



## Kjell Ray Lester

May 13, 1966 - May 28, 2016

Kjell Ray Lester, 50, nearly a lifelong Winthrop resident and Businessman, passed away on Saturday, May 28, 2016 at Central Washington Hospital in Wenatchee. His passing marks the end of 51 years of a retail business in downtown Winthrop for the Lester family.

He was born on May 13, 1966 to John and Carol (Gatewood) Lester at the Brewster Hospital. Kjell grew up in Winthrop but attended the Greenlake School for the Deaf in Seattle for his first and second grade. He continued his schooling in Winthrop and graduated from Liberty Bell High School in 1985 as a three-sport letterman in football, basketball and baseball. He continued his education at Seattle Community College and Big Ben Community College working part-time as an Auto Mechanic for an auction company to pay tuition. He received his Private Pilot's License, during this time too. Upon returning to Winthrop, he worked for the U.S. Forest Service on the trail systems. In 1991, Kjell along with his brother, Kory, started the "White Buck Trading Company, a souvenir shop in Winthrop. Once well established, Kory let Kjell continue the operation of the store. In 2012, the television reality show, "American Pickers", came to the White Buck Trading Company and purchased 32 items on their program. The most memorable item was a Grizzly Bear Trap, which sold for \$3,500.00. He continued the operation of the store until starting a new business in 2014, known as "Lester Pump Service". This was a domestic and irrigation pump service company. He continued his pump service company until ill health made it no longer possible.

He enjoyed life in the Methow Valley, hunting, fishing, and hunting with his hounds. Kjell and two friends became a volunteer for the Washington State Game Department on a special Grant Study of Cougars in the Methow. He assisted by using his trained hounds to catch, tranquilize and implant tracking devices, to observe their territories for ten years. In 2013, he received Volunteer of The Year from the Washington State Game Dept.

Kjell is survived by his companion, Julee May, Winthrop; parents, John and Carol Lester, Okanogan; brother, Kory J. Lester, Okanogan; maternal grandparents, Herb and June Gatewood, Wenatchee; aunts and uncles, Tom & Fae Graves, Winthrop, Ralph Lester and JoAnn, Forks, Patricia Lester-Davis, Okanogan, Bill and Sharon Lester, Port Orchard, Ray Soule, Bremerton, and Joyce Rieson, Wenatchee. His paternal grandparents and step-grandmother, Emma Graves Lester preceded him in death.

A Commemoration Service will be on Sunday, June 12, 2016, 2:00pm at "The Barn" in Winthrop. Memories and condolences can be left at his online guestbook at [www.HeritageMemorialChapel.com](http://www.HeritageMemorialChapel.com) . In lieu of flowers the family suggest memorial donations to either AERO METHOW RESCUE SERVICE, (<http://www.aeromethow.org>) or WINTHROP AUDITORIUM ASSOCIATION (<http://www.winthropbarn.com>) Arrangements are in the care of Heritage Memorial Chapel, East Wenatchee.

# Tribute Wall

AJ

“ When ever I came back to the valley I would try to make it into his store. He always greeted me with a smile, handshake, and a hello. When I moved back he was still the same way never changing with his friendly spirit. After my accident Kjell made sure he stopped to say HI. And when dad and his brother couldn't fix the well problems I said call Kjell. He was great at showing up and helping plus not charging an arm and a leg. He also stopped by just to say hello. Then when Ernie Thurlow came into town he was calling me and we would meet for pizza at hometown. I wish I would have spent more time with this man!

AndyJ

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**Andy Johnson** - June 17, 2016 at 10:30 PM

EM

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with the family. He will surely be missed. Such a great guy! Inside and out! Very touching service, and so neat to hear all the stories. So sorry for his loss. Our love, Ed & Ana Mattson

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**Ed and Ana Mattson** - June 13, 2016 at 11:17 PM

AA

“ We were so sad to hear that Kjell had passed away. He was always so soft spoken and kind. We are so sorry for your loss and know how much he will be missed. The valley won't be the same without him. Our sincere condolences to all of his family and friends.

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**Agnes and John Almquist** - June 12, 2016 at 12:40 AM

GS

“ I always enjoyed my visits with Kjell He was such a wonderful young man. The valley will miss his smiling face. My sincere thought and prayers are with you all. Hugs Georgia

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**Georgia Sanders** - June 11, 2016 at 09:00 PM

AM

“ I have known Kjell most of my life, so it is hard to believe he is no longer with us. Although I had moved away from the Valley years ago, I always stopped at his store to say hello when I was in town. I was always greeted with a big hug and lots of interest about my life. He instantly made you feel welcomed and special, no matter how long it had been. He was such a gentle, kind man. I will always remember him with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eye. He will be missed, but remembered with a smile.

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**Anita Maling** - June 10, 2016 at 01:56 PM

GC

“ RIP Kjell Lester, my condolences & prayers go out to the family for comfort during this time of loss. (friends with Kory Lester)

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**Grace Cantu** - June 08, 2016 at 02:25 PM

DS

“ I can not express what a loss I felt upon hearing of Kjell's passing. Kjell was one of the kindest men I have ever known. I saw Kjell everytime I went up to Winthrop. He worked for Wayne and I at the Mack Lloyd ranch, and I enjoyed having him around. Later when I divorced Wayne, Kjell expressed to me that he never liked the way Wayne had treated me. I appreciated the compassion that he showed me, In times when a few others were shunning me. I will miss Kjell but have some very fond memories of him I will hang onto. I hope that all of you can treasure the memories and the time you had with this young man. He accomplished a lot during his 50 years, and that you should be very proud of. My heart goes out to John, Carol and Kory. I am thinking of all of you.

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**Diane Shaw** - June 05, 2016 at 04:09 PM