



James "Jim" Paul Bonwell

November 24, 1951 - December 7, 2025

James "Jim" Paul Bonwell, age 74, of York Township, Michigan, passed away at home on Sunday, December 7, 2025. Jim was born on November 24, 1951, in Waterloo, Iowa, and spent most of his life in the Des Moines metropolitan area before relocating to Michigan.

Jim is survived by his wife of 43 years, Dorene (Fenimore) Bonwell; daughter Sarah (John) Erickson; sons Doug (Michelle) Edwards and Jeff Edwards; grandchildren Dylan, Drew, and Logan Erickson, and Alexis and Sydney Edwards; and his siblings John Bonwell and Amy (Bonwell) Ozturk.

Jim proudly served with the Des Moines Police Department for 32 years. Throughout his distinguished career, he worked in homicide forensics and crime scene investigation, retiring with the rank of Captain. His work was marked by dedication, integrity, and quiet professionalism.

Outside of his career, Jim was an avid duck and goose hunter who valued time outdoors and the friendships built along the way. He was also a talented painter and an enthusiastic reader. One of his greatest joys was writing fun and goofy poems for his kids and grandkids; small traditions that created cherished memories.

He will be remembered for his steady presence, his devotion to family, and his

unwavering strength. He will be greatly missed by all who loved him.
No formal services are planned per his wishes. To leave a memory you have
of Jim or to sign his online guestbook please visit www.rbfhsaline.com

Tribute Wall

DP

“ Unfortunately after leaving DMPD I fell out of contact with many, however I will say that the years that I served the Department were the best years of a 42 year career.

I worked in the Identification Section while Jim was the commanding Lieutenant. He was the consummate professional, and was very knowledgeable in the forensic sciences. As a commanding officer, he was firm but fair in any decisions he made.

To say that I enjoyed working for Jim and the Des Moines Police Department is an understatement.

For family, you have my sincere condolences, and as for the Captain, Rest in Peace my friend.

Drue Powers - April 03 at 06:08 PM

GM

“ I always looked up to Jim as a great leader working for DMPD. Jim was well respected and was always there to help and answer any questions.

I will always remember him telling me to take that promotional test and that he would be there to back me through the process. It was a great honor to work with and for Captain James B. RIP to a great man!

Greg Morse - December 13, 2025 at 05:24 PM

VV

“ My name is Vincent Valdez. I am a retired Des Moines Police Sergeant. I entered the police academy in 1985. Jim Bonwell was assigned there at the time as a training officer. He was strict but fair and made sure that we learned all of the essential things we needed to do the job. I always admired how he carried himself . Always professional and impeccably dressed from head to toe in his uniform. His uniform was clean, tailored and all his brass was polished brilliantly. I'll never forget his shoes, the ones he wore for special occasions...Florsheim imperials. They were shined to a mirror finish. He was my main influence in the way I wore my uniform all the way to my retirement in 2016. One night, a couple of years into my career, Jim and I answered a shots fired call in the Waterbury neighborhood hood. It was a heavy rainy night with loud thunder and bright bolts of lightning. I remember we were wearing those long, yellow, rubber raincoats and I thought, “What a target we make.” As we walked along the outside of the house, a few shots rang out from the window directly above us. We eventually went in the house and upstairs was a young man pointing a .22 rifle out the window. Within a few seconds, Jim moved forward quickly and snatched the rifle out of the unsuspecting shooter's hands. The guy turned out to be young and stupid playing with a rifle. On graduation night after our Academy class concluded, I greeted him that evening as Officer Bonwell, as was the proper way to address him during our training. He said, “Vince, it's Jim now. Congratulations on your graduation” And we made a toast. I always admired his service as a detective and eventual promotion to Captain. It's a coincidence that I read of his passing since I was just thinking about him a couple of weeks ago when I pulled out my Florsheim Imperials for a fresh shine. Restin peace my friend.

Vincent Valdez - December 11, 2025 at 09:29 PM

JV

“ Jim was an exceptional mentor and leader at the DMPD. I was fortunate to serve under him in the Ident Section from 2000-2004. He corrected my reports with the wrath of the red pen, he demanded professionalism and efficiency, and he challenged all to be and do better. It was an honor to work with him. Rest in peace Jim, many are better having known you.

Joedy VanVelzen - December 11, 2025 at 09:22 PM

FM

“ Franciis Garrity MD purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of James "Jim" Paul Bonwell.



Franciis Garrity MD - December 11, 2025 at 05:50 PM

FM

“ Franciis Garrity MD planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James "Jim" Paul Bonwell.

Franciis Garrity MD - December 11, 2025 at 05:50 PM

SR

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Stephen Robison - December 11, 2025 at 01:20 PM

KS

*I am sorry for your loss. Jim served a good life. We were your neighbors to the north on R.R.#1 in Waukee.
Karen Speicher*

Karen Speicher - December 11, 2025 at 11:20 PM

MP

My name is Mike Stueckrath-

Jim was my training officer in 1985 in the Police Academy. Jim was a great teacher and very inspirational.

In 1990, Jim organised the Des Moines Police Department's first Gang Unit (SCAT). He recruited various officers to be part of the eight person unit. I was proud to be part of this unit and work with Jim.

We were very close knit unit. With Jim's leadership we made a lot of key arrests of gang members from various cities.

You will be missed.

RIP

Mike Stueckrath (Retired Des Moines Poli - December 13, 2025 at 10:02 AM

DM

I worked night patrol with Jim for about 6 years. He was a solid cop who carried himself well. I called him James regardless of rank and he called me Dave. Our friendship was forged between the hours of 10:30 at night to 6:30 in the morning for years. It was called First Watch. RIP James. You did it right.

David Murillo - December 13, 2025 at 08:25 PM

J(

Jim began his career as a young police officer when I began my career as a young prosecutor. He was reliable, responsible, diligent and honest. He had the capacity to see victims, witnesses and defendants as people, a humane trait not always found among law enforcement. Years later, after I had been appointed to the bench, our professional career again intersected, as he appeared to testify in my courtroom. Here he was the consummate professional, direct in his answers, free of bias. A remarkable life, well invested in service to others.

Judge Robert J. Blink (Ret.) - December 14, 2025 at 09:24 AM