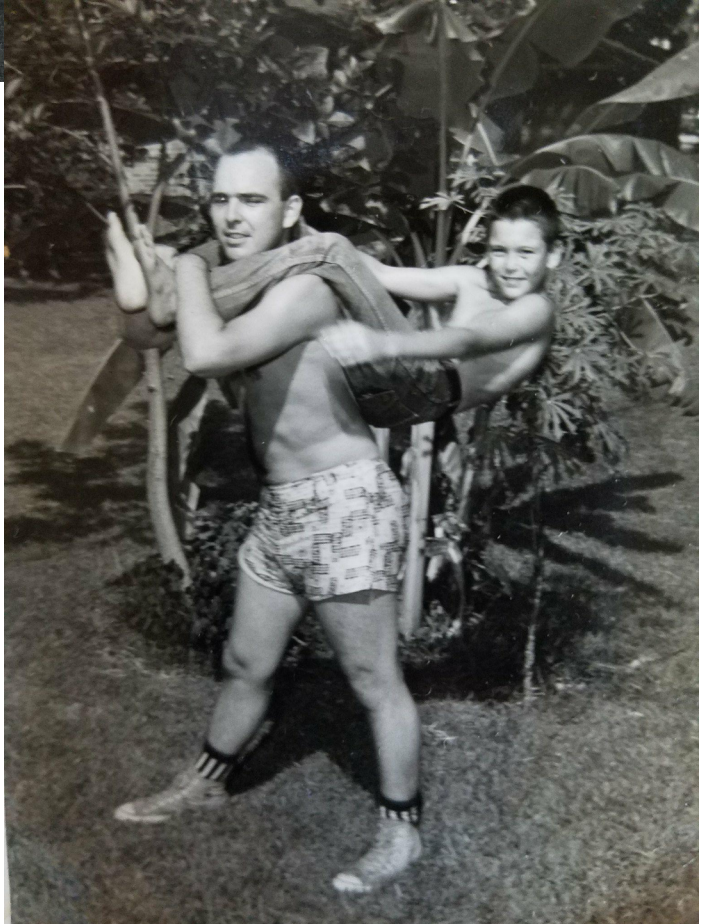
We arrived at the bus terminal in Jerusalem around 12:30 a.m. but then there's a walk of about 1/2 mile up Salah-e-Din Street to the Albright. Around 1 a.m. we arrived, with my father walking out the gate because he'd been unable to sleep and thought he'd take a late night stroll. I saw him first: "Hi, Daddy!" Dad, surprised: "Why hi there, Mary Elizabeth! I thought you were coming tomorrow." Me: "Nope, today. By the way, this is Avram and he needs to find his Yeshiva tomorrow. Can he bunk with us for the night?" Dad: "Um, sure (as if it's the most natural thing in the world for one's daughter to show up at all hours from across the globe with strangers in tow), I have an extra bed in my room."

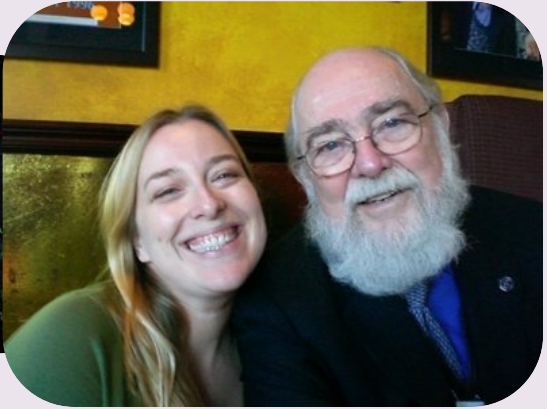
And so the next morning Dad helped Avram find his Yeshiva.

Flying in New York

When I was very young my family often visited New York City, where my father would walk down the sidewalk with my hand in his on his right, and my brother's in his left, with my mother trailing behind. Sometimes he would skip down the sidewalk with us, to our great delight. We would beg him, "Run, Daddy, run!!!" And he would charge down the sidewalk, with us in tow. Now my brother was a bit sturdier than I and could kind of keep up. I, on the other hand, would essentially be hauled along with my feet barely touching the ground the entire time. It was like flying! We squealed with delight and begged him to do it again and again. So, in my dreams, Daddy, I'm still holding your hand as we fly along together forever.













Carolyn Midkiff Strange:

April 20, 2018

My Dearest Jim,

I have been married to you for 57 plus years and am just learning what an exceptional, loving person I have had as my husband all this time. Only now does the comment from Zelma Hardy, my high school English teacher, make sense. She asked me, "How did you manage to get him?" We had only been married a little over a year when she met you. Indeed, how did I manage to be married to such a beautiful man? I did not do anything. God gave me a gift.

You have been "all about love" for so very long. I remember when you were first teaching New Testament Greek at USF. You reported to me the question you asked yourself, "How am I going to teach these students Greek?" Your reply was "love them." You have loved and nurtured so many students these 45 plus years at USF. You loved students and colleagues alike. More recently, you came home one Wednesday evening in so much pain because you had forgotten to take your medicine. Yet, in that excruciating pain, you were more concerned about getting your students to grasp some spiritual insight, which had come to you from reading Richard Rhor, than you were about hurting. You never wanted to retire, because you would miss your students and your colleagues. Well, you did not retire.

That same love has been evident in all aspects of your life. When you were in the hospital, you showed love in whatever way you could to all of those who did anything for you. You knew that they were acting out of love, whether they knew it or not.

Often, over the last two or three years, I have seen your love become even deeper and broader as you have been living out exactly what Jesus commanded. You have shown me how to love more.

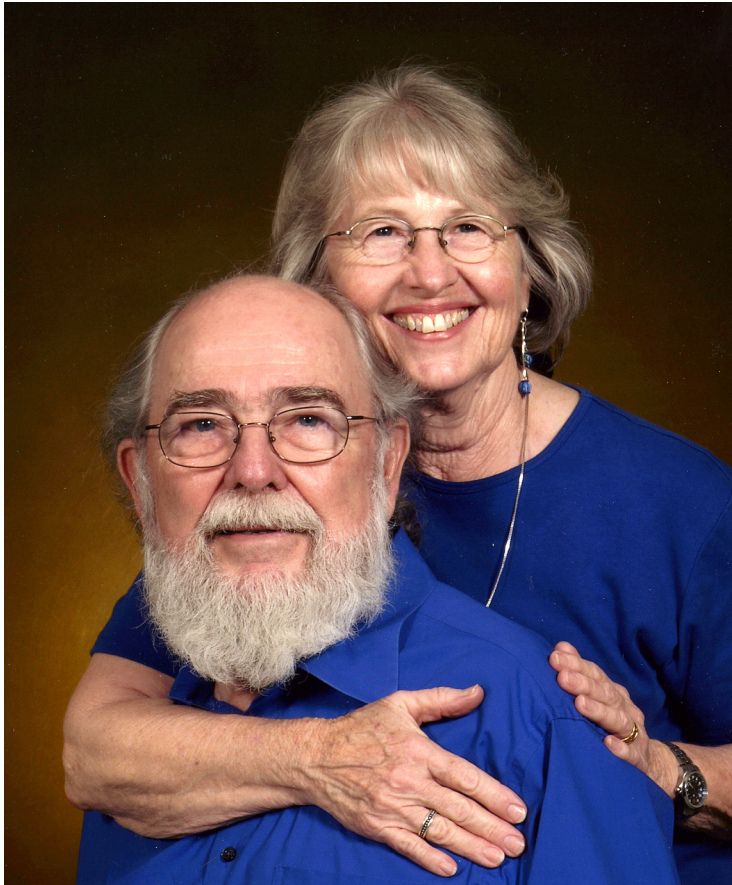
Remembrances and accolades have been coming in from everywhere. You were a gift to all who met you and will continue to be that gift. When, at age two, you crawled out of that burning house, your mother knew that you would become someone very special. Many mothers may believe that about their sons, but yours was right.

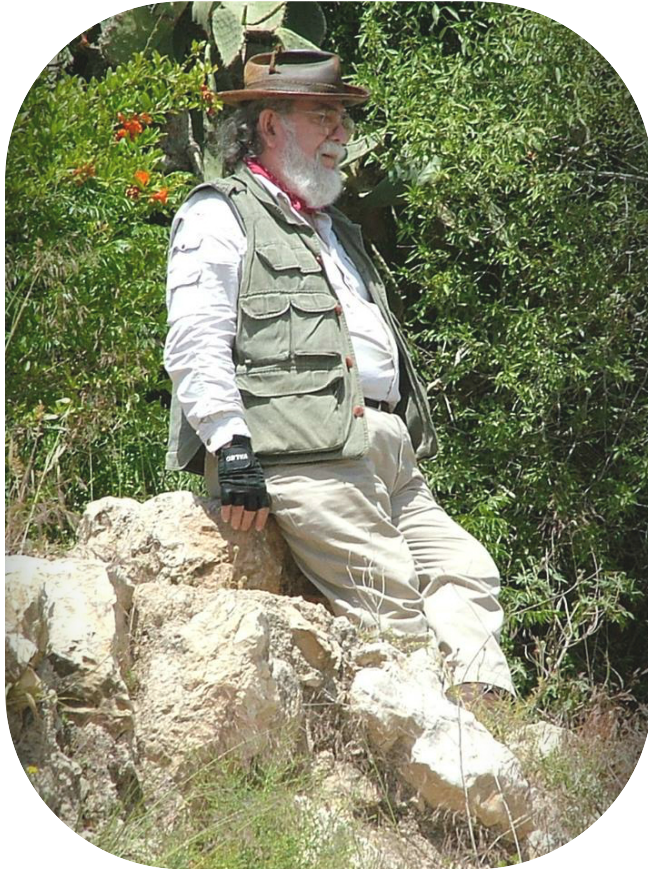
Several times over the past weeks, you have said, "He has given us so much." You were just uttering a "Thank you" to God. What a remarkable man I have been married to and I did not even know it.

As for love, you loved me, without reservation through all of our 57 years,
even when I was at my least loving. You embraced your children and
grandchildren with that same abiding love.

I miss you, my sweetheart,

Carolyn





Thanks to all who contributed.

In Loving Memory of:

Jim Strange

Husband, Scholar, Father, Archaeologist, Friend,
Uncle, Teacher, and so much more