



Memorial Resolution

James A. Gaidos
(July 15, 1936 – November 11, 2025)

Department of Physics and Astronomy
Purdue University

James A. Gaidos, Professor Emeritus of Physics and Astronomy, died November 11, 2025 due to a stroke. He is survived by his wife Susan.

Jim was born in Clarksburg, West Virginia, on July 15, 1936. He earned his B.A. from West Virginia University in 1958, and his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin in January 1963. He was a research associate at the University of Wisconsin from 1963 to 1965. He was Assistant Professor of Physics at Hamilton College from 1965 to 1968, before joining the Department of Physics at Purdue in 1968. Jim retired in 2001 with the designation of Professor Emeritus.

Jim was instrumental in starting the astrophysics effort in the Department. His research focused on high energy gamma rays, and he was widely published with the VERITAS collaboration and colleagues around the world. Jim's earlier physics research focused on proton decay.

He co-authored a 1996 paper in Nature regarding Gamma-ray bursts that challenged existing theoretical models. The work was with Prof. John Finley and Dr. Glenn Sembroski, and others, utilizing data from the Whipple Observatory in Arizona.

Jim was also involved in constructing and installing the first optical telescope in Antarctica, which comprised 10 one-inch mirrors utilizing copper insulation and heating coils to prevent icing and fogging in the harsh climate. His involvement in international scientific efforts helped position Purdue's physics program at the forefront of astrophysical exploration.

Jim was the dissertation advisor for many graduate students, and he spent countless late Friday afternoons in "physics meetings" for his graduate students, postdocs, and fellow faculty at local establishments in the Village, where liquid refreshment could be had by the pitcher. Jim was always friendly and ready for a good conversation. In his later years, Jim's longer hair combined with his casual beachcomber appearance was a signature look in the hallways of the Physics Building.