



James Anthony Driscoll Jr.

February 22, 1937 - April 14, 2023

JAMES ANTHONY DRISCOLL, JR, ONLY CHILD OF J.A. SR. OF ANACONDA & EVA ROSE RUMMEL OF HELENA, was born & raised on Butte's upper west side and, from childhood, was crazy about the arts, both visual & performing. He first trod the boards of the Fox (later Mother Lode) Theatre at age five for Henry Bishop's Dance Revue, and returned to that great stage with Brother J.C. Fellows' Boys' Central Farces in his teens. While at St. Patrick School, he was a mainstay of plays, piano recitals, and concerts. He later forsook being a piano prodigy for playing in the accordion band that traveled much of Montana with the renowned Boys Central Tumblers. Then, when boys were needed in Girls' Central plays, he met his true love, Mary Kay Quinn, both at age 16, and they began a lifetime romance.

Jim and Kay attended college at Gonzaga, where he acted for both college and local Spokane drama groups. Jim was married to Kay at her "I.C." Church on 8/22/1959, and after a brief honeymoon in the mountains of Glacier & Banff, they went off together to New York City; he to teach at the job found for him by "Brother Jack" at another C.B.I. school, Power Memorial, on the border of the coming Lincoln Center, and she to use her Gonzaga Med-Tech skills in research at St. Luke's Hospital, just blocks from Columbia University, where Jim pursued graduate studies in Drama. After work hours, they both became true "N'Yawkers" by seeing every play they could on or off Broadway, every opera they could at the Old Met, every concert possible at Carnegie Hall, and

visiting every great Museum, not just of art - all mostly with free or reduced admission in those generous “between wars” days.

Although their first daughter Kathryn was a true Manhattanite, born on the edge of Central Park, they reluctantly left “The Only City in the World” for suburbia, where daughter Jennifer was born while Jim taught English and directed plays at Lynbrook High School on Long Island. In 1967 they returned to Butte and bought a Victorian home near Jim's old area, which they lovingly maintained & improved while keeping its soul by never modernizing its look. Here they welcomed a third daughter, Valerie, and a much-awaited son, James John. Soon Jim recalled his own dislike of his “baby” name, Jimmie, and let his son be just John. All four children continue the family love of, and service to, the arts as musicians, performers, and promoters of beauty in all forms.

For 25 years Jim taught at Butte High School, replacing the subject label “English” with what he preferred to call “Good Writing and Great Literature.” He felt there was no real difference between the Ivy-League-bound students of Long Island and the seemingly less driven but equally capable Butte kids, and he proceeded to prove that point every day. He was always happy to be contacted by past students, many of whom hit the top of their fields as adults, and/or became loyal friends for life.

As soon as he returned to Butte, Jim promptly joined the arts scene thanks to his mother's friends, who passed on tickets they couldn't use until he and Kay were able to buy their own Community Concerts memberships and support local play productions. Impressed by their current shows, Jim joined Mike O'Connell's community theatre group before season's end and won their Supporting Actor award for his work as nerdy poker-buddy “Vinny” in THE ODD COUPLE. He soon became a frequent actor, then director, for Mike's group while also directing the Butte High Drama program for 15 years. He

continued to rule two stages by appearing in and/or directing community plays while also heading up play production and competitive drama at BHS.

In the 1970's, Jim drove nightly to Western Montana College for his Masters of Education degree. He chose Art as his concentration, and then joined the group of artists working on the Park Street "Historic Butte" mural, the centerpiece at the new Mural Park. He and Kay joined the group transforming the Clark Chateau into a new community art museum, and soon after, Kay was asked to serve on the Community Concerts board. Jim soon joined her and they served together for decades, retiring as Historians by setting up the transfer of 30 years of group records to "The BCC Collection at the Butte Archives." During this decade, after urging by the BCC President, Jim began writing reviews and commentary for what became a ten-year run of over 100 columns in the Montana Standard under the title, ANOTHER OP'NIN'. In 1997 Jim was elected to the board, then Vice-Presidency, of Butte Center for the Performing Arts (parent of the Mother Lode and Orphan Girl Theatres).

On the Mother Lode Theatre stage in 2000, Jim gave his "Sara Bernhardt Farewell Performance" as a tipsy, aged actor in the farce "Noises Off" nearly 60 years after he was a tap-dancing Uncle Sam and 50 years since he drew laughs with the Boys Central clowns on the same grand stage. Before that last play, he had been appointed by Governor Martz to a term with Humanities Montana from 2000-2005, where he was able to guide statewide credit to the lifelong generosity and service of his friends Bob and Pauline Poore, who were awarded the Governor's Humanities Medal, and to his first (1968) Butte writing student, Edwin Dobb, who gained a significant production grant for his epic movie, BUTTE, AMERICA. Jim's latest interest and volunteer service was to the collections of the Butte-Silver Bow Archives, where he was one of many collators of the vast Smithers Photo Collection and was in the process of donating to the Archives his own lifetime photo collection of some thousand

images.

Jim leaves behind Kay, his wife of 63 years, four children, and four grandchildren: daughter Kathryn (Dan) Pecha of Bellevue, WA and their children Meaghan and Katelyn Pecha, Jennifer Driscoll of Butte, Valerie Driscoll of Missoula and her children Maia and Ian Saltsman, and John (Kathrin) Driscoll of Missoula. Also numerous cousins who have made these recent years interesting and enjoyable.

Jim and his family would like to thank their lifetime friends, some still with us and some gone before us: Tom Schumacher, Margaret "Jiggs" Coldiron, Patty Evankovich Ochab, Debré DeMers, Martin and Mary Clare Favero and family, LeRoy and Judy Corbin and family, and Don and Sherrie Hubacka and family. We also thank Highlands Hospice, especially Tina, Josh and Becky. Donations are suggested to Highlands Hospice, the Butte Archives, or the Butte Food Bank.

Memorial services will be conducted Tuesday, May 2nd at 11 am in Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home with Deacon Bernie McCarthy officiating. A reception will follow in Wayrynen-Richards Community Center. A Celebration of Life will be planned in July, for which the family will provide details as they are finalized.

Cemetery Details

Holy Cross Cemetery

4700 Harrison Avenue
Butte, MT 59701

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY 2. 11:00 AM (MT)

Wayrynen-Richards Funeral Home
1800 Florence Ave
Butte, MT 59701
(406) 723-3221
<https://wayrynen-richards.com/>

Tribute Wall

JM

“ I had Mr. Driscoll as a teacher For two years at Butte High School. At the time I had no idea of his amazing background and his lifelong passion for the arts. But in the classroom, he was dedicated and passionate about inspiring students to explore and enjoy vast universe of literature and the arts. I always knew that he was a brilliant man and I always enjoy the fact that he treated every student like an adult. He never talk down to us, and he always had a great sense of humor. I last saw him at a party for Sheri Hubacka When she graduated from Mt. Tech some 40 years ago. He immediately greeted me with a warm smile and we had a great conversation. I'm sure he is already producing and directing a new play up in heaven. I send sympathy to his entire family and especially his daughter Kathryn... Whom I shared a math class or two with at Butte high school.

Jeff Maki - May 02, 2023 at 03:58 PM

MC

“ Jim Driscoll was a great teacher—“loved and feared in equal measure”—inspiring his students to explore the world beyond. He instilled a love for great literature & great performances and continued to teach and learn all his life—long after he had left the teaching profession. It was a privilege to know him. (From Jiggs, BHS '73)

Margaret Coldiron - May 01, 2023 at 07:16 PM

JW

“ Dear Kay, Kathryn, Jennifer, Valerie & John - Sending warm thoughts to you all and lots of love from Jiggs & John White.

John White - May 01, 2023 at 07:08 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James Anthony Driscoll Jr..*



April 19, 2023 at 11:59 AM