



James "Jim" Sumner

February 11, 1954 - January 18, 2020

James "Jim" Sumner

Kingston – James "Jim" Sumner, 65, with a big heart to match his gentle giant stature passed away on January 18, 2020. Jim was born in Knoxville, Tennessee lived, graduated from West High School and the University of Tennessee where he played trumpet in the Pride of the Southland Band. He was a registered Professional Engineer who received his Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering. He completed graduate work in both Mechanical Engineering and Engineering Management.

Mr. Sumner served as a Program Manager for the UT Institute for Nuclear Security at the Howard H Baker Center for Public Policy. He retired from Oak Ridge National Laboratory where he served as a Program Director and Division Director. He was very proud of his work supporting nonproliferation missions as well as managing efforts to secure at-risk nuclear materials and equipment. He previously served as the Deputy Program Manager for Oak Ridge support for the Highly Enriched Uranium Transparency Program, monitoring the down-blending of weapons-grade uranium from dismantled Russian nuclear weapons. He received a patent for novel instrumentation. Jim was on the Board of Directors for Michael Dunn Center, was past president of the Kingston Rotary, and was a volunteer tax preparer for the Roane County United Ways. He was also a graduate of the Leadership Roane program.

Jim is preceded in death by his parents, James and Francis Sumner. He is

survived by his wife Deborah Helfenberger Sumner; brother-in-law David Helfenberger (Shelly) of Morristown; sister-in-law Diane Helfenberger Clark (Randy). He is also survived by special cousin Tom Woosley (Jane) of Birmingham, Alabama. Dear cousins in the Chattanooga area include: Tom (Bonnie) Cope, Patsy (Jack) Herring, and Susan (Mike) Ledbetter.

The family will receive friends from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, January 21, 2020 with funeral services to follow at Kyker Funeral Home, 350 West Race Street, Kingston, TN 37763 with Pastor Gary Alley and Bill Strunk officiating.

In lieu of flowers, Jim requested donations to any of the following non-profit organizations:

Cancer Support Community East Tennessee, 2230 Sutherland Ave.,
Knoxville, TN 37919

Friends of the Smokies, P.O. Box 1660, Kodak, TN 37764-7660

The Gary Sinese Foundation, P.O. Box 368 Woodland Hills, CA 91365

The Michael Dunn Center Foundation, 629 Gallaher Rd, Kingston, TN 37763

Roane Imagination Library, P.O. Box 128, Kingston, TN 37763

Thompson Cancer Survival Center, 1901 Clinch Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37916

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 21. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Kyker Funeral Homes
OUR KINGSTON CHAPEL
PO Box 69, 350 W Race St
Kingston, TN 37763
(865) 376-6531
<https://www.kykerfuneralhomes.com/>

Funeral Service

JAN 21. 4:00 PM (ET)

Kyker Funeral Homes
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PO Box 69, 350 W Race St
Kingston, TN 37763
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Tribute Wall



“ *Kyker Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of James "Jim" Sumner*



Kyker Funeral Home - January 21, 2020 at 11:39 AM

SM

“ *I just discovered that a friend is no longer with us. While I moved away from East Tennessee, I still follow my friends and family. You and Jim and I go way back to when he first came to Oak Ridge/Knoxville and seemed to follow each other around. I remember that little sports car he owned and drove. I never could understand how he managed to drive that thing being a very tall man. God bless you with yours and our loss of a good friend. Stan Moses*

Stan Moses - February 24, 2020 at 01:30 PM

LM

“Debbie, I am so sorry for your loss. I may have met you once, but I grew up with Jim through our teenage years and into college. He and his dad introduced me to shortwave radios, a hobby that led me to get my amateur radio license.

I remember one day he or his dad dug up an old WW 2 German transceiver in his back yard in Cumberland Estates where we lived. As kids it was really eerie cause it looked kind of obvious Germans were spying on Oak Ridge during that war. Wild stuff.

It looks like Jim had a good and successful life. Very impressive man. Again so sorry he's gone.

Larry Maso - February 18, 2020 at 10:43 PM

RT

“Deb - I am truly heart broken to learn of the passing of the "gentle giant" named Jim. Your devotion to each other was inspirational and I am blessed to have known you both. The kindness and appreciation shown to us will never be forgotten.

*Always in my heart,
Rhonda
Aka Batman*

Rhonda (Nance) Tremblay - January 28, 2020 at 10:47 AM

WM

“Deb, I am so sorry for your loss. I had the privilege of working with Jim at Y-12 before the group moved to ORNL. He was the kindest man and treated everyone with such respect no matter their position. He wrote a job description for me to move to ORNL and even though when I moved over I didn't actually work for him, I will never forget him going to bat for me. I remember working with you as well. Jim was a great guy and he will be missed. Truly a gentle giant.

Wanda McCrosky - January 28, 2020 at 09:13 AM

PB

“ *Debbie - Paul Person sent me word of Jim's passing this morning (Wed 1/22). Scottie and I are so sorry for your loss. We had been receiving updates from our ORNL family but not recently. Our thoughts are with you. Jim was a wonderful person.*

Phil and Scottie Baxter - January 22, 2020 at 08:36 AM

MH

“ *My condolences to Jim's family. As you can see from several who have posted here, Jim was well-respected for his talents and many contributions to his field as well as the type of person he was. He taught me a lot about "things" when I came into the group to which I remain very grateful. Thanks to Debbie and family for sharing him with us so we too would know what a kind person he was.*

Mike Hulseley - January 21, 2020 at 01:25 PM

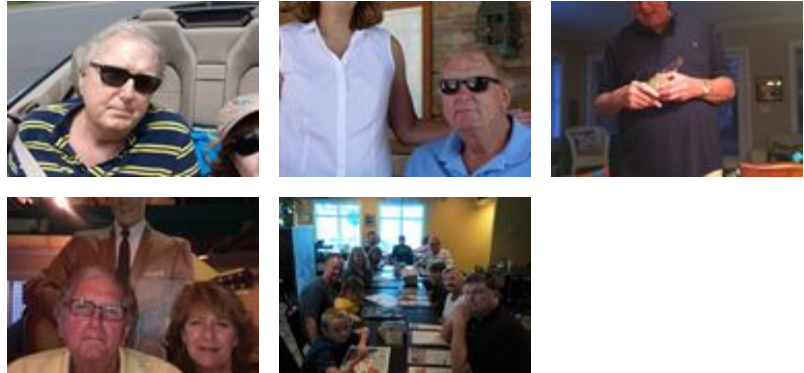
KB

“ *Deb I am so sorry for your loss - it was only recently I was blessed to reunite with you and Jim. May God bring you peace and solace during this time. -Kristy*

Kristy Bentley - January 21, 2020 at 01:19 PM



“ 43 files added to the album LifeTributes



Kyker Funeral Home - January 21, 2020 at 11:31 AM



Debbie:
My sincerest condolences to you. I remember him as so very kind, courteous, and professional. My love and prayers for you... Denise McNelly

Denise McNelly - January 21, 2020 at 12:02 PM



“ Debbie my heart goes out to you. I had the honor of working with Jim when he came to ORNL. Jim was kind, sensitive and always ready to help a friend or coworker. Thank you for introducing me to him many years ago. He will be missed.

Fay Frederick

Fay Frederick - January 21, 2020 at 09:39 AM

JT

“ Jim was such an inspiration to me and to many others. I had the privilege of working with him at Oak Ridge national laboratory for many years. He was taken from us far too soon. What an honor to have known him. Rest in peace Jim.

Juanita Hunt Tomcik - January 21, 2020 at 08:14 AM

JT

Juanita Hunt Tomcik

Juanita Hunt Tomcik - January 21, 2020 at 08:15 AM

GF

“ I had the privileged and honor to get to know Jim the last few years of my career and after he retired. He was one of the kindest people I ever met as well as a patriot for his country. Thank you for sharing him with us at ORNL for a few more years, Deb.

Glenn Fugate - January 21, 2020 at 07:12 AM



“ Fairest of All was purchased for the family of James "Jim" Sumner.



January 21, 2020 at 06:16 AM

CC

“ Dang! Jim is one of my heros who knew how to live life well and make positive things happen. We worked together at Y-12, ORNL and with UT building the Institute for Nuclear Security. We also collaborated on polishing off margaritas with family and friends. While my big buddy is off on another adventure he is very much alive in all the people he touched including Pete and me.

Chris Clark - January 21, 2020 at 06:11 AM

HH

“ Jim and I were co-workers and close friends during his time in Atlanta. I loved his terrific sense of humor and came to appreciate how that sense of humor was informed by wisdom as we all got older. He was a connoisseur of gentle aging jokes. Lots of great memories of Jim. My wife and I still talk about the road trip to Gatlinburg with Jim and Deb! He loved cars and music and Deb--a life well-lived.

Hack Heyward

Hack Heyward - January 20, 2020 at 11:56 PM

DT

“ I first worked with Jim when he came to Atlanta in '78 or '79. We hit it off instantly with a love of cars and music. We remained good friends after he returned to Tennessee and we attended each others weddings and special events. Jim and Deb have been wonderful family friends for close to 40 years. We are heartbroken that Jim has left us and wish Deb and family our sincere condolences. Jim was a wonderful friend who freely gave his time and talent for his community and country. We will truly miss him.

David & Jan Tennant - January 20, 2020 at 10:35 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of James "Jim" Sumner.*



January 20, 2020 at 08:21 PM



“ *Jim was one of the first people I worked with when I began working @ ORNL. I came to learn very quickly how talented Jim was and the tremendous impact he quietly had on our National Security over the many many years of his contributions and research. Jim ALWAYS made a grande impression in the room... Let's face it... It was hard for him to hide! I always enjoyed our conversations and I always came away feeling much smarter as a result. Thank You, Jim! Rest Easy my friend. #BravoZulu!*

Tony Rucci - January 20, 2020 at 06:05 PM



“ *Jim Sumner was a very kind person. I came to work with him as an outsider. He welcomed me inside his circle and did his best to educate me on the big problems he and his team were solving. I was fascinated and appreciative of his achievements. If you worked with Jim you came away a better person for having known him. God rest your soul Jim Sumner! Thank you for all you accomplished.*

Michael Rochford - January 20, 2020 at 12:36 PM

TL

“ I was honored to have had the opportunity to work for Jim and Deb as a contractor making additions to their home. During this period we became good friends as we shared a passion for classic cars. I'll always have fond memories of Jim. He will be missed. Tommy and Jane Lowe

Tommy Lowe - January 20, 2020 at 10:54 AM

LL

“ Jim was a wonderful man! I have many great memories of our times working together over the past many years. He definitely was a special soul and one that will be greatly missed.



Lisa Loden - January 20, 2020 at 10:05 AM

MC

“ Jim was always the tallest guy in the room and I always gravitated toward him. I would stand on my tip-toes and he would bend down to give me some of the best hugs I ever had from a friend. I will miss those hugs of welcome, joy, and compassion.

Marilyn Calfee - January 20, 2020 at 09:47 AM