

**BIOGRAPHY OF**  
**JAMES L. NICHELSON**  
**GRAND EXALTED RULER**  
**2009-2010**

*Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the U.S.A.*

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Born May 3, 1948, in Lima, Ohio, **James L. Nicholson**, the oldest of ten children, was raised on a working farm, learning responsibility early in life. Jim's father worked second shift in town, so Jim and his younger brother, John, milked the cows and worked the farm. If anything broke, they fixed it.

After high school, Jim worked his way through college at The Ohio State University, earning a bachelor's and master's dual degree with distinction in 1971. Jim briefly pondered going on for a doctorate and becoming a university professor, but decided, instead, to give law school a try. He earned a Juris Doctor degree from The Ohio State University School of Law, cum laude, in 1974.

Jim spent four years in the U.S. Air Force and Army ROTC while in college and law school. After graduation, he spent several months on active duty at Fort Ben Harrison in Indianapolis, Indiana, where he attended Army Officer Basic Training. The rest of Jim's military career was in the inactive reserves.

Jim met his wife, the former Mary Carolyn Pearl, in 1969, while providing consulting services to a model cities program in Martins Ferry, Ohio. The couple were married August 19, 1972. Mary Carolyn taught elementary school in Westerville, Ohio, for two years while Jim finished law school. She is now principal of St. Mary Central School in Martins Ferry.

After graduation, Jim was offered a position with a law firm in Belmont County, Ohio. As this was the home area of his wife, they were happy to return to the upper Ohio River Valley. The couple established a home in Martins Ferry. There, they raised three children: Tom, an engineer, Lauren, an attorney, and Ellen, a marketing director. Jim and Mary Carolyn boast of their four grandchildren.

In 1977, Jim became chief trial assistant in the Belmont County Prosecutor's Office. In 1980, he became Belmont County public defender. In 1996, he became a founding Belmont County park commissioner, serving as secretary/treasurer for ten years. He has recently retired from public service to devote time to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

Mary Carolyn's father, Charles Pearl, was a two-time Exalted Ruler of Martins Ferry Elks Lodge No.

895. And, soon after returning to Martins Ferry, Jim was pleased to be initiated into the Order and soon started through the Lodge chairs, becoming Exalted Ruler in 1979-1980. He has served as a Lodge Officer every year since his initiation, replacing his father-in-law as Lodge Treasurer in 1994 and holding that office ever since. The Lodge voted him into Honorary Life Membership in 2007. By then, after two mergers, the Lodge had become Ohio River Valley Lodge No. 231.

Jim Nicholson became active in the Ohio Elks Association Southeast District and in the State Association. He worked his way through the District chairs, becoming District Activities Chairman in 1987-1988. He became legal advisor to the Ohio Elks Association in 1983 and has served in that capacity almost every year to the present. He has also been State Judiciary Chairman and Parliamentarian. He was named an Honorary Ohio State President in 2008.

Jim also has served the Grand Lodge, becoming District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler in 1990. In 1996, he was appointed to the Grand Lodge Committee on Judiciary, where he served until 2004 and as Chairman the last two years. In 2005, he was elected to the Board of Grand Trustees, serving as Approving Member East, Home Member, Pension Member and Vice Chairman. He has also served the Grand Lodge for two years as Parliamentarian and as a Member of the Pardon Commission.

Active in the community, Jim is a member of the Knights of Columbus, Eagles, Redmen, VFW (life member) and the American Legion. He is a past president of the Belmont County Bar Association, the Martins Ferry Chamber of Commerce, the Ohio Valley Classical Camerata Choir, and the Belmont County Chapter of the American Cancer Society, and he formed the Martins Ferry Educational Foundation. He is a cantor and confirmation instructor at St. Mary's Catholic Church in Martins Ferry. He and Mary Carolyn, for many years, codirected Teens Encounter Christ retreats for high school juniors and seniors.

Jim Nicholson believes strongly in the charitable and good works of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks. As Grand Exalted Ruler (National President) he hopes he can spread the word that **ELKS MAKE A DIFFERENCE.**