



James Barry Stenkamp

October 26, 1961 - June 3, 2020

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Leavenworth, WA

James Stenkamp (Jim) died at age 58 on June 3, 2020. He was born in Pendleton, Oregon. Jim's early days were spent in Boise, Moscow, and Pocatello, ID, and he graduated from Capital High School in Boise. His siblings recount to their kids so many "Uncle Jim" stories from these days, that they could fill books! Most of these involved the building of contraptions that are probably illegal now (and perhaps then, too?), such as homemade fireworks, rockets, go-carts, telescopes, etc. These would come together with salvaged materials like paper towel tubes, discarded 2-stroke engines from the landfill, Erector Set parts, and substances from a poorly-labeled chemistry set. Jim harnessed his fearlessness, creativity, and passion for building by turning to a career in architecture, completing a Master's degree in Architecture at Washington University in St. Louis.

Jim started his early career in Minnesota, learning as much as he could at a variety of firms. After moving to Washington State, he established himself as a caring, reliable, and creative project architect. He was encouraged to strike out on his own by a general contractor and friend, and this independence led to an incredibly fulfilling career.

Jim is gone but will not be forgotten as he has left an indelible mark over the past 25 years, as easily Walla Walla Valley's most prolific architect of his time. Over his lengthy career, Jim worked mainly with the local non-profits, helping them to better serve the community. His clients included Blue Mountain Action Council, YMCA, YWCA, Whitman College, WWCC, Odd Fellows, Walla Walla Valley Academy, Walla Walla Clinic, Providence St Mary Medical Center, and the Horizon Group, as well as the Port of Columbia in Dayton and Shalom Ecumenical in the Tri-Cities. He completed multiple projects for all of his long-term clients, forging lasting friendships along the way.

Jim was passionate about his work and very proud of the many buildings that he designed as well as how those structures improved the mission of his clients. During a time when architecture was rapidly changing from an art form to a computer aided design (CAD) based discipline, Jim resisted this shift as he felt that it restricted his ability to mold and shape structures to fit his vision and that of his clients. Jim took this a step further by collecting his mechanical, civil, structural, and electrical consultants' design input and personally drafting these components by hand to incorporate them into the final set of construction plans. By doing so he could construct every element of the building in his mind, correcting many possible conflicts on paper before handing off the plans to the construction team. On the more intricate projects Jim would spend countless hours building a scale model of the project to allow the client to better visualize the finished product so that fine tuning could be done. He was a true architect in every sense of the word.

Jim will forever be remembered for his iconic bright floral shirts, shorts (no matter the weather) and infectious grin. He had a brilliant mind, but also a playful kidlike enthusiasm for life. He was a compassionate caring friend to many. He would remember the names of most everyone he met and treated all with equal respect. He could recount intricate details about hikes or climbs

that he had taken years prior. He was an avid hiker, trail runner, mountain climber, rock climber, fly fisherman and cross-country skier. He was so tenacious and passionate, struggling at first to run to the mailbox with his asthma, then carefully and methodically working his way to 50 kilometer distances through the mountains that he so enjoyed. He was a loving husband to Susie. The two were an inseparable team, sharing years of outdoor adventures together. For the last 12 years of his career, Susie joined Jim in business, handling landscape design and assisting with design and drafting duties. For her, that was the most wonderful job she ever had, creating a vision for a new building while learning so much from her best friend and love of her life.

Jim is survived by his wife Susie (Leavenworth, WA), siblings Cindy (Ft. Collins, CO), Deb (Moscow, ID), and Joe (Boise, ID) and their spouses, his mother Mardy (Boise, ID), four nieces and one nephew. Jim was preceded in death by his father, Ben.

Due to Covid-19 a celebration of life will be held at a later date. Please consider donations to the Pacific Crest Trail Association in Jim's honor.

Update:

Jim's celebration of life will be postponed until the summer of 2021 and will be held in Dayton/Walla Walla, Washington. A memorial tree will be planted at his and Susie's residence in Leavenworth. Decorations for the tree will be welcome, whether sent or brought in person.

**Update:

Please come celebrate Jim's life by sharing your presence and your memories. A service will be held at 2 pm on Saturday, September 11, 2021 at 252 N. Touchet Road, Dayton, WA. It is graciously hosted by Jennie Dickinson

and Jay Ball in their new home that we created together. To be Covid safe, the memorial will be held outside. An RSVP to Susie would be wonderful but not required.

Tribute Wall

BH

“ Dear Susie and Family, we feel so fortunate to have worked with Jim on countless occasions at our flooring store, and we send you our deepest condolences. Jim was a joy to work with! No matter the project, we always appreciated Jim's genuine enthusiasm and his kind and bright personality. He engaged all of us in memorable philosophical architectural discussions, and was always interested in the latest material options he could utilize for his clients. It was never about him - no ego (certainly not your normal architect). We might have been slightly jealous that he had the freedom to sport the shorts and colorful floral shirts as his work uniform. He easily earned our respect both as an architect and a kind-spirited man, and we will miss his energy in the world!

Brandon Hallsted - June 30, 2020 at 03:26 PM

JR

“ I was shocked and filled with sorrow when I learned of Jim's death. Jim was the architect for The Salvation Army's new food bank and service center in Walla Walla. As chairman of the board, I interacted often with Jim. He did a fantastic job designing the building, and getting to know Jim was a real joy. He was kind, considerate, attentive, compassionate, supportive--riches Jim brought to his relationships. He truly was a prince of a man. I'll always remember him that way. My heart goes out to you, Susie, and all those who loved Jim.

J. Andrew Rodriguez - June 29, 2020 at 12:41 PM

SB

“ I got to know Jim while I worked at Walla Walla Community College & he was performing his architectural magic on our campus. After retiring, I'd run into him & Susie when they were in town for architectural projects or other reasons. He was always so friendly & fun to visit with in various locales. My sincere sympathy goes out to Susie, other family & friends who knew & loved Jim.

Sandi Blackaby - June 28, 2020 at 11:56 AM

BU

“ I was so sorry to hear about Jim's passing, Susie, even more so since he was so healthy and vigorous, and your partner and best friend. Feel free to reach out when you're ready.
Take care, Brian (Utting)

Brian Utting - June 22, 2020 at 06:27 PM

JP

“ Kari and I are devastated by the loss of Jim. He was a bright, shining light in our world....so much good energy, cheer, and humor. He was a wonderful friend and a terrific architect. I worked with him for over 20 years at Walla Walla Community College where he designed many buildings and renovations. He took on as one of his last projects before he retired, the redesign of our home in Walla Walla and did a fantastic job. We love the results! I shared Jim's passion for fishing which we enjoyed together many times. He always out-fished me. Kari is aware of many construction projects Jim created, detailed, and watched over for local nonprofit organizations in Walla Walla. Jim and Susie were a wonderful and loving team.

Love from Kari Isaacson and Jim Peterson

Jim Peterson - June 22, 2020 at 05:53 PM

EK

“ Dear Susie,

We were shocked and stunned by the news of Jim's passing. It was less than two years ago that we reconnected with you and Jim regarding some maintenance issues with the beautiful office building Jim designed and built for us. Twenty-five years had passed but like long lost friends, we resumed our friendship and did not miss a beat. You and he were so generous and willing to help us again. We are reminded of how random, fragile and unfair life can be. We will sorely miss this kind person and regret we did not stay in touch. We cannot fathom the depth of your grief. While we don't believe we have actually met you, we feel we know you from Jim's happy descriptions. Please know you were the light of his life. When he would tell us about the past and planned "adventures of Jim and Susie" his face would like light up with joy and excitement. He was so joyful and excited when he spoke of you. Anyone and everyone could tell he loved you dearly.

*With our most sincere condolences,
Ed and Amy Kwan*

Ed Kwan - June 20, 2020 at 02:37 PM

WB

“ Dear Sussi,
Your friend Kelly Meinig passed on the terrible, sad news of Jim's sudden death. This truly came as a shock to me and probably to all who knew Jim. My memories of Jim go immediately back to our work together on the Edison Terrace South and Kennewick Perry Suites housing projects. Jim was full of ideas to make these projects better and fit within their budgets. You, Sussi, were a vital partner with Jim on those projects. Every winter Jim invited me to go X-C skiing with him, but that never worked out. The two of you would have quickly left me in the dust (snow). Jim took such delight in showing me around your new home last fall. He was rightly proud of his (and your) design of this lovely, comfortable home, which will constantly remind you of your beloved Jim. Every visit to Edison Terrace South or Kennewick Perry Suites will surely evoke pleasant memories of Jim in me and in those he worked with on those projects. A donation to the Pacific Crest Trail Association in Jim's name will be a small expression of our deep sympathy toward you and your family. May you experience peace that can only come from God. Your friends, Rich and Doris Barchet

WR Barchet - June 19, 2020 at 10:54 PM

CA

“ Oh Susie I am so sad to hear this...I will always remember Jim as a very kind and decent man. I know he was your best friend and I am so very sorry for your loss.

Caroline - June 18, 2020 at 06:03 PM

SG

“ *What sad shocking news! It seems like just yesterday Jim and Suzie ran from Chinook Pass to White Pass counting logs to scout for the Pacific Crest Trail Association.*

I loved Jim's upbeat attitude. I treasure the conversations I've enjoyed with Jim and Suzie.

My heart goes out to you, Suzie. What a painful loss! My heart weeps with sadness.

I am giving to the Pacific Crest Trail Association in honor of Jim.

Steven Ghan - June 18, 2020 at 05:06 PM

JB

“ *Susie, I am so sad to learn of Jim's passing. I know he was a rock for you. I will miss hearing of your many adventures. My thoughts and prayers are with you through this tough time.*

John Berg - June 18, 2020 at 04:59 PM

MH

“ Susie - We are so sad to hear about Jim. I have been spending alot of time thinking about all the times I had together with the two of you and the more I think, the more memories I recall. I could write a book. One memory that comes to mind was the time Jim and I went fly fishing up on the Yakima River. It was near my birthday (July 1st) so the flows in the River were still pretty high. We had to wade across the River and during this transit, one of Jim's waders filled with water causing him to get carried down the river toward a log jam. All I could do was watch from where I was but out of good fortune Jim grabbed ahold of a tree just before the log jam and slowly made his way to the safety of the shore. I remember him yelling at me "Don't come in the River it's too dangerous." It was very dramatic and once he recovered from the experience he says "Let's go get some coffee and something to eat". We did at the Turtle Cafe. Much to my surprise as we were finishing dinner he said, "It's still light out, let's go catch some fish". I was quite surprised since just an hour earlier he had nearly drowned and when I expressed my reservation about fishing more he said "It's your birthday, we're here to fish". And so we fished and that was Jim in a nutshell to me. Positive, can-do and always thoughtful of others.

I will really miss him. My thoughts and prayers to you Susie and your family. We will keep you in our minds and prayers moving forward.

Matthew Hinck - June 16, 2020 at 02:09 PM

JS

“*Susie, we are heartbroken. Matt and I spent Saturday night revisiting the memories of our times together with you and Jim - the hiking, backpacking, and many dinners together with the grad school gang (do you remember the night we all wore those funny hats?). Jim was always the grown up in the room; he had a real job and you guys lived in a real house! I recall Matt and Jim's excellent fishing adventures, that crazy drive up the middle fork of the Snoqualmie River road to get to some hiking trail, with potholes half the height of your car, and when Jim came to Minnesota with Matt to help move me back to Seattle. I surprised him by driving 100 mph in Montana! Jim was the consummate outdoorsman, a generous and kind friend, and so much fun to be around. I see his smile and hear his laughter right now. We send our love to you and to your family and Jim's family, and we will keep all of you in our thoughts and prayers in the days and weeks ahead.*

Jill Seebergh - June 15, 2020 at 10:01 PM

BR

“*Jim was a truly joyful, can-do, energizing person. We have so many great memories of hiking and adventures with Jim and Susie when we lived as grad students in Seattle 1991 to 1997. Jim was always giving, and taking care of others. This rips us up. We miss him dearly and share our condolences with Susie, and friends and family. -Bret Snyder and Anna Quisel*

Bret - June 15, 2020 at 01:01 PM

BR

“ I met Jim while attending graduate school with Susie. Both he and Susie taught me how to hike and rockclimb with such utter patience. My favorite memory is when we summited Mt Ingles (if I'm remembering the name correctly), and nobody warned me I was going to have to repel down. Everyone in the group knew it was only Jim who could give me the confidence to "stick my butt out there and go". And he did. It was such a thrill. I went climbing and repelled last summer and recall relaying this story to my boys and said the same thing to them as it was their first time. So his influence on me was passed on to another generation.

Susie, my thoughts, prayers, and deepest sympathies are with you. Please reach out when you are feeling up to it. I know many years have passed since I visited you in my travels to Richland, but the friendship never fades. Much love to you and my sympathies to the entire family.

Brigette Rosendall - June 14, 2020 at 11:15 PM

SE

“ Jim was such a great person and I am so proud to have worked with him on the amazing project for housing for adults with disabilities, Kennewick Perry Suites in Kennewick. He worked on this project for several years and it was an amazing contribution to the community. Susie, our thoughts and prayers are with you now.

Sherry Erickson - June 14, 2020 at 10:12 PM

EI

“ We are saddened to hear of the loss of Jim, my second cousin. Sending prayers for the comfort of his family and the repose of his soul. May he rest in eternal peace with God.

EmmaLee Italia - June 12, 2020 at 08:59 AM

RB

“ Jim was an amazing architect and I always enjoyed his energy and creativity. I'm so shocked and saddened to learn he is no longer with us. My heart aches for you Susie. I'm sending loving prayers for you.

Rick Boyd, cbo City of Walla Walla, retired.

Rick Boyd - June 10, 2020 at 03:12 PM

JD

“ I worked with Jim for many years, but he turned into my friend. He always had a big smile and a Hawaiian shirt ready to go. Everywhere I look in my town there is a structure with evidence of Jim's creativity and vision. My husband and I have the honor of living in one of the last buildings Jim designed before he retired. It is our absolute dream home. I will never forget him. Susie, my heart breaks for you. Run in peace, Jim.

Jennifer Dickinson - June 10, 2020 at 12:50 AM