



James "Jim" Leo Foran Jr.

December 4, 1950 - January 25, 2020

James Leo Foran

James Leo Foran Jr. (Jim) passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, January 25, 2020 at the age of 69 in Oro Valley, Arizona with his long-time companion Kimber Russell at his side.

Jim was born in 1950 in Endicott, NY, to James and Margaret Foran and lived his early years in Vestal, NY. In 1963, he moved to Mesa with his family, attending the Mesa schools, including Westwood High School (Class of 1969).

He graduated from the world-renowned Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1973 and went on to become a pioneer in Silicon Valley where he secured 11 patents and contributed to the advancement of medical technology and computer-generated imagery (CGI). His most notable contributions were to CT scanners, Silicon Graphics workstations, and the Nintendo 64.

Jim raised two children with his wife Anne. Following a divorce, Jim met his partner Nancee Knutson with whom he shared 20 years of adventure.

Jim loved being in nature. Upon retirement he dedicated his time to preserving open spaces in the San Francisco Bay Area by serving as a Santa Clara County Parks Commissioner, the Director of the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, and most recently, a Bay Area Ridge Trail Board Member. He also supported native plants and national parks in Arizona. He was a good man with an iron will and an old-fashioned hard work ethic. Known for his beautiful smile and a heart too big, he lived his life in his own way, and he lived it fully.

Jim is survived by his children, Peggy Kellen (Mark) and Patrick Foran (Kiera), his two grandchildren, five siblings; Barbara Willan (Peter), Joseph Foran, Jeanie Welch (Mark), Charles Foran, Kathy Shea (Brian), and many nieces, nephews, cousins and friends. He

was preceded in death by his father and mother, James Foran Sr., and Margaret Foran, his brother, Robert Foran, and his partner, Nancee Knutson.

Jim's family respectfully requests that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in his name to the Bay Area Ridge Trail:

<https://connect.clickandpledge.com/w/Form/dcebafa5-691c-49d9-a774-0035aa74b5a4>

A memorial service will be held at Meldrum Mortuary, 52 N. Macdonald St., Mesa, AZ 85201 on Saturday, February 22nd at 4:00 PM.

Events

FEB **Memorial Service** **04:00PM**
22

Meldrum Mortuary

52 N Macdonald, Mesa, AZ, US, 85201

Comments



“ Jim was incredibly helpful with the environmental work of Green Foothills. As a person on staff when he was on the Board of Directors about 10 years ago, he was knowledgeable and helpful. He made the most of his time on Earth to benefit the Earth.

My condolences to his family and friends.

-Brian Schmidt (on staff at Green Foothills)

Brian Schmidt - September 02 at 03:17 PM



“ It's been a year since Jim passed away. I miss him terribly. I have enjoyed seeing pictures and reading what his friends and family wrote in his memory. He was loved and admired by many.

Jim knew so many things about so many subjects. But he wasn't boastful or arrogant. He was easy-going, saying "tomorrow is promised to no one".

I miss talking and laughing with him over dinner and wine. We had many hikes and picnics followed by a rest in the hot tub. Jim was always up for a visit to a museum or an event. We enjoyed the San Jose opera, symphony, and Tucson Broadway shows.

We had too many good times to list here, but we enriched each other's lives and made them better with laughter and enjoyment



Kimber Russell - January 25 at 04:37 PM



“ Our deepest condolences, to the whole family. We feel your loss. On our trip west last year, we were able to meet everyone but Kate. It was great to share memoirs, stories and family history facts. Its sad that it took us so long to get together. Life's journeys take us on many different trails, but do they. Jim had an enduring love of the outdoors and the beautiful states that he lived in. He shared that love with his family and friends. We too had our own nature experience, by living in the woods for 43 yrs. Now on Lake Champlain, in Vermont. Not so different.

As we met and spent sometime with our cousins, it was clear that we all have continued along similar paths and created some of your own. This tribute wall is a testament to Jim's love and the joy he shared with all who knew him well. What a gift!

May we all remember; that we share the same genes, to see outside ourselves. To the greater gifts passed to all of us; family, friends, work ethics, and faith. Our parents shared it with all of us and we in turn pass the gifts on to those we love. Too always move forward and enjoy the treasures of the world. To honor and remember those who cleared the path for us to follow. Your parents, moved your family west, to leave their siblings and all the familiar surroundings of their youth. What a leap of faith! May you all continue too share their vision, with your families.

When Patrick of Ca. started the cousins email; he connected all of us across the country. Let us keep each other in our prayers. Jim and Theresa Foran, from Vermont

James and Theresa Foran - February 21, 2020 at 05:51 PM



“ Very nice James and Theresa

Joe Foran - February 22, 2020 at 01:34 AM



“ A few older photos of Jim. The infant is Peggy.



Anne Foran - February 21, 2020 at 01:03 AM



“ So nice to see,... Thx Anne

Joe Foran - February 22, 2020 at 01:35 AM



“ In heaven we will meet again dear brother.....For now and always I will carry you with me in my heart.....Love, your sister - Jeanie Foran Welch

Pete Willan - February 21, 2020 at 12:44 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



joe foran - February 18, 2020 at 06:33 PM



“ Like Matt, I knew Jim for over 50 years, having attended MIT with Jim and living on the same floor in our dorm. There are so many memories of time spent with Jim; it is very painful to know that there will be no more. Playing Oh Hell (card game) in the dorm elevator, riding up and down for a couple hours entertaining the various passengers who could not figure out why we were doing this. My first backpacking trip with Jim, hiking in the Sierras with Jim and Matt Goetz in 1988. The infamous "Ice Trip" in 1995 outside Mammoth Mountain where everything above 10,000ft (most of the trip) was snow-covered with all the lakes frozen over. Went to the pass behind Mt. Banner and Mt. Ritter to see if we could get over it, but it was not to be. Too much ice on the way down the other side. Jim was our trail finder as everything was buried under 2-3 ft of snow. Our hike in Glacier National Park in the late 90s where we staggered into a campground at dusk at which we had intended to spend the night, only to find a ranger sitting there with a rifle (for warning purposes only) indicating the campground was closed and we needed to go a further three miles due to a bear in the area. After being regaled by the ranger and his musings on how to prevent flying squirrels from landing on food bags hung 15-20ft in the air, gnawing through them and eating the food, we headed out for the three-mile hike in the dark to the area near the ranger cabin where we could make dinner and set up the tents. Jim was never fazed by any of this nonsense, just get on and do it was his thinking. Or the 2006 trip, also up behind Banner and Ritter where Matt fell through the snow, dislocating his shoulder in the process. Jim took the lead in guiding Matt back over the low, snow and ice-covered ridge and back to our previous campsite, taking care to ensure Matt did not suffer any further damage in the process, while my son Chris and I shuttled Matt's pack. And the trip last summer to Canyonlands with its spectacular scenery, a great time together in a special place.

My wife and I visited Jim at his homes in both Milpitas and Oro Valley, and always had a fantastic time. Touring the local areas, getting wined and dined by Jim with his wonderful cooking ability and tremendous collection of fine wines. We will miss him dearly. Rest in peace my friend.

Cliff

Cliff Hendrick - February 17, 2020 at 11:26 AM



“ Thanks Cliff. Wonderful anecdotes, bittersweet to hear how much he did and how much fun he had in life.

joe foran - February 18, 2020 at 07:21 PM



“ Vivid Recollections was purchased for the family of James "Jim" Leo Foran Jr..



February 17, 2020 at 01:02 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Joe Foran - February 16, 2020 at 12:59 AM



“ Dear Jim,
So sad to learn of your passing..how could you..and you are younger than me. We had such great conversations carpooling to SF Bay Trail board meetings.Chatting about your wine collection and all the hikes done around the trail. I will certainly miss you and those great conversations.You will NOT be forgotten with all your great contributions.
Rest well my friend.
Blessings,
Julia Miller, SF Bay Trail Board Member
Sunnyvale, CA

Julia Miller - February 15, 2020 at 09:33 PM



“ Thank you Julia. It means a lot to hear from Jim's friends

Joe Foran - February 16, 2020 at 12:57 AM



“ Barbara Foran Willan Feb 04, 2020

Jim - It is hard to believe you are gone. You will always be in our hearts and minds. I will always remember the times in recent years you would come over and sit with our Foran family siblings and relatives, around our outside fire, to trade stories. Since 1983, when our father passed away, you have been around to offer advice and became somewhat of a father figure for us all. Jim, you were doing what you Loved that day, hiking and enjoying the outdoors. We hope that you have found peace and will think of you always. Your loving sibling Barb

Pete Willan - February 15, 2020 at 09:27 PM



“ This is a very sad time for all of us. We're sharing some photos of Jim from various hiking events, circa 2000+? Jim & all of us were having a wonderful time, as always.

There are so many things to say about Jim. He was a very giving guy. The thing that stands out for me is from Oct 2017: the Sonoma County fires caused Ken & I to evacuate our house & Jim called us to see how we were doing, then FedEx'd us keys to his townhouse to go & stay safe. We ended up staying 2 weeks; Jim said we could stay as long as needed, anytime. Not many people can do that. He was amazing that way.

From Ken & Mary Greenberg, Bay Area Friends



mary - February 14, 2020 at 08:46 PM



“ Appreciate your kind words Ken and Mary. To hear from his friends and parts of his life unknown to us means a lot. Thank you.

Joe Foran

Joe Foran - February 15, 2020 at 01:12 PM



“ Ken & Mary Greenberg, his northern CA friends purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of James "Jim" Leo Foran Jr..



Ken & Mary Greenberg, his northern CA friends - February 14, 2020 at 08:27 PM



“ Much has already been said about Jim’s many accomplishments, who he was and how he lived by following his passions. There are some things not mentioned yet I want to add.

For one Jim was a marathoner in the Arizona desert while in high school there. He went back to running in his forties witnessed often by his children. He backpacked all over California, took his children white water rafting and on road trips throughout the west and into Canada. He owned property in northern California where he spent time camping with his family. He also loved sports, especially baseball, which he coached as a teenager. He became a Sharks fan and a season ticket holder. Peggy and Pat got to enjoy the games with him on occasion.

And not only did he attend and graduate from MIT, he got a scholarship to attend there for four years. While at MIT he worked in a neurology lab where he performed delicate hours long operations on white rats inserting electrodes in specific portions of their brain to test the function of that location. It took precision and focus to be successful. I remember watching him operate helping him feed the rats. Also while at the lab he witnessed the development of the first lasers. He showed me how it worked but it remained a total mystery to me. I never imagined lasers would become such a multipurpose tool.

He was definitely a rock music enthusiast in college but added the symphony and other cultural activities to his life after meeting his long time partner Nancy including becoming a member of several local museums. He also shared these new interests with his children.

Jim lived his life with integrity staying true to his values and acting on them. I appreciated and shared many of those values even though we ended up going in different directions.

It’s hard to imagine him gone as I know it is for the rest of his family and friends. He lived and enjoyed his life the way he wanted and I hope he had a sense of satisfaction from doing it his way.

Anne Foran - February 13, 2020 at 08:51 PM



“ Thank you Anne

Joe Foran - February 15, 2020 at 01:13 PM



“ We spent so many wonderful times with Jim: So many hikes, dinner parties, sharing of wine and friendship. He was such a good cook and loved sharing his good food and wine and stories. So many will miss him.



Linda Krasnow - February 08, 2020 at 02:13 PM



“ Thank you Linda

Joe Foran - February 09, 2020 at 10:38 AM



“ I was always proud of his accomplishments. He took a big risk in high school when ordering the assessment required for MIT. The school counselor even told him not to waste his money, no one from the school had ever gotten a score of 5/5. But he would not be swayed, and he studied hard, paid for the testing, and got the first 5/5 the school had ever seen, and later, his acceptance letter to MIT.

He was always proudest of the Reality Engine, the chip that made Silicon Graphics the legendary computer graphics workstations they became famous for. Jurassic Park, flight simulators, early VR, all were made possible by the reality engine and its iterations.

And most famously, he directed the project creating the N64, "Project Reality", designing its hardware and processing architecture, including the "Reality co-processor", built off his Reality Engine design. He told us about his visits to Japan, how he forced the chip manufacturer to buy hardware from its chief rival (they had the best machine, and he wanted to stoke their rivalry to his advantage). I'm not sure what made the difference, but the N64 launched without a hitch. "200,000 buns in the oven, and no way to know if they were good until after they'd been sold" he would say.

I didn't realize what a big deal that was until the Microsoft 360's infamous "Red Ring of Death" debacle, where poor decisions by management led to extremely high rates of complete system failure. According to one account, there was just a 32% yield from one of the test production runs, meaning 68 of every 100 test units were found to be defective. By contrast, all of the N64 consoles ran clean with no problems. I gained a lot of respect for him after that.

He worked on some of the first high resolution displays, which allowed NASA scientists to discover the volcanoes on Io during Voyager 2's fly-by.

He made a big impact in a lot of ways, and largely shunned the spotlight, preferring to contribute in the background and let others get the publicity. He was satisfied with knowing who was really responsible for these achievements. I was proud that he was my father, and I know his legacy will live on for a long time.

Patrick Foran - February 04, 2020 at 05:05 PM



“ Very nice Pat

Joe Foran - February 04, 2020 at 06:19 PM



“ Good insight Patrick, thank you

Kyle Foran - February 05, 2020 at 06:05 AM



“ Very well said Pat.

Anne Foran - February 05, 2020 at 11:43 PM



“ What a wonderful tribute, Pat.

Linda Krasnow - February 08, 2020 at 02:19 PM



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Joe Foran - February 04, 2020 at 04:04 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Joe Foran - February 04, 2020 at 03:02 PM



“ A truly great brother. I will always love you and miss you Jim.

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

Numbers 6:24-26

God bless and keep you Jim. See you on the other side.

Joe Foran - February 04, 2020 at 02:26 PM



“ Meldrum Mortuary lit a candle in memory of James "Jim" Leo Foran Jr.



Meldrum Mortuary - February 04, 2020 at 12:37 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Meldrum Mortuary & Crematory - February 04, 2020 at 12:36 PM



“ To all of our Arizona cousins our prayers, thoughts and hugs to each of you as well as Jim's children. Our favorite times were trips made by your family to see our family of nine in Rhode Island. We would sit in a large tree with pads of paper and pencils marking each car that passed on Washington Rd with chicken scratches waiting impatiently until all 18 of us would be together under one roof!!!! Jim would spend many college vacations with us as it was much too far to travel home to Arizona and much too costly! He loved Aunt Floss's home cooking and was always so happy to be blessed with good home cooked meals. His keen intent of a great education and where it took him in his life says so much. RIP cousin Jim. Love from cousin Jerie Frey Drupp and Family in Pennsylvania

jerie frey drupp - February 04, 2020 at 09:12 PM



“ I have no words for the shock and loss we are all experiencing.

We just pray that Heaven serves good red wine up there.

Ellen & Steve Silver-Hoeft

Ellen Silver - February 04, 2020 at 10:02 PM



“ Thank you Jerie
Thank you Ellen and Steve

Joe foran - February 05, 2020 at 10:17 PM



“ I met Jim just over 50 years ago. We were both Freshmen at MIT and pretty much lived together for four incredible years. Since then there have been so many backpacking trips to the Sierras, to Wyoming, to Montana and to Canada. Trips to the California Central Coast wine country. Trips to the Bay Area, trips to Tucson. And last year, a great, great road trip to Canyonlands National Park. And the trips that for whatever reason I now so deeply regret not have taken with Jim to see the solar eclipse in Montana, to go rafting and hiking in the Grand Canyon and so many other places that Jim wanted to explore.

There are so, so many things I would not have done, would not have thought to do or if I had done would have been done so much less well were it not for Jim. He was like a brother to me.

As will so many others, I will always remember Jim and deeply miss him.

Matt Goetz

Matt Goetz - February 08, 2020 at 05:17 PM



“ Even though I did not know my cousin Jim very well because of geographic distances, I was fortunate to visit with Jim in the Bay Area while on a cross country trip with my husband in June. He greeted us warmly, insisted on grilling dinner for us, including wine, purchased tickets in advance to the Oakland A’s game so he could choose the “good seats,” suggested places to sightsee, took us on the BART to the stadium, offered us two nights in his guest room, and would not let us leave until he made breakfast for us the morning of our departure. I also believed that Jim had to work to shuffle arrangements he previously had in the Tucson area and make sacrifices so not to miss us the time we were in Oakland.

After spending about three weeks on our trip though Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, Jim asked how we were enjoying our trip. With me coming from small town farm America in Upstate New York with probably over 90% Caucasian, I was really noticing all the different nationalities and how different they were from me and what I was always used to. I mentioned to Jim that I felt like a minority. Without missing a beat, Jim said “we are all a minority.” His smart words will always stay with me.

I’m glad Jim was doing what he loved in nature and I have chosen to honor him at the Bay Area Ridge Trail, a trail in one of his favorite areas.

Michele Merwarth
Marietta, NY

Michele M Merwarth - February 08, 2020 at 11:31 PM



“ Thank you Matt.

Thank you Michelle.

Joe Foran - February 09, 2020 at 10:40 AM