



James Jay Engelson

May 24, 1946 - June 1, 2025

James Jay “Jim” Engelson of Okanogan, WA passed away peacefully at home on June 1, 2025 with his wife Gail by his side.

Jim was born on May 24, 1946 in Rapid City, South Dakota to Phyllis Millstead Sanders and Frank Sanders. When Jim was two, his mom married George Douglas “Doug” Engelson who adopted Jim and his older sister Linda, raising them as his own. Jim became the middle child when younger brother Jerry was born.

Jim attended school in Philip SD, graduating in 1964. He joined the National Guard after his Junior year, serving as a heavy vehicle driver in the 214th Engineer Company and attaining expert marksmanship certification, a skill which he never allowed to atrophy. He was honorably discharged in 1967.

After graduation, Jim spent some time traveling with friends while working in an assortment of cities including Denver, Chicago, Los Angeles, and eventually Bremerton, Washington. Jim’s good friends Gary and Bob Schuler had already settled in nearby Renton, and Jim decided this was a good place to take a rest from his ramblings. Through the Schuler brothers and their circle Jim soon met Gail Hinger. The two were married on August 31, 1968 and two years later welcomed daughter Julie.

The couple had visited Gail's hometown of Malott several times during their early marriage, and as an avid outdoorsman Jim grew to love the area for the rich hunting and fishing it offered. When Julie was just six months old, Jim was able to convince Gail to return to her roots and move back to Okanogan County. The couple bought a small home in Malott and completed their family with the addition of daughter Shari in 1971. In 1979 they purchased a 10-acre apple orchard from Gail's brother Duane. With the help of friends they built a home there where they would spend the next 39 years.

Jim plied a number of trades throughout his life, laboring in turns as an ironworker, pipefitter, truck driver, fire extinguisher tech, orchardist and farmer, and most notably a weed control applicator for the DNR. A rodeo man for a brief time in his youth, Jim remained a cowboy throughout his life, helping sister Linda & brother-in-law Merle as well as son-in-law Mike on their cattle ranches whenever possible. He served his community as a member of the Okanogan County Sheriff's posse and a 39-year volunteer for the Malott Fire Department. His eventual retirement was anything but idle, as 'Papa' Jim was a proud grandpa who never missed an opportunity to support his grandkids in their extracurricular activities and hobbies. In 2018, Jim and Gail downsized by selling their longtime home in Malott and moving next door to daughter Julie and her family in Okanogan.

Jim and Gail enjoyed traveling throughout their years together, whether just as a couple or in the company of family and friends. They ventured to Arizona and Mexico, vacationed in Hawaii several times, enjoyed many road trips to visit Linda and Merle in South Dakota, cruised to Alaska twice, explored the San Juan Islands, and spent time the past two years with daughter Shari and her husband Darryl at their winter home on Grand Cayman Island.

As a man Jim was competent and resourceful, dependable yet uncompromising. He refused to suffer fools but stood by the friends he'd

accrued across his life, steadfast companions met along the journey that led him from South Dakota to Renton and eventually Malott and Okanogan. He could outshoot a sniper, outdrink an Irishman, and improvise equipment fixes that would put MacGyver to shame. His encyclopedic knowledge of noxious weeds and spray application made him an asset to his local ecology whose expertise will be sorely missed.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents, younger brother, and a number of close friends with whom he spent years hunting, fishing, boating, building houses, golfing, and traveling.

He is survived by wife Gail, daughter Julie (Mike) Duke and their children Amber (Clayton) Murrah and Mason Duke, daughter Shari (Darryl) Lewis and their children Matty (Kat) Calliccoat-Lewis and Gavin (Sierra) Lewis, sister Linda (Merle) Stilwell, and several nieces and nephews. He is also survived by many good friends including Rick & Char Schumacher, Georgia Beam, and Tim Kraft.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests making a donation to the Malott Improvement Club at PO Box 88, Malott, WA 98829.

Tribute Wall

CM

“ *Dave and I want to send our sincere condolences to Gail, his family and friends. We loved Jimmy and will miss him greatly. RIP Jim. Until we meet again, give em hell up there!!*



Cathy Myers - June 12, 2025 at 04:19 PM

RV

“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



River Valley - June 12, 2025 at 02:20 PM