



## James Kent Scoble

May 9, 1931 - February 16, 2026

I left Cook County, Illinois as a twenty-year-old. Sixty-seven years later, arriving in Monroe County, Indiana, I thought, "How nice to round out my days in a town like Bloomington." Graced as it was by a respected university, I was reminded of John Winthrop's "city on the hill."

Since then, the people I've met and the obit pieces I've read in the local paper have altered my thinking. Whether the metaphorical hill has sunken or its surrounding plains have risen I cannot say, but what I see now is a prominence surrounded by a mix of woods and fields on a rolling plain, all illumined equally.

On this, the occasion of my own constituent dispersal, I wish to praise the city, the university and the dreamers who come from places near and far, testing and invigorating both, then scattering to other cities and towns in America and elsewhere to inspire other dreamers.

Mostly, however, I wish to praise the unpraised--the lower luminaries of this and many other towns of any size-- the people that sustain individuals and families and towns, the ordinary people who are the warp and woof, the tillers and planters, the producers of the youth with a hunger to know and the confidence to leave these places for the colleges and universities that promise to satisfy that hunger in the towns that embrace them.

I speak of the mamaws who unfailingly made a lap for us, who listened to the cause for our tears, who dried them, gave us a kiss and a cookie and sent us back to engage with life. Thanks too to the pawpaws at whose workshop doors a neighbor's tractor or truck was brought for fixing, the cost a future favor. I'd include the uncle who somehow never let his crops suffer while giving numberless hours to coach or sponsor one of his children's teams.

Surely there's a verse, maybe a chorus, for your mother's four sisters: the one who organized the family reunion every year or the one who provided every baby, every family bride a quilt both beautiful and personalized or the maiden aunt popular both as a genial and skilled partner at the euchre table or opponent for the backyard cornhole game.

There were others of this ilk, practitioners who sanctified the life of everyday usefulness— people who worked faithfully and well at a job for ten, or twenty, or thirty years. Truthfully there were some that didn't: the negative nuggets. Most families had at least one.

It's hard to raise even a glass of sweet milk to those folk but there's this to remember: whether folks gave our spirits a lift or repelled us, each one added direction and trajectory to the launching of our lives. Maybe we even went farther because of the dark ones so we need to embrace them all.

How to embrace them all becomes the question. Copland's "Fanfare for a Common Man" is tempting but at heart is too fanciful to the ear of plain folk. I can only think fitting a British ditty from WWI called "Bless 'Em All". Revived in WWII, it needs laundering for polite company. I recommend the Bing Crosby version. He croons when rollicking vigor is needed, but it goes like this:

"Bless them all! Bless them all!

The long and the short and the tall,  
Bless all the sergeants, the top-kickers too,  
Bless all the corporals and above all bless you,  
For we're saying goodbye to them all  
As up the gangway we crawl,  
No ice-cream and cookies for stout-hearted rookies, (or alternately)  
There'll be no promotion this side of the ocean,  
So cheer up my lads, bless them all."

I thank those who have made my stay here so pleasant. I could not have specified a place or a people to live among more wonderfully ordinary or more commonly exemplary. I wish I'd been occasionally inspirational. Realistically I hope I've been regularly decent to all.

James Kent Scoble

b. Detroit, MI, May 9, 1931.

d. Bloomington, IN, Feb. 16, 2026

P.S. To today's Marines and my former comrades of the 2nd Inf Trng Regt, 1st Mar Div, FMF, which then included veterans of Guadalcanal as well as survivors of the fighting march from the Chosin Reservoir to Hungnam in Korea during the winter of 1950, "Semper Fi" and "Oorah!"

P.S.S. James "Jim" Scoble leaves behind some of his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, in-laws, nieces, and nephews, along with many devoted friends near and far. Jim never stopped being curious, reading, and learning during his 94 years on this planet.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Hoosier Hills Food Bank in Jim's memory.