



## James "Jimmy" L. Gagan

May 6, 1930 - May 1, 2020

James "Jimmy" Lawrence Gagan, 89, returned to his heavenly home on May 1, 2020, after a short battle with cancer. His devotion to his family and his firm belief in God supported him in his struggle and ultimately gave him peace. James was born to the late Helen and Lawrence Gagan, in Chicago, Illinois on May 6, 1930. He was the oldest of three children Patricia 'Pat' Gagan (deceased) and Lawrence 'Larry' Gagan. James only completed 8th grade at Riley Grammar in Chicago and went on to join the United States Army. He served two years from 1948-1950 as a Physical Reconditioning Instructor, and then was called for a second duty during the Korean conflict where he was stationed in France running a motion picture theater for the troops. Upon his return to Chicago in 1952, James began working for Household Finance and spent two years as a manager in the Northwest Indiana area. His entrepreneurial fire began in 1959 when he started Businessman's Credit and Collection Services and Doctors Service Bureau. In 1959 he married his wife and best friend of 60 years, Claire 'Alice' Gagan. James left his brother, Larry, in charge of Businessman's Credit and Doctors Service, and began United Penn Oil and Gas Company. Between 1963-1969, United Penn Oil and Gas drilled over 28 wells across West Virginia and Illinois. He also earned his private pilot's license and learned to fly a twin-engine plane. In 1971, James founded United Consumers Club (Direct Buy). Direct Buy, a private buying club based in Merrillville, Indiana, grew from a napkin idea to over 173 franchises in the U.S. and Canada. Direct Buy became the largest private

buying club of its kind doing over 2 billion dollars a year in products and services. He sold the business in 2007 in a private sale sharing the proceeds with the 400+ employees at home office that he said built this business. More importantly than any business impact, was the profound personal impact that James had on the employees, partners, and members of Direct Buy. In 1996 James and a group of investors bought Bighorn Golf Club, a world class golf club in Palm Desert, California. James loved his home at Bighorn and loved golf. He purchased Innsbrook Country Club where he was a member for +40 years, and near where his kids grew up. James' professional life was a wonderful story of the American Dream achieved through self-motivation, hard work, personal strength, perseverance, and strong faith. But above all, his family stood first. For all those who knew him, James had the most endearing and energetic personality shining through and that charismatic and unforgettable sense of humor that would hold the attention of any room he entered. James is survived by his wife, Claire; his son Jamie; his daughter Sarah; his grandchildren Taylor Buckley, and Chad Gagan; his great-granddaughter Olivia Buckley and his brother, Lawrence Gagan. He is preceded in death by his sister, Patricia Gagan; his parents; and his son, Jack Gagan. James and Claire were married for 60 years and renewed their vows last November in a private family ceremony at Sacred Heart Cathedral in Palm Desert. James had three children who he loved unconditionally and above all else, Jack (deceased), Sarah, and James Jr. (Jamie). James also had the joy of spending time with his great-granddaughter who referred to him as Grandpa Bubbles. He also loved animals, especially his beloved dog Jesse who preceded him to heaven just a few days before. James raised his kids to be strong, charitable, loving, and faithful. He was a family man and loved his family deeply. He was able to spend the last few months living with his kids and was surrounded lovingly by family when he passed. James always lived by the scripture "You are blessed to be a blessing" and gave much of his life to charitable works. He also lived by the words "There but for the grace of God go I". He was devout in his faith and prayed earnestly and read his Bible every

day. Jim will be buried in a private family service. The family gratefully declines flowers, but prayers, donations and memories are gladly accepted at St. Jude Children's Hospital, Shriners Children's Hospital, and Salvation Army. Burns Funeral Home, Crown Point entrusted with arrangements.