



James Alden Pemble

June 5, 1928 - September 26, 2015

Jim Pemble – Earth Steward, Teacher, Artist

James Alden Pemble returned to the earth and the Universe, September 26, 2015.

Jim joined the loving family of Mildred Olsen and Carl Marshall Pemble and his 5-year-old sister, June Pemble, in June, 1928. His father Carl was born in 1896 in the frontier town of Milford, Utah, and after his mother Fannie Mae took him and his brother James back to Illinois, Carl grew up a Midwestern farm boy, herding cows in from pasture, milking, collecting eggs, and mucking out stalls. At age 21, he joined the Navy in 1917, serving on the battleship USS Oklahoma off England, Ireland, and France. Carl had long loved to draw, and some of his finest sketches are from brief shoreside leaves off the ship in Brittany. Back home after the war, Carl pursued a degree in art at James Millikin University in Decatur, IL, followed by a career in commercial art in Chicago. In an era before computer graphics and clip art, Carl illustrated many covers, inside art and advertisements for Popular Mechanics and similar magazines of the day.

Jim's mother Mildred, daughter of Norwegian immigrants who met at their elementary school in Chicago, was born in Kewanee, IL in 1900. Mildred's father sold insurance on the road, so the family saw much of the Midwest

during her childhood. Mildred graduated from high school and business college, working in a large insurance office until she was supervising all the typists and secretaries there.

Carl and Mildred met on a blind double date with one of Mildred's sisters, and it was love at first sight. They married 4 months later, June 30, 1922. Daughter June was born in 1924, and Jimmy four years later.

Growing up in Norwood Park, a neighborhood in Northwest Chicago, Jimmy's boyhood memories turned into fun stories for his children – of family vacations on the lake in Wisconsin, selling Collier's magazine door to door, hunting for "purple poops" when he and his friends couldn't catch any real fish. Once he was older, Jim caddied at Tam O'Shanter Golf Course near Chicago for big name players, and graduated from Robert Taft High School with his buddies, "The Jolly Boys". After school, Jim would often walk downtown to his father's art studio, where Carl and his fellow artists would have him help with this project or that, teaching him their tricks of the trade. When Jim was 13, Carl took him on a special adventure to northern Ontario to camp and fish in the Wanagan Flowage – they took a train from Chicago into Canada, then travelled with their guides by canoe deep into the wilderness.

Jim enlisted in the Air Force in 1946, serving in Texas, and at the Denver discharge base for World War II soldiers returning near the end of the war and during peacetime. Following his discharge from the service, Jim's art background from his father sent him on to The Art Institute of Chicago for a year; a summer job at a neighborhood camp sent him to the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, to follow his desire to work with children. He graduated with his B.A. and taught art in the Fulton, IL schools.

The summer before his senior year, Jim travelled to the Navaho Reservation at Ganado Mission, where he worked on various projects with other young

men and women, building and repairing buildings, organizing children's programs, and soaking up the native American culture, an experience that would shape the rest of his life's journey.

After several years at Fulton, during a solo bicycle trip on Cape Cod, MA, Jim had a phone-call from the First Presbyterian Church in Decatur, IL, the same city where his father Carl had gone to college. They offered Jim a position as their new youth minister. He took his art training, and with the high-school youth installed a large mosaic on one of the outdoor walls – the A and O symbols still grace the entrance.

Another adventure began at that same church when his future wife, Connie Pace, entered Millikin University. Connie was born to Bob and Ruby (Gillis) Pace in 1937, in Danville, Illinois. Grampa Bob was a newspaper man, working on the Danville paper, and serving for decades as the Treasurer for the National Association of Newspaper Advertising Executives. Gramma Ruby kept their home and raised Connie and her older brother Bob.

Back at Millikin, thanks to the senior minister at First Presbyterian in Decatur, Dr. Jay Logan, Connie happened to become Jim's volunteer secretary and a life-time of sharing began. While working with Dr. Logan, Jim led various teen activities including work camps to Tennessee, and sang in the choir under Bill Tagg, performing in several "Diggest Thou" productions. Connie kept a vigil eye on him from the chorus and in his office.

As part of the college group which Jim led at the church, Connie was inspired to become a Junior Year Ambassador sponsored by the Presbyterian national church. She chose Silliman University in the Phillipines as her home and study site for the school year, 1957-1958. Connie and "her boss" Jim parted in late May with no definite plans between them but with hopes and dreams in

her heart. Those dreams turned into reality when Jim proposed via the air-form letters of the day, July 1957. Her answer “yes” brought an immediate telegram from Jim saying, “ Words cannot tell you. My life will show it.”

Daily letters between Jim and Connie shared their daily lives during that year apart. After finishing her junior college year at Silliman , Connie traveled the rest of the way around the earth , visiting Japan , Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand, Burma, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Egypt, but giving up Greece because she and her friend were eager to reach Italy since it seemed to be more familiar. Connie felt so at home in Italy, not realizing until several trips later with Jim how appropriate her maiden name was: Pace, pax, peace. Through-out Italy, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and England, the call to return home grew. She had stayed with families of the churches and newspaper contacts from her dad for those travels, but Jim was home, Jim, her fiancé.

Jim greeted her on the O’Hare tarmac as she ran from the plane and as the saying goes, “the rest is history”. They were married in Decatur’s First Presbyterian’s chapel August 23, 1958 by Dr. Jay Logan. Jim finished his service as youth minister as Connie graduated with her B.A. That year brought both families together with suppers at “Home at Last”, Jim’s parents’ Decatur home. The decision was made for Jim to enter McCormick Seminary in Chicago, to become a Presbyterian minister. They would return 3 years later for Jim’s ordination and charge by the stately Dr. William Lampe.

Off to the big city and dorm-life, a return to life as a student in graduate school. Jim took an active part also in a seminary program called P.I.E.R., seminary students working in industry in the Chicago area. Life-long friendships began – Gary and Marijo Hickok, and Connie and Kris Ronnow. Life altering bonds also began as their son Rodd Allen Pemble was born in 1960. Spending fun times at the nearby Lincoln Park Zoo and Fullerton Beach

on Lake Michigan filled Rodd's early childhood. Rodd became the devoted brother to Johanna Marie Pemble, also born in Chicago, in 1962.

Jim spent his senior year at McCormick commuting from his student church in Newman, Illinois back to seminary for each week of classes. Graduating from McCormick in June, 1962, he was called to Shaw Memorial Presbyterian Church in Newman, Illinois. The family lived in that very small town, again forming new friendships. The turmoil of the civil-rights era affected Jim's beginning ministry as he and several session members brought the issues home. The weather also hit home, literally, as a fierce tornado tore through Newman, a large tree crashing into Rodd's bedroom. Thankfully, they were all in the brick basement corner, feeling only the dust blow through the bricks.

Moving to Ft. Wayne, Indiana in 1964, Jim returned to his love of working with youth as Youth Minister in the large First Presbyterian Church. His first activity was a travel/work-camp venture with a bus-load of teens back to Decatur, then with the same group back to Ganado Mission on the Navaho Reservation where his life path had been altered years before. Connie was able to travel with the group to a later inner-city work-camp in Cleveland, OH. A joint adventure with the Ft. Wayne Roman Catholic priest and his youth group took Jim and Connie and their teens to Buckhorn, KY for an unforgettable coming together. Jim also began weekly social evenings for challenged young people, even marrying one of the couples. Lifelong friends Jack and Judy Bliven entered Connie and Jim's life, partly as Dr. Jack worked on cavities in the Pemble kids' teeth!

The years in Ft. Wayne were filled with social justice work, musical endeavors and creating bonds that filled their lives. A dream of Jim and Connie's from the time she had returned from her year overseas was fulfilled as they, Rodd and Johanna welcomed Juliana into their family, June 1967. A month old, Juliana's adoption was finalized that summer. She fit right into the wash-tub used with

the Apache Camper on her first camping trip to their favorite spot, the Pinery Provincial Park, on the shores of Lake Huron, Ontario. The Apache and Jim's unique food box, which fit neatly in the old Chevy trunk, took them also to the Smokies, Wisconsin, even moved with them years later to Rockford, Illinois, and to Bellingham. At 50 years old, it is still the Pemble home in the woods.

Travel became an integral ingredient for Jim and Connie's shared life. They believed strongly that the world and its people held wonder and beauty for them and wished to pass on their appreciation. Family vacations became, also, a renewal time for their own family connections; long days at the beach, carving dolphins in the sand, quiet campfire evenings, story-reading by lantern, guitar and vocal sounds as lullabies, special ice-cream treats at the camp-store. Where and when did you have your first ice cream drumstick? As the children grew, enlarging their own worlds, so did the trips: Florida, Maui, Canada, the Pacific Northwest, California and the coast, Maine and the windjammer.

In late summer, 1969 the family left Ft. Wayne, moving to Rockford, Illinois where Jim would return to teaching. School began for Jim at Ralston Elementary, 5th grade, for Rodd and Johanna at White Swan, grades 4 and 2. Connie and Juliana held down the camper, their first home in Rockford, at Rock Cut State Park for two months. The first home Jim and Connie bought, on Trudy Rd had a large backyard garden for Jim, and a tree for climbing. Connie returned to college to complete her student teaching at the new Eisenhower middle school in Rockford. A summer position for Jim and Connie at a camp for Chicago inner-city children at Pleasant Valley Farm, Woodstock, IL found the camper, again, their family home for the summer.

At Ralston, Jim initiated a large project to convert the back corner of the school playground to what he called the 'Nature Lab.' Students helped plan,

then plant hundreds of trees, shrubs, and wildflowers, sculpting berms and seasonal ponds, building benches and signs. Jim's 5th graders became teachers themselves, guiding younger students through activities in the Lab in all seasons and weather. In the decades since, the trees have grown to over 50 feet in height, creating a small forest that each year is used by the school for classes and reflection. Jim often found a boy or girl having a tough day sitting quietly in the shade of a tree or shrub, a peaceful spot to collect their thoughts before heading back to class. More than once, Jim would fall asleep himself in the shade there, to be woken by the end of lunchtime bell! In recent years a young man working on his Eagle Scout award, restored the lab and the sign now reads the Jim Pemble Nature Lab.

In a similar vein, Jim began working in the late 1970's and 1980's, first with the Pecatonica Prairie Path, and then the Natural Land Institute (NLI) to identify remnant prairie parcels, and protect them with the growing science of restoration – prescribed burns, plantings, weeding exotics, and so on. Northern and central Illinois were once mostly covered with millions of acres of short and tall grass prairies, but by 1900 only 2,500 acres had survived the plow and development. Pioneer cemeteries, railroad rights of way, and old farms often harbored hidden prairie gems, with rare plants whose seed was incredibly valuable for propagating and reseeding on fertile ground. Jim worked with wildlife managers, farmers, landowners, school teachers, politicians, and business people to build support for this work, which has now resulted in thousands of acres being protected.

In keeping with his background, Jim helped start an education committee at NLI, to bring school and community groups to see the work, to help plant, and celebrate when, for example, the first sandhill cranes in perhaps a hundred years landed at the Nygren Farm Preserve. Endangered whooping cranes have also stopped there on their journeys, and sandhills now breed at Nygren before leading their young far south to refuges in Florida and back again each

year. No surprise that Jim and Connie were early supporters of Operation Migration, known now to so many from the film “Fly Away Home.” Jerry Paulson, NLI executive director, became a close friend.

During his Ralston years, dad usually rode his bike 9 miles each way to school and back. If the day was sunny and cool, he often roller skated the entire way, not on Rollerblades, but old fashioned, lace-up roller rink skates!

Connie began her first teaching position at Guilford High School in 1973, as an English teacher. She added Journalism class, becoming the advisor to the staffs of the school newspaper, the Voyager, and the yearbook, Valhalla. Those contacts with her students led to life-long friendships for both Connie and Jim as Jim would often bring over a picnic supper during deadlines. Dr. John Alongi, Kristine Allen McMahon, Janelle Lassonde, and Dr. Zachary Hart still correspond with “Mr. and Mrs. P.”

Meanwhile, both Rodd and Johanna graduated from West High in Rockford and then The Evergreen State College in Olympia, WA. Rodd met and married Janie Hauschild of Victoria, Texas – both were interns at the Wilderness Education Association in Alta, WY. Their stints overlapped just ten days, and well, they didn’t tell Janie’s mom until they were married a year later, but they got engaged after just ten days! Must be something about that mountain air . . .

Sister Julie’s wedding was in 1987 to Michael Ripportella in Rockford, while Johanna was pursuing art education like her father and grandfather before her, in Madison, WI, and Seattle.

In July of 1987, Jim and Connie met Rodd and his wife Janie in Boston and drove up through Maine to Nova Scotia. The younger Pemples would start the day bicycling toward the lunch stop for the day, while Jim and Connie drove

ahead to the next night's lodging, then rode their bikes back toward lunch, usually in one of those impossibly picturesque villages the Maritimes are famous for. Much ice cream was sampled along the way! Semi-truck drivers would kindly stop behind them as they rode up the many hills, and they found the locals friendly to a fault.

Jim and Connie retired from teaching in 1989, the same summer Rodd and Janie moved to Bellingham, Washington. Jim and Connie bought a home on the edge of Bellingham, and Jim filled the yard with plantings of native shrubs and wild flowers he collected from surrounding woods as development expanded around them.

In 1991, Jim and Connie flew to England after planning for many months, to hike the famous Cotswold Way. They spent the first week there at friends Joy and John Mee's B&B, since Joy thought they needed beefing up before their long trek. Beginning in Chipping Camden, the 12 day foot journey of 112 miles, with time out for several R&R days, became the ultimate of their "carrying themselves" into the world. Equipped with only day-packs and walking sticks, a thorough guide book showing each stile, hamlet and cow pasture, and the will to finish, Jim and Connie triumphantly reached the Bath Cathedral. Plans to also walk the coastal way from Cornwall were replaced by a restful stay back at Old Walls Farm with Bill and Liz Fursdon, who had welcomed them in an earlier tour of England.

Jim's art continued throughout his life, mainly in the beautiful poetry books he hand scribed and illustrated in pen and ink, and the hundreds and hundreds of handmade cards he sent to friends near and far – for celebration and commiseration, for hellos and goodbyes, but always singular in wit and wonder at the world he saw around him. You knew you were someone special if you got a handmade card from Jim Pemble.

Jim loved camping, and as his son Rodd obtained experience backpacking and mountaineering, they went on longer trips together. These included a 5-day trip into the Blue Mountains of Washington, where they marveled at large elk herds and open forest covered in pine cones. In 1992, Jim and Rodd completed a 9-day backpack in the Quinalt River drainage along the western edge of Olympic National Park – the highlights of the trip were literally dozens of blooming wildflower species, and the giant old cedars and hemlocks crowding the deep valleys along the trail.

Jim and Connie moved back to Rockford in 1993 to be near their new grandchildren Anthony and Angelina, Juliana's and Michael's son and daughter. Gardening for dad had to share time with playground swings and sandboxes. Over the next 13 years Jim and Connie were active grandparents! Also entering the family once mom and dad had a backyard was a new golden retriever puppy, Mendocino Breeze, or Mendi for short. She followed in the Pemble big dog tradition, from Tula the boxer, to Licorice the black lab, to Marsh, the big goldie who came before Mendi. Jim was always a softie when it came to treats, so many graham crackers and the nubs of ice cream cones disappeared with a slurp into one dog's mouth or another.

Back in Bellingham, Rodd and Janie's daughters Jessie ('95) and Sarabeth ('97) were born with the gentle care of midwife Lynnette Gerhardt in Mt Vernon, and drew Jim and Connie west for visits, even shared camping trips in the old Apache. By 2005, the girls were old enough to venture across the pond, where the family spent two weeks with Grampa and Grandma in Kandersteg, Switzerland. A chalet second floor was their base for hikes and journeys by train to Bern, Lucerne, and the "Sound of Music"-like fields and trails above Murren and Lauterbrunnen. The girls had been learning German from Frau Boatman at the Whatcom Hills Waldorf School, so they could talk to the chalet's pet rabbit in a language it could understand!

In 2006, Jim and Connie sold their house on Douglas Street in Rockford to move back to Bellingham. They settled in a sunny condo, and immediately jumped in with both feet to the lives of their granddaughters. They were welcomed by the Waldorf community as well as the kind circle of Rodd and Janie's friends. Jim contacted the Farmer's Market about recycling, and soon found himself the prime recycling volunteer at the Market, helping moms and dads and kids alike learn how to sort their cans and bottles, and later, compost their paper plates and napkins using FoodPlus! Containers.

Jim was the Master of Recycling at the Bham Farmer's Market nearly every Saturday from 2007-2011, and in May of 2011 he was awarded the Individual Recycler of the Year by the Washington State Recycling Association, at their conference in Pasco, for his dedicated work at the Market. Their daughter Johanna joined the celebration from her home in Oregon.

Despite the family being spread from Massachusetts to Illinois, Colorado to Bellingham, Jim had opportunity to be with his sister June and 2 nieces, Gayle and Diane and their children who joined in Jim and Connie's 50th wedding celebration, August, 2008. His older niece, Sue, was unable to come.

Jim created many poetry volumes capturing their trips to Italy, Switzerland, France, Austria, and Great Britain. They had always researched their own itineraries, places to stay and eat, but one of their ending trips was with a Rick Steves' small tour group, "Villages and Slow-food" in central Italy. That trip led to their final long trek because of being in the right place at the right time: listen as Dale Robbins of Sacramento describes how he and his wife, Bonnie, met "this older couple."

"We were nervous, never having been to Europe before, as we waited for the bus pick-up at Padua. There you were, this older couple, quite calm, sitting

with your daypacks, waiting. Then I saw the Rick Steves' guide book and I thought, they must be on our tour! What a comfort! If they can do it, so can we.”

The 2 couples met, began sharing backgrounds, and Connie discovered how comforted she was to have them along. They had strong medical careers, handy since Jim was just 2 years out of major brain surgery! That friendship carried Jim and Connie to several visits in their California home and surrounding sights. On Jim's bucket list was to see Yosemite and the haunts of John Muir, one of Jim's favorite outdoor writers; the Robbins made that epic trip possible in 2012, learning from Jim how to hug trees!

In September of 2011, Rodd took Jim and Connie on a pilgrimage to Ishi Country in the foothills of northern California. Jim had read “Ishi, Last of his Tribe” years earlier, and had always wanted to visit the canyon home where the last man of his tribe survived the gold rush and development of early California. They drove thousands of feet down into the steep river canyon on a sunny day, then sat on the gravel bar next to Ishi's stream and walked a game trail he might have followed, imagining his simple, yet resilient life, his utter loneliness after the rest of his family group were killed or died of exposure. Humbled, Jim and Connie and Rodd continued on to visit to the volcanic wonders of Mt. Lassen, and then the Coast Redwoods completed a California odyssey Jim and Connie had long dreamed of.

Riding Amtrak together, Jim, Connie and Johanna spent a week in Glacier National Park, the summer of 2012. The big red buses moved the trio from lodge to lodge; hikes, boat rides at Many Glaciers, and slow shared meals gave the opportunity to catch-up. A family reunion happened Labor Day week-end, 2014, when Juliana flew out, Johanna trained in, and the Bellingham Pemples all renewed their bonds.

Jim's closing years were filled with almost daily walks with Connie, down to the Bay, to lunch at Torres with Louisa and Pasquale, a visit at the Old World Deli, a crepe with Magdalena in Fairhaven. Even after Jim was in his 80's, they would routinely walk from downtown to Fairhaven and back in a morning. Jim thrived on the repeated and enthusiastic contacts with familiar faces, from Village Books to Avenue Bread, and of course, winter or not, raining or not, Sirena's or Mallards for a scoop of strawberry or mint chocolate!

He loved being "honorary grand-father" to Jamie, son of Sue and Don Sayegh, and to Aidan and Colin, sons of Mary and Dan Glaze, cheering their achievements at Bellingham High School on the track and on the stage. Jim was honored to be a part of both of his granddaughters' graduations from BHS, Jessie class of 2013, Sarabeth class of 2015. In his later years, little pleased Jim more than following his granddaughters' events – at Waldorf, Bellingham High School, and university – theater, music, basketball. Jim and Connie cried "Brava! Brava!" after Jessie's performances in the pit orchestra for South Pacific, Thoroughly Modern Millie, and Pirates of Penzance. He was proud when Sarabeth was chosen by her teammates as co-captain for her senior year of basketball at BHS, after lettering all four years. He was even more impressed and pleased at her growing love for Ultimate Frisbee, with its emphasis on cooperation and actually helping the other team up when they fell, cheering them when they made a good throw – the older Jim got, the less interest he had in who won, and more in that everyone had fun.

Once Jessie started at Central Washington University, Jim and Connie had the privilege of seeing Jessie perform in her first college symphony performances. They also got to watch her race as part of the Central WA Road Bike Team. Jessie went on to race for Western Washington University as a sophomore and now a junior – Jim was a loud and loyal fan on the roadside as Jessie would speed by.

Jim had always loved singing, so he felt right at home in the monthly song circles hosted by Rodd and Janie, or the Sayeghs, Glazes, or Simeons. From the kids to the grandparents, everyone got a turn to pick a song – Neil Young, John Denver, James Taylor, Steve Goodman, Bonnie Raitt, John Prine, The Beatles, CS&N, Frampton, Doc Watson, Pete Seeger, and so many more. The house would pulse with voices and guitars and banjo, stand up bass (thanks Chad!), accordion, harmonica (Dan!), and if they could be persuaded, Sarabeth on her penny whistle and Jessie on the violin. Don started Music at the Dock last year, convening singers and players and dancers at the Taylor Street Dock on warm summer evenings. Jim and Connie would dance slow to “Harvest Moon” or “Old Fashioned” while the sun set over Bellingham Bay and passersby stopped to sing along or just lean on the railing as the voices harmonized. Heaven indeed.

Jim’s wishes were for his passing to be a natural process. His days of being tended to at The Bellingham At Orchard, his emergency care at St. Joseph Hospital, his moving into the loving family at the Whatcom Hospice House, and their leaving rituals, all led him to his resting place. A family time at his green burial in The Meadow at Moles Greenacres, Sept. 28, fulfilled Jim’s wishes. Special thanks to Brian Flowers and Michael Anderson at Moles-Greenacres, for their quiet and dignified care of the Pemble family.

The family offers their thanksgiving to all of his caregivers, especially to Richard McClenahan, his personal doctor who listened, heard, and cared for Jim for his last 7 years. Thank you to the circle of friends joining the family in Jim’s favorite Neil Young song, “Long May You Run”.

Go celebrate Jim’s life with ice-cream and song! The steward has returned to the earth and Universe he loves.

Memorial donations can be made to The Whatcom Land Trust, Whatcom Hospice Foundation, and Marion Medical Missions

***We hope you will join us in the spring for a celebration of Jim's life, as the ocean spray and red-flowering currant begin to blossom above his grave, the birds call to each other, and the earth awakens to another season of life and song. Watch for details . . .

Tribute Wall

GC

“*Sadly, I never met James Pemble, but I often think of him. You see, for more than a decade I was the director of continuing education and alumni relations at McCormick Theological Seminary. While doing some research as the seminary was celebrating the life and ministry of Dan Little, I came across a letter Mr. Pemble had written to Dan. As I read, this closing remark leapt off the page into my heart: “May the Great Mystery find in you a joyful celebrant.” Since Great Mystery is my only true understanding of who/what others so casually call “God,” I’ve used this lovely little challenge/blessing many times over the years, often with the notation I scribbled in my calendar that day —*

by James A. Pemble (alum of McCormick who is no longer ordained) in a letter to Dan Little.

Reading this beautiful obit, I believed I would have loved knowing James Pemble. He sounds like a “kindred spirit” as Anne of Green Gables would say.

May his memory be eternal.

The Rev. Ms. Grayson Van Camp, MTS Class of 1992

Grayson Van Camp - July 05, 2025 at 12:00 AM

MC

“*Jim was a man of great intelligence, a super sense of humor, his wit entertained us on numerous occasions...he was obviously a man of deep convictions and a friend to all that live on our planet. Mike pinned the nickname “Howdy” on him, because from the time we met many, many years ago, within a very short time, Jim had become acquainted with and friends with, nearly every person in the immediate neighborhood with his outgoing personality.*

There were times during our friendship that Jim’s counsel was needed, and appreciated by both of us....Jim was an unusually good man. He will be missed. Mike and Dora.

Mike and Dora Cooper - September 26, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MH

“ I was a student of mr pemples’s 5th grade class in ’78 & just googled his name tonight, as he popped into my head. My condolences to the family. I am reading a book about insects & those that love them. I appreciated the nature lab & pleased they still have it.

I remember him to be a great cheerleader of us in reading, art appreciation, physical education & being a good person. Probably the best & most interesting teacher I had.

I’m 50 years old and I remember a story he told the class one day about his baby girl stuffing peas in her ear. It was sweet. I remember him showing us Early Disney cartoons & the making. Very interesting. A teaching pioneer indeed.

I am sorry for your loss, family

Marleen Dobson harrison - September 26, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GA

“ Dear Pemples all, What a beautiful tribute to Uncle Jim! What a beautiful life! You are in my thoughts and prayers. Here are a couple memories I can add: When I was about five, in the newspaper I saw a photo of a dog sheltering a baby bunny. I kept that photo as a special treasure but somehow lost it and was inconsolable. Jim sketched that scene in colored chalk, matted and framed it. As if the dog and bunny had come to life! It hung in my room till I went to college.

Most of you know this story, but maybe not the details. Uncle Jim was a funny, goofy guy when I was little, like Jerry Lewis but more handsome. The one tiny speech I remember he made in a British accent he made while donning white gloves:

*“Why, the ideodocity of your curiosity!
If I didn’t have on my new silk gloves,
I’d spank your boombosity!”*

When I reminded him of it a few months ago, he had trouble remembering. But Connie, you were right there to help. Then I thought of the times we shared folk music in Rockford, Boston, and Bellingham. And I remembered Steve Goodman’s “The Dutchman”:
*“...Long ago, I used to be a young man
and dear [Connie] remembers that for me.”*

I can’t think of Jim without thinking of music, him singing or listening intently. Now his song goes on in you.

love, Gayle

Gayle - September 26, 2015 at 12:00 AM

LL

“ Dear Connie, Rodd, Johanna, Juliana, and families:

I just learned of Jim’s death from Julie Ann (my daughter) after her visit with dad Bruce Parks, and I just read the wonderful obituary posted on this site. Please know that I send you my love and my thanks for sharing your wonderful husband and dad with me through our meeting at Nature Jaunt, the Rockford Park District day camp, through dinners with your family, through phone conversations when I was “stuck” on what to put in a job application, and through various serendipitous contacts over the years. I am happy to know Jim’s later years were so fulfilling and that he and Connie have had the joy of staying in close touch with kids, grandkids, and good friends. If I ever get out your way, I sure hope that I can join in on one of the sing-a-longs!

I was planning to retire – well, did retire for a few months – but am now the half-time Unitarian Universalist minister in Sierra Vista, AZ. My Julie has a “miracle” baby girl named Emerson and son Paul is completing paramedic training in NC. Gary is teaching writing after leaving the corporate world several years back. His kids are doing well.

I wish you the comfort of many, many loving memories, and I hold you all in my hearts as you adjust to your lives without the physical presence of Jim.

*Much love and peace to you all,
Linda*

Linda (Crowe/Parks) Lawrence - September 26, 2015 at 12:00 AM