



## James Rex Sims

July 19, 1928 - May 21, 2025

James Rex Sims, aged 96, a prominent businessman and community leader in Bonita Springs, passed away peacefully at his home on May 21, 2025. Born in 1928 in Wabash, Indiana, Rex was the son of Rex and Clara Sims. He grew up during the challenging days of the Great Depression, alongside his two older sisters, an experience that instilled in him the values of thrift, hard work, and ingenuity.

After completing his education, Rex married his high school sweetheart, Peggy Dawes, in 1949 in Warren, Michigan. He went on to serve honorably in the United States Marine Corps before transitioning back to civilian life, where he began a career as a control engineer. In 1960, Rex founded his own damper manufacturing company, later focusing on designing equipment for the pollution control industry. Under his leadership for two decades, the company achieved recognition as a leader in the electrostatic precipitator industry, serving electrical generating plants.

Rex was committed to his community in Rochester, Indiana, where he served as president of the Chamber of Commerce, the first chairman of the Industrial Bond Agency, and president of the Rochester Community School Board. Alongside other business leaders, he contributed to the growth and development of Rochester by establishing new businesses and constructing buildings that bolstered the town's vitality.

An avid private pilot, Rex owned and cherished his Cessna aircraft, which he used for business, recreational fishing trips, and annual Canadian canoe adventures.

In 1980, Rex and Peggy relocated to Bonita Springs, Florida, where he continued his legacy of community service. He became actively involved in the Bonita Springs Chamber of Commerce, serving as a director, charter member of the President's Club, and contributing to the construction of the Chamber's new building as a member of its building committee.

Rex's entrepreneurial spirit flourished in Bonita Springs, where he founded Builders Glass Service and constructed numerous houses and office buildings. He also played a pivotal role in founding the Bonita Springs Elks Lodge, helping to design and construct its building on Coconut Road, and serving as its first Exalted Ruler. Rex was a 67-year member of the Elks Lodge.

Equally passionate about Rotary International, Rex was an active member for 65 years. He served as president of the Rochester Rotary Club, became a multi-Paul Harris Fellow, and was a generous contributor to the Rotary Foundation. In 2009 He and Peggy traveled with the Rotarians to Belize to distribute wheelchairs. They funded the local club's wheelchair program, with proceeds from one of his books purchasing over 200 wheelchairs.

In 1981, Rex joined the Community Congregational Church, actively serving in multiple roles. In 1999, Rex and Peggy toured Israel with Dr. Charlie Lewis and were baptized in the Jordan River. Later they joined the Bay Presbyterian Church in Bonita Springs.

In 1998, Rex played a central role in a pivotal moment for Bonita Springs.

Alongside a dedicated group, he worked to advocate for the city's incorporation, serving as the vice chair of the effort. After the community voted in favor of becoming a city, Rex collaborated with the start-up committee to lay the foundational framework for its governance. The first mayor, Paul Pass, appointed Rex to the Local Planning Agency to help develop the Comprehensive Plan and zoning laws . This plan remains the bedrock of Bonita Springs' strategy today.

In 1985, he founded Heaven Scent Flowers Inc., with Peggy and his daughter Susie Sayger. He remodeled the Old 41 building to reflect an Old Florida look and joined other downtown businesses looking to establish a walkable, vibrant destination for the community.

In 2009, with his son-in-law Jim Sayger, they launched For Heaven Shakes Ice Cream, sharing the same building as the flower shop. Together, these two businesses have become a cornerstone of the downtown area, continuing to attract visitors and locals alike.

His last business venture, Hosting Bonita, created multiple pet-friendly, short-term vacation rentals that his son, Steve, manages.

He authored 4 books, writing his first book at age 90. His fifth manuscript was sent to the publisher just before he passed away and his children have promised to get it printed.

Rex was a long-standing member of several Masonic and Shrine organizations, including the Rochester Masonic Lodge, South Bend Scottish Rite, Mizpah Shrine of Fort Wayne, and Bonita Springs Shrine Club. He was honored to be chosen for the veteran's Honor Flight to tour Washington, D.C. with his son as his guardian. He was very involved in the historical

preservation of his hometown, Wabash, and added his first-hand stories and memories on their Facebook page.

He is survived by his son, Steven Rex Sims and wife, Christine; daughter, Susie Sayger and husband, Jim, of Bonita Springs; his grandchildren, Abbe and Lucas Guddal; and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Proceeding him in death were his wife of 75 years, Peggy in October 2024; grandsons, Brandon Sims in 2010 and Jacob Guddal in 2005; sisters, Betty Creighton of London, England, and sister Barbara Russell of Wabash, Indiana, along with his beloved Chow Chow, Robear, and Riley, the Boxer. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible nursing team—Alice, Sophia, Melissa, Andrea, Tia, Brenda and Rebecca—for their unwavering compassion and dedicated care.

The family invites guests to gather on Sunday, June 8, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at the Rex Sims Hall in the Bonita Springs Estero Elks Lodge. Services will begin at 3:00 p.m., followed by a time for fellowship until 5:00 p.m. Those who wish to share memories or speak during the service are warmly encouraged to do so. The services will be live streamed on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/events/s/celebration-of-life-for-james-/1202308954421674/](https://www.facebook.com/events/s/celebration-of-life-for-james-/1202308954421674/)

Floral tributes are welcomed, as are donations to the Bonita Springs Rotary Foundation, PO Box 474, Bonita Springs, FL 34133-0474, marked for the "Learn2Earn Scholarship," benefiting Lee County students pursuing trade education.

Rex will be remembered not only for his professional accomplishments but also for his dedication to his communities, his family, and his commitment to service. His legacy will continue to inspire all who knew him.

Online condolences may be offered by visiting [www.ShikanyFuneralHome.co](http://www.ShikanyFuneralHome.co)

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Arrangements are being handled by Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home, Family Owned and Operated since 1978.

# Previous Events

## Gathering of Family and Friends

JUN 8. 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM (ET)

Bonita Springs - Estero Elks Lodge #2753  
3231 Coconut Road  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134

## Celebration of Life

JUN 8. 3:00 PM (ET)

Bonita Springs - Estero Elks Lodge #2753  
3231 Coconut Road  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134

# Tribute Wall



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James Rex Sims.



June 06, 2025 at 12:02 PM



“ Ed & Judy Ptaszek purchased the Treasured Lilies Spray for the family of James Rex Sims.



Ed & Judy Ptaszek - June 05, 2025 at 06:01 PM



“ Ed & Judy Ptaszek planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Rex Sims.

Ed & Judy Ptaszek - June 05, 2025 at 06:01 PM



“ Rolando R. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Rex Sims.

Rolando R. - June 04, 2025 at 06:54 AM

RC

“ To Rex Sims family, like Rex,I was also an Exalted Ruler of the Bonita Springs Elks Lodges. Rex was always a consummate gentleman, teacher and encouraged me to be and do the best I could. He totally understood what I was trying to achieve for our lodge. During our many one on one meetings, he always encouraged me to think about tomorrow, formulate long range plans and made numerous suggestions. I am very grateful to Rex for his help, wisdom and making me a better man. I am grateful to have known Rex and saddened by his passing. Ronald T. Cumming

Ronald Cumming - June 03, 2025 at 10:59 AM

JR

“ I first met Rex when I joined the Bonita springs Estero Elks he always greeted any of us. A very gracious man and loved getting to know him and his lovely wife Peggy. I was so happy I attended his birthday and his and Peggy's anniversary. I also bought one of his books. Wonderful couple. Rex will be missed but he and Peggy now rejoined in Heaven. Joyce Reitz a sister Elk..

Joyce E. Reitz - June 03, 2025 at 12:22 AM

JF

“ Jarek, Jadzia with family purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of James Rex Sims.



Jarek, Jadzia with family - June 02, 2025 at 08:11 PM

JF

“ Jarek, Jadzia with family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Rex Sims.

Jarek, Jadzia with family - June 02, 2025 at 08:11 PM

JF

“ I am deeply sorry for your loss. The first time I saw Rex he was just a happy man. And later - always the same way, with smile. The time when I did some work for him will be in my memory forever. He always was very nice and kind. My English wasn't very good at that time and he didn't care. Always took time to explain. At his son 50th birthday party, I was able to Join him jumping from second floor balcony to the swimming pool. I was really impressed. God bless you with peace and understanding. Hold only good memories, they can't be taken away. I wanted you to know that my thoughts are with you.

Jarek Freund - June 02, 2025 at 07:51 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James Rex Sims.



June 02, 2025 at 07:32 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Rex Sims.

June 02, 2025 at 07:32 PM

TB

“ Rex and Peggy were truly extraordinary and great individuals who will leave a great void in Bonita Springs. Our Deepest Sympathies go out to Steve, Susan and the entire Sims Family for their loss. Your friends at Old 41 Restaurant.

Tony Backos - June 01, 2025 at 05:15 PM