



David Kim Johansen

September 16, 1954 - September 21, 2023

David Kim Johansen, a long-time resident of Corvallis and a beloved husband, stepfather, grandfather, son, brother, friend, died early in the morning of September 21, 2023 at Timber Hill Place, where he lived with his wife Susan Bliss. He was 69 and had battled cancer for more than a decade.

Kim, the name he went by, lived life with gusto and had many interests and passions, among them his family and friends, outdoor adventure, endurance sports, wood working, and music. During his career as a Geotechnical Engineer for the U.S Forest Service he was recognized for his innovation to promote and maintain healthy streams and safe passages for fish.

Kim was born in September 16, 1954 in Pendleton, Oregon, to David and Evelleen Johansen, the third of five children. He spent his grade-school years in Klamath Falls, where his father worked for a local bank. The family moved to Beaverton when Kim was in sixth grade and graduated from Beaverton High School in 1972. During his high school years, Kim worked for a local landscaper, a job that fostered a life-long love for landscaping and physical outdoor work.

Following high school, Kim enrolled in Portland State University but soon transferred to Montana State University in Bozeman to pursue the study of architecture. In the end, he decided engineering was more to his liking, and he

returned to Portland State, where he graduated in 1979 with degrees in Earth Science and Applied Science and Engineering.

He landed a job right out of college in the Sweet Home office of the U.S. Forest Service, reviewing the viability of proposed roads. He would spend the rest of his career with the Forest Service, working on a wide range of projects.

Kim met Susan Bliss, the love of his life, in 1987 during a wellness retreat. At a social event one evening, Susan spotted Kim across the room, marched over, and invited him to dance. A little over a year later, in August of 1988, they were married. It was the second marriage for both.

Kim joined a family already in progress. Susan had two boys, Rob then 10, and Matt, 7. He embraced the role of stepfather. After a brief stint in Vancouver, Washington, where Kim had moved for work, the family returned to Corvallis and into a new house not far from the Woodland Meadow. He lived there with Susan until the final month of his life.

Kim spent most of his career working out of the Willamette National Forest Supervisor's Office in Eugene, focusing on road drainage projects and landslide repair. What he enjoyed most, though, were stream-bed restoration projects and designing culverts to promote low-impact fish passage. He received a national award for a series of workshops he prepared and presented to other forest service personnel related to this culvert and restoration work. One aspect of the job that he particularly loved was that his projects got him out of the office and into the forests of Oregon.

Kim's father was an accomplished trumpet player and tried to interest his young son in the instrument. But as Kim later recounted, the trumpet "wasn't cool enough" for a boy growing up in the late 60s. Instead, he persuaded his parents to buy him, "a cheap, but beautiful" acoustic guitar, which he taught

himself to play. As an adult, he acquired a taste for high-end Taylor guitars, and he played those—teaching himself complicated pieces by composers like Leo Kottke—until he started making and playing his own acoustic guitars in his 50s.

Over the years, Kim created a constantly evolving state-of-the-art wood shop in his basement. Here he crafted beautiful cabinets, tables, and rocking chairs, among other things, before turning to guitars.

At one point, Kim ordered a large, high-tech table saw from Europe. When it was delivered, he realized he had no way to get it through the house and into his shop. He wound up cutting a large hole in his concrete garage floor and with help from his brother-in-law Steve lowered it into the shop with ropes.

Neighbors remember watching him spend a cold, rainy weekend on his driveway, hand milling board after board from a fallen walnut tree a friend had given him. The wood from that tree was used in numerous projects for years to come.

Even during some of the lowest periods of his cancer treatment, Kim found the strength and stamina to work in his shop. The projects took his mind off his illness. In the end, he made eight guitars in addition to countless pieces of furniture. It gave him great pleasure to gift these guitars and his other creations to family and friends.

Throughout his life, few things made Kim happier than working and playing outdoors, whether it was gardening with Susan, rebuilding a deck, fly-fishing from his pontoon boat, or kayaking on local lakes and rivers. He loved endurance sports, like hiking, running, biking, and Nordic skiing. He ran 50-mile trail races in the Cascades. He pedaled his bike on roads throughout the

west, including a ride from Oregon through Lassen National Park to Bridgeport, California. He enjoyed backpacking in the summer and winter, both solo and with friends, in the Cascades and northern Sierras.

As a young adult, Kim learned to sail on the Willamette River and he continued to sail throughout his life, captaining frequent trips with Susan and friends, to places like the San Juans and most memorably from Grenada to St. Lucia in the Caribbean.

An avid reader, Kim immersed himself in guitar-playing and wood-working magazines as well as thrillers and novels set in the western mountains and forests. He and Susan often had a jigsaw puzzle going on their dining room table. And for decades, they had a standing Sunday-night date with two other couples for Masterpiece Theater and dessert.

Kim loved cracking jokes and had an infectious guffaw. He loved gathering with friends and neighbors for conversation, music, wine, and laughter. He was kind and generous and always happy to lend a hand or his expertise. He was a gentleman, in both meanings of the word.

Most of all, Kim was one half of a fabulous couple, a devoted husband, stepfather, and grandfather, son and brother. He will be missed.

Kim is survived by his wife, Susan Bliss; his stepsons, Rob and Matt Putnam; Rob's wife, Sarah Putnam; his grandchildren, Ayla, Harper, Elias, Reece, and Simone; his brother, Eric Johansen of Beaverton; and his sisters, Debbie Cardiff of Vancouver, Washington, and Amy Otoupalik of McKenzie Bridge, Aunt Wanda Orton of Auburn WA. as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews.

A service to celebrate Kim's life will be December 9, 2023 at the Unitarian

Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis, 2945 Circle Blvd. at 1pm.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 9. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (PT)

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Corvallis
2945 NW Circle Blvd
Corvallis, OR 97330