

Chip Shots: Jim Rehbit died doing what he loved

By John Craig, August 20, 2010



Jim Rehbit with son Jay

Jim Rehbit loved the game of golf. Friends called him "Boom Boom" for the way he "boomed" the ball. Jim was a state worker who took care of his family and spent time with his buddies on the golf course. I'm sure you know a "Jim." "Oh yes, he was an avid golfer," said Marcia Rehbit, Jim's wife of 36 years. But Jim has been gone since 2004 when, at age 61, his heart finally gave out. Many people hope they leave a lasting impression, besides family and friends. Believe me, Jim has. I never met Jim, but I see results of his legacy.

For the past five years, his family and friends have gathered for the "Boom Boom Classic" at the Town of Colonie Golf Course. It's not a serious tournament, it's just fun. It's not corporate, by any means. It's simply one family getting folks together for golf, some raffles and a backyard party. It's just that simple. After last week's 5th Anniversary, "Boom Boom" has raised more than \$20,000 for St. Peter's Cardiac Rehab Center.

For the second year, a team that directly benefits and uses equipment paid for by the "Boom Boom Classic" joined in. I know, because I have been part of that particular foursome for two years now. I am a heart patient and St. Peter's Cardiac Rehab and its staff members have helped me and so many others. Jim's Journey: In 1986, Jim had a heart attack. He was just 43 and, Marcia told me, there was a lot of damage. "It was a very big one and he attributed a lot of his recovery to the people at Cardiac Rehab," she said. "Doctors gave him 10 years to live. He made it 17.

Jim worked for the Dept. of Education as a printer and designer until he finally retired in January of 2003. When he wasn't working, he was working out, or so it seemed. He also loved playing golf at the Town of Colonie Golf Course. Marcia said Jim followed doctors' orders and had developed a tie with his cardiac nurse Noreen Kelsey, whom he met when he first came into the hospital. Noreen followed him through rehab, and today is part of a team that's second to none. "He would follow-up with the doctors and did remarkably well," Marcia said. Jim carried his pills in a container that was always with him, and sometimes tucked in his golf bag along with tees and all the rest. And yes, Jim actually died on the golf course, July 8, 2004.

He and some close friends, who all knew of his heart condition, played Ballston Spa Country Club. They had made the turn and got to the 13th hole. "It was just very, very sudden," Marcia said. "I know if there had been any indication of any problems at the turn, they would have said, 'C'mon Jim, let's come in.'" But there wasn't. Since retirement, "Boom Boom" had been playing a lot of golf. Then it happened. Very, very sudden. "He hit a shot and stood there and that was it," she told me. "He was doing what he loved with people he enjoyed and having a good time."

Jim and Marcia have two sons: Matt, 36, teaches in Bethlehem and Jay, 40 next month, works for an insurance company in New Jersey. They wanted to do something in their father's memory. "He loved golf, he was a kid, he loved people and friends and family," Marcia said. "I think he would be very proud of what his sons have done. "He just was guy who loved life and loved people and that's what they want to follow up on," she said as her voice cracked.

My foursome of heart patients included Jack, Paul and Dan. Jack, 68, is an avid golfer and retired Senior Investigator at SUNY, who had blockage of the left bundle branch. First a stent but later quadruple bypass. He plays golf four times a week. "I'm as routine as routine gets," Jack remembers his doctor telling him. "It may have been routine for him, but it wasn't for me," he said. Paul, 61, is a business agent with the Teamsters Union who once sparred with Muhammad Ali. He had a heart attack while tiling his kitchen floor in February. "I had some chest pain," Paul said. "I thought I had pulled a muscle." Dan, 65, is the director of sales and marketing for Wohrles in Pittsfield who has a very rare, undetected birth defect that led to ruptured aorta. He was actually given last

rites. "I shouldn't be here," he said, and said they called his wife to the room to say good bye. "Here I am acting like a two-year old," Dan joked last Friday, "or something like that." And I had quadruple bypass surgery at age 40. We all owe a lot to "Boom Boom." If you haven't already, there's still time to find a charity golf outing. I hope you pick one or two that are close to your heart.

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