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James M. Craciun BIOGRAPHY

James M. ("Jim") Craciun, a proud American Romanian Italian, was born on August 31, 1951 and raised in Cleveland, OH. Upon graduating cum laude from St. Edward's High School in 1969, he went on to graduate in 1973 from Cleveland State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Business, and a major in Labor and Industrial Relations. In 1976, he obtained his funeral director license and joined the family business, where today he manages the Craciun Berry and Corrigan Craciun Funeral Homes with his son Jonathan, brother Joseph, and niece Alexandra in Cleveland, Ohio.

Jim married Marcy Rocawich, and together they had five children, Noelle Fitzpatrick (Jake), Jason (Monica), Jonathan (Michaela), Jesse, and Nicolas, before her untimely death in 2010. Jim is also the grandfather of six.

Continuing in the legacy of his family's human rights activities, Jim's Romanian odyssey unfolded in 1974 when he [smuggled Bibles and Catechisms into Communist Romania](#) which began his own serious lifetime commitment to human rights. At that time and throughout communist dictator Ceausescu's over 30 year reign of Communist terror and murder, any person in Romania found with a bible printed in another country would face a five year sentence.

In April of 1977, Jim attended the International Human Rights Conference in London, where he and the leading international Romanian human rights activists in the Diaspora, as well as many free-world international political figures, in solidarity with Polish, Czech, and Romanian dissidents living behind the iron curtain, met at the royal Holloway University in Egham, England to draft the [International Memorandum denouncing the Helsinki Accords](#) and condemning the USSR for its outrageous lies and cover-up of the intolerable acts of terror, murder and human oppression which the Communist party consistently perpetrated against the people behind the iron curtain. The International Memorandum was signed simultaneously in Romania and Czechoslovakia by courageous dissidents who were later imprisoned for this act.

The Memorandum was presented during the Belgrade Conference on the Helsinki Accords and it confirmed to the free world the lies of the Accords and the acts of horror many of its signatories freely performed on their peoples. The Memorandum ultimately led to international disillusionment with the Helsinki Accords.

During the 1980's, Jim Craciun became a founding member of the Ohio Committee in Support of Solidarity for the Polish people and all people seeking freedom from the tyranny of communism. From 1983 to 1984, he was co-chairmen of the Ohio Committee to Renounce the Yalta Agreement, signed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill after WWII in 1945 that put the people of Central and Eastern Europe into the communist Soviet Union. With the signing of the Yalta Agreement, this *Western Betrayal* gave Stalin's communist regime absolute tyrannical control over the newly established central and eastern European Soviet bloc of countries. Although the exact number of Eastern European lives of all ages who were starved, died and/or were tortured and murdered for rejecting the absolute tyranny of the communist party while striving to maintain their religious and intellectual freedoms after the signing of the Yalta Agreement is unknown, *conservative* estimates put the total dead at 65 million.

In 1986, Jim coordinated a national demonstration of Romanian Americans in Washington D.C. to demonstrate against Most Favored Nation status for communist Romania. He was interviewed by Mike Wallace of 60 Minutes, but it was not broadcast. Jim began his public speaking in 1982 as a member of the Metropolitan Speaker's Bureau of Northeastern Ohio - his topic: "Life under Communism".

In 1984, Jim became a founding member of the World Union of Free Romanians (WUFR) in Geneva, Switzerland along with Mr. Ion Ratiu, a founding member of amnesty international, and the 1990 candidate for the Presidency of Romania. He was elected Vice President of WUFR at the second World Congress held in Paris, France in June 1987 and was re-elected to this position in 1991 and 1996 in Paris France, and again in 2000 in Bucharest, Romania. In addition, Jim co-founded the International Romanian Relief Fund (IRRF) with former US Ambassador to Romania, Dr. David B. Funderburk. See: [James Craciun Speech, WUFR Congress, May 27, 1992](#) and [James Craciun Speech, WUFR Congress, May 21, 1994](#)

On January 13, 1995, Jim advised the Clinton administration on the enlargement of NATO, representing the Romanian-American perspective. See: [Invitation to White House Conference](#) and [James Craciun Addressed Delegates to White House Conference](#)

On the Holy Day of Christmas, 1989, forty-five years of dedication by the Craciun Family to promote the defeat of communism in the streets and halls of government in the US, Russia, and Romania, were fulfilled with the execution of Romanian communist Dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife by the People's Tribunal of Romania, which ultimately ended decades of Stalinist communist terror throughout Central and Eastern Europe. Communism's political gangsters were driven into the dark political underground, employing, unchallenged by the U.S. to this day, the same tools of tyranny, corruption, extortion, intimidation and murder to dismantle the new Democratic Republics,

Together, Jim and his older brother, ITM Chairman & CEO Jack Craciun III's hallmark humanitarian endeavors and initiatives have perpetuated the pioneering spirit of his family name, Romanian for "Christmas," by expanding upon the legacy of their Romanian immigrant Grandfather, John J. Craciun, Sr., who in 1921 directly contributed to the establishment of the first Romanian Orthodox Church in the United States (1904), St. Mary's, and the first Romanian American Bank in the US (1921), Pioneer Savings and Loan, both in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1993, through the ITM Capital Fund Division, Jack, and Jim (ITM Group, COO (Europe)), became founders of the American Romanian Investment Corp. (ARIC) to establish the first American-Romanian Bank in Romania, Banca Populara. The ARIC agreed to appoint the ITM Group as the international sole agent and worldwide representative of the ARIC and the Banca Primamerica in Arad, Romania.

From 1985 to 1991, Jim was a member of the executive board of the Diocesan Union of Holy Name Societies, the Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. In 1985, he was chairman of the anti-pornography campaign that stopped local convenient stores from displaying adult magazines. From 1989 to 1991, he served as president of the Diocesan Union of Holy Name Societies covering 8 counties and 245 churches.

Jim's civic leadership includes serving as President of West Cleveland Jaycees in 1983, a chapter establish by Jack Craciun III, President of the West Cleveland Jaycees in 1980; Board Member of the West Side Ecumenical Ministry from 1985 to 1988; and the Co-Chair of the Cultural Committee for the International Children's Games in 2004.

From 2002 to 2009, Jim served as Chairman of the Board of the International Services Center, a United Way agency that resettles refugees. In addition, he is past chairperson of Cleveland's 2000 and 2001 International Folk Festivals in Playhouse Square, founder of Cub Scout Pack #541 of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel School in Cleveland, and currently serves as Our Lady of Mount Carmel School Foundation president. Jim ran unsuccessfully in 2006 for State Senate of Ohio in District 23. In 2010, Jim became incorporating secretary of the Cleveland Police Foundation, where he currently serves proudly as Vice President.

In 2007, Jim Craciun became a humble recipient of the Freedom Award from the American Nationalities Movement for contributions to world peace, human rights, and dedication to a wide range of community organizations, and in April, 2017 Jim was inducted into The Cleveland International Hall of Fame in recognition of his valuable and lasting contributions to this multicultural city, his global impacts, and his inspiration to past, current and future generations of leaders. See: [James Craciun Cleveland International Hall of Fame Induction Keynote Speech](#).