

James Wellington Carter was born August 1, 1913, in Bradner, Ohio, to James L. Carter and Lena Rees Carter. He had an older sister, Elizabeth, and the family was later joined by Dorothae, Juanita, Anna Belle, and Robert.

The Carter family moved to Fostoria in 1915 where the father opened an optometric office. The Carter children always had fond memories of their home at 339 West Fremont Street. Grandpa Rees lived with them, and kept the family cow. They also had a pet groundhog, "Dick," and Jim's best friend was his German shepherd named (for some unknown reason) "Collie."

Music was an important part of life in the Carter household, and each of the children played an instrument. Jim started with the cornet, and as a young boy became proficient enough to join the high school band. When the band entered the first national high school band contest in 1923, Jim and two other young boys, another cornet player and a drummer, went along to Chicago. They were not old enough to qualify for the competition, but they were featured performers when the band played concerts. The Fostoria High School band won first place in the contest, Jim's picture appeared on the front page of the Chicago Evening American newspaper, and the three young boys — dressed in white sailor suits — played "Semper Fidelis" during a radio broadcast from the Drake Hotel.



1923

Jim graduated from Fostoria High School in 1931, and headed for Chicago and his father's old school, the Northern Illinois College of Optometry. He graduated in 1933, and spent that summer working at the Chicago world's fair, "The Century of Progress."

In early 1935, Jim's father died unexpectedly. Jim passed the state board exams and opened an office in Fostoria in late summer of the same year, taking over his father's practice. His office was located for many years in the front of the Carter house at 138 West Center Street. Later, he built an office building next to his house on Summit Street. He practiced optometry for forty years, drawing patients from a wide area around Fostoria.

In 1938, James Carter married Wilda Bates. Their daughters Jill and Diana were born in 1939 and 1943. They purchased a hillside lot at 525 Summit Street, and in early 1951 moved in to the passive solar house that they had designed. The idea of solar heating wasn't new at the time,



but the house was unusual with its shed roof, south window wall, and southern overhang. The overhang was calculated to keep sun out of the house in summer, but to let it in in the winter. Wilda furnished the house in the style that is now called mid-century modern. In later years, Jim reflected that few people can live in their dream house for more than 50 years. Instead of a grave marker, he said, the house could be his memorial.

Jim's interest in music continued though the years. He played in the Methodist Sunday School orchestra, and was a member of the Fostoria VFW band that won national championships in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Everyone who visited the house will remember Jim's work room in the basement where he tinkered with his garage sale finds and repaired many old musical instruments, including a player piano and several reed organs. He also created lamps and clocks out of instruments that were too badly damaged to restore. There he kept his cane collection and the many bicycles he owned over the years, including high-wheelers and a tandem. He was still riding for exercise well into his 80s.

He was never a competitive athlete, but he enjoyed fishing, hunting, hiking, and horses. He broadcast on the Ham radio frequency with call letters WD8AJI.

After retirement, Jim and Wilda often took automobile trips — anything from a day-long outing to a cross-country expedition. Jim's excellent sense of direction and his encyclopedic knowledge of the back roads in northwestern Ohio led them along many scenic byways. He was fond of cars with nontraditional engines.

Jim and Wilda also visited Japan, Hawaii, and most of the continental U.S. They took several trips to Canada, Mexico, and Europe, including a stay in Germany and Hungary with their friends Janos and Christel Szabo.



1988

James W. Carter died in his sleep Thursday morning, November 16, 2006, at the Good Shepherd Home, Fostoria, Ohio, where he had resided for six months. He was a 91-year member of Wesley United Methodist Church, Fostoria, where a memorial service was held on December 2, 2006.

Jim outlived all his siblings and his wife, Wilda, who died in 2001. His surviving family includes his daughters, Jill and Diana, and son-in-law Don; his grandchildren, John, Jennifer, Trudy, and Richard; and four great-grandsons, Carter, Kevin, Rees, and Kadin.

Memorial contributions may be made to Wesley United Methodist Church, 900 Van Buren Street, Fostoria, OH 44830.



2004