



## Richard Rick Bjelland

August 23, 1947 - December 23, 2016

Richard Ray Bjelland, Rick to all who knew him, passed away suddenly at home on December 23rd, 2016, in Bellingham, Washington. He was born in Seattle, to Ray and Hazel (Rich) Bjelland on August 23rd, 1947. Rick leaves behind his beloved wife, Janie Bjelland (Armstrong), who were together for 39 years. They were married on August 18th, 1979 in a quiet ceremony by the bay at their home on Chuckanut Avenue in Bellingham. In true Rick Bjelland fashion, it was quiet and simple with his closest friends and family. Besides his family, Rick's greatest passion in life was music. He began playing professionally at the age of 14, as a saxophonist and vocalist, but also played the flute, clarinet, and percussions. Some of his bands included, Charlie and the Seniors, Inside Straight, Legacy, and most recently, The Rocky Vaselino Show who he also played with in the 70s. Rick's other love was cars. He rally raced as a young adult, loved watching NASCAR and Indy racing, and worked as an auto-electrician for most of his life in Bellingham. Rick was passionate about nature. He took his family camping every year and taught his daughters all about the various plants and their uses. He was an avid animal lover, rescuing everything from crows and squirrels, to cats, dogs, and even once, a baby deer.

Rick grew up on his family's farm, "Alderwood Manor" in Lynnwood, WA, where he developed his love and knowledge of plants and animals. His parents gardened and raised Highland Cattle, sheep, pigs, and Collies. He

graduated from Meadowdale High School in 1965 and attended Western State College (Western Washington University) in Bellingham, graduating with his Teaching Certificate in 1969. Lovingly known as Mr. B, he began his teaching career in Brooklyn, WA, teaching all subjects and grades and directing the school's music program. He later returned to teaching in 1999 in Whatcom and Skagit County. His work as an auto mechanic began at Southside Service in Bellingham, and he eventually formed his own private auto-electrical business.

Rick was a kind, gentle, and spiritual soul. He found his peace in nature, strolling along beaches, collecting rocks, and watching the sun set into the bay. Rick loved his quiet and alone time; he cherished his wife, daughters, sons-in-law, and grandsons, loving as much as he was loved. He is survived by his wife, Janie; his daughters, Richelle (Jeff) and Skyla (Mike); stepson Mason; and his grandsons, Calum, Kieran, and Tristan. He is predeceased by his parents, Ray and Hazel. The extraordinary depth of his passions and careers allowed him to touch the lives of so many, and he will be greatly missed by all. Though we are profoundly wounded by his death, we know that he will always be nearby in spirit, guiding, loving, and protecting his family.

A Memorial Service will be held for Rick on Saturday, January 7, 11:00am at Moles Farewell Tributes – Bellingham, 2465 Lakeway Dr.

# Tribute Wall



“ So very, very sorry to hear about Rick. Our hearts are with you Janie. With all our love, Steve and Jan Goodwin

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**Steve and Jan Goodwin** - December 23, 2016 at 12:00 AM

EB

“ The first time I met Rick, he was climbing out of a Triumph TR3, a tiny red sports car which was classic even in the early 1980's. Next he extracted Janie, who never missed a band gig, then came a tenor sax case trailing reeds, song lists, neck strap and dislodged sax key pads , and then, as if that were not enough cargo, the back seat area yielded up youngsters Richelle and Skyla! Good people arrive in compact packages.

Rick was a first rate musician, devoted family man, and in automotive matters, a skilled technician. On stage he was invariably professional, good humored, and never complained about even the lowliest venue, nor did he rank his musical companions. His reputation as an innovator went beyond music. When he and Janie needed more bedroom space for the girls, he added to the family's cottage by bringing up lumber from a boat hull the beach, and thus accomplished the needed addition at minimal cost. His gatherings of family and friends were always popular, and yearly garden gifts of pickled beans launched many a delicious Bloody Mary.

Janie was Rick's biggest fan, so it did little good to ask her to critique a band performance. If asked to do so, invariably she would reply "You guys always sound good to me!" Perhaps her opinion was enhanced by the fact that Rick, having arrived resplendent in a floral Hawaiian shirt, or even his red tuxedo, would occasionally play so hard that next day he was nearly too stiff and sore to work. True to form, however, Rick had no complaints. His talent and calm carried the day.

Janie and girls, we will be thinking of you. R.I.P. Rick. You will be very much missed by all of us.

Earl Bower, band mate: Inside Straight, Ragnarok, Meteors.

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**Earl Bower** - December 23, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KL

“ Sorry for your loss Janie and family. Hugs

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**Karen and Dave Letendre** - December 23, 2016 at 12:00 AM

FO

“ I am so sorry to hear about the death of my old friend and musical companion. We played in a number of bands together in the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the start, we played country music mixed with some 50s rock and roll, which was always popular with the country music crowd. The band went through a lot of changes and different players over the years, we veered from country to country rock, to rock and roll, but Rick was a constant — he was nearly always the best musician in the band — and we spent many nights out and about in Whatcom County getting dancers on their feet. He was a good friend and I admired his gentle spirit and his saxophone playing. He was a good singer too, helping us arrange vocal harmonies when that was called for. To Janie, sorry to have lost touch with you guys over the years, but you’ve always had a place in our hearts, and our thoughts are with you now.

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**Fred Obee** - December 23, 2016 at 12:00 AM