

James (Jim) W. Nicholson, OLS# 1094, CLS
July 6, 1935 - April 9, 2016



Jim Nicholson was a great guy, a good surveyor and a close friend. He passed away quietly and peacefully at Georgian Bay General Hospital in Midland, Ontario on April 9, 2016. He is survived by his wife, Donna, his children Tim, Jane, and Jon and his grandchildren Bryn, Avery, Kate, Emily, Emma, and Aiden. Jim was father-in-law of Deb and Jill and brother of Mary Ann Adamson and her husband John, and Nancy North. He was predeceased by his parents Ernie and Islay Nicholson. Jim was born and raised in Midland and graduated from Midland High School.

Throughout his life Jim was actively involved in the community, including the Midland Minor Hockey Association, the Georgian Bay Minor Hockey Association, the Midland Curling Club, the Huronia Masonic Lodge, the Rotary Club of Midland and St. Paul's United Church.

His love of music began with the Midland Brass Band in the 1950's and later with the Penetanguishene Legion Pipes and Drums. It continued with the Orillia Wind Ensemble and then many happy years with the Orillia Silver Band.

After completing high school in June 1954, Jim decided to try his hand at surveying and he took a job as a chainman on a field crew with Charlie O'Dale, OLS, in Midland. In November 1955, he joined the Department of Highways in Downsview and from there decided to become an OLS. Jim signed articles on June 3, 1957 to Bill Ratz of the Department of Highways in Toronto and in 1958 he was transferred to the regional highways office in London. Jim received his OLS commission on November 22, 1961 and was assigned registration # 1094 He later received his commission as a "Canada Lands Surveyor".

In September of 1960 Jim married his high school sweetheart, Donna, and they lived in London until Jim was transferred back to head office of DHO in Toronto in 1967, becoming a Control Survey Supervisor.

In July 1968, Jim and Donna returned home to Midland to raise their family in the area that they loved. Their family and their grandchildren still live in the community.

Jim established a private survey practice in Midland which was incorporated as "James W. Nicholson Limited" in 1974 and in 2001 partnered with Gary Preston to form "Preston Nicholson Harvey Inc." Jim retired his OLS commission in 2009.

Jim's volunteer work with the AOLS began in 1984 when he was appointed to the "Board of Examiners" which is now the "Academic Experience Requirements

Committee”. As a testament to Jim’s dedication to that task, a surveyor in Sudbury that Jim monitored during the surveyor’s article period in the mid 1980’s, recalled his meetings with Jim in his Midland office and how he appreciated the generous amount of time and the genuine advice that he received from Jim.

Jim was elected to AOLS Council in 1988 and was president of the Association in 1991 which was the centennial year of the founding of the AOLS. Jim was very proud to represent our profession during our Centennial year. His photo is displayed on the centennial poster of the Province of Ontario titled “Surveying for Settlement” which is displayed in many survey offices across the province.

While Jim received his Surveyor’s Commission long before the start of the University of Toronto’s Survey Science program in the early 1970’s, he took advantage of Survey Law courses offered by the University and did considerable reading to upgrade his legal survey knowledge. From this he became proficient in survey law principles, especially in the area of water boundaries. In his later years, Jim was sometimes engaged as an expert witness in Boundaries Act cases across the province and often came out on the winning side of the decision.

Jim was a very social type of guy, easy to talk to, and was always genuinely interested in what was going on whether it be personal, or association business. I got to know Jim in the early 80’s when we both sat on the Board of Examiners and then on Council and we have been good friends ever since. Jim always looked at the brighter side of things and if he did not have something good to say about someone – he said nothing. The surveyors in the Georgian Bay area who were his business competitors were also his friends.

Jim’s love for Georgian Bay began long before his surveys in the area. As a child, he spent his summers at Honey Harbour and in the mid 60’s his dad built a family cottage, named “Whistlers Cove”, on Little Beausoleil Island, on the Main Channel, about 5 minutes north of Honey Harbour. Jim purchased this cottage in the mid-80’s and it became his family’s retreat. In retirement, Jim’s favourite pastime was sitting on the deck enjoying in his words “watching the world go by”. Another of Jim’s expressions was to go “up the shore” for the weekend.

Sometime in the late 1980’s Jim decided to learn to play the bagpipes with the Penetanguishene Pipes and Drums. With his musical talent, he became an accomplished piper. For several years in the 1990’s, Jim piped in the head table at the Presidential Luncheon at the “Annual General Meeting” of the AOLS held in February each year. Jim’s favourite part was “tossing a shot of scotch” with the incoming President prior to piping himself out of the room.

Jim also enjoyed himself at another annual function, the “Senate” get-togethers. The Past Presidents of the Association, (affectionately known as the “Senate”) have met socially twice a year for almost 30 years. Rarely did Jim and Donna miss one of these events. The Senate meets with the incoming President and Council at the AGM in February to wish them well in their council year. This of course, requires a toast to council, and generally another toast (or two) if the scotch does not run out. At the summer Senate BBQ in 2013, Jim was presented his “Gold 50-year pin” as an Ontario Land Surveyor.

Jim will be missed by the profession, as during his time he was certainly one of the leaders of our association.

Submitted by Jack Young