



MARCH 2026

## James Bjerklie Remembers Trinidad State with Gift in His Will

READ TIME: 2 MINUTES

Trinidad State was humbled to recently learn about a generous legacy gift from Jim Bjerklie, who passed away in April, 2025. Jim chose to make his gift in his will.

Born in Gilby, North Dakota, Jim was one of nine children. Jim was an Army veteran with the 11th Airborne Division during the Korean war, although he was not deployed. After his service, Jim attended Trinidad State where he obtained degrees in Gunsmithing and Automotive Body Work.



*1954-1955 Sophomore Class Treasurer Jim Bjerklie (far right) with fellow class officers at Trinidad State*

During his time at Trinidad State, Jim was noted for his sense of humor and storytelling abilities. He joined the Gun Club and was a member of the Rifle Team. Jim was elected to Student Council, appearing several times in the Trojan Tribune newspaper with his fellow council members.

Jim chose to make his gift unrestricted, enabling Trinidad State to use these funds in the area of greatest need.



*Jim Bjerklie (back row, second from left) with the 1954 Trinidad State Rifle Team*

After receiving his degree, Jim relocated to Seattle, Washington, and worked as a gunsmith at a local sporting goods store, a position he held for 20 years. He built and repaired guns and fishing gear. He then accepted a position as a precision machinist at Boeing, where he would finish his career, retiring in 1991.

Per his obituary, Jim remained an avid sportsman and hunter who never lost his gift for storytelling. He also loved to make candy. Each holiday season he would transform his home into a candy factory, creating his signature sour creams, nougats and caramels.

Jim married Sally Croft Stevens in 1963 and they enjoyed 56 years of marriage. He is survived by three children, six grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He passed peacefully at his home.



*Jim Bjerklie (left) with former Gunsmithing Instructor Dave Nolan*

---

Trinidad State is grateful for Jim's foresight and generosity. Jim chose to make his gift unrestricted. This allows for these funds to support our students and the College in ways that create the greatest potential impact.

If you'd like to join the many friends of Trinidad State who have shared their values by including a gift in their will, please contact Toni DeAngelis at [toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu](mailto:toni.deangelis@trinidadstate.edu) or 719-846-5520. You can also visit us online.

Thank you for considering this opportunity.