



James B. Wilson

November 11, 2024

James B. Wilson, a decorated retired Navy Captain who in a 23-year military career served two tours in Vietnam and directed the prestigious Navy Seal schools on both the east and west coasts, died November 11 of pneumonia, he was 90. A resident of Manheim Township and Park City, Utah until health and the pandemic made travel to Utah impossible, Jim was born to James Borden Wilson and Grace Anderson Wilson in Oswego, NY. After a fortuitous meeting on the ski slopes of Utah, he married Marolyn Shirk Davenport in 2009.

Jim received his BA in education and MA in psychology from the State University of New York. While studying for his master's degree, he had a fellowship with the well-known psychologist, Carl Rogers. He worked as a guidance counselor and coach for five years on Long Island. While in college, Jim drove in numerous stock car races, including one against Mario Andretti. When living on Long Island, he played on a minor league soccer team.

Jim's primary career was as an officer and a SEAL in the US Navy. As the

commanding officer of Underwater Demolition Team 13, he led his men in combat in the swamps and rivers of Vietnam. The honors he received for this included a Bronze Star with a V for valor, the Vietnamese Medal of Honor, and a Presidential Unit Citation. He served as Director of Basic Underwater Demolition/Seals training for the Atlantic Fleet in Little Creek, VA, and the Pacific Fleet in Coronado, CA. Capt. Wilson's skills as an educator and his devotion to training the next generation of Frogmen, as the members of the UDT/SEALS are known, were an essential part of the Naval Special Warfare's transition from the Underwater Demolition Teams to the SEALS Teams.

After retiring from the Navy, Jim founded a development company, Ellison & Wilson, and built houses in Reno, NV. A superb athlete, he also taught skiing at Mt. Rose ski area there and later moved to California to teach at Kirkwood Mountain Resort. In 2001, he moved to Park City, Utah where he was in high demand as an instructor until he retired at the age of 82 after 30 years teaching skiing.

Jim combined his love of travel and biking by serving as a bicycle trip leader first with Adventure Cycling, biking, and camping throughout the west, and then with Bicycle Adventure

Club. He especially loved France and planned and led over 25 trips through France as a volunteer group leader. Between trips, he learned to speak French by attending immersion French language programs in France, Canada, and Guadeloupe.

In addition to his wife, Jim is survived by his daughters, Kathleen Wilson Sietsema (husband Keith) and Karen Wilson Gustavel; three grandchildren, Megan Kollar (husband Ross Dwyer), Ryan Gustavel, and Kayde Gustavel; and a grandson Oliver James Kollar Dwyer.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation, michaeljfox.org.

Tribute Wall

KM

“ I'll always remember the day Jim Wilson took me up to the top of a ski run called *The Wall* at Kirkwood. Back in the day when it was never, ever groomed, so the bumps just got bigger and meaner. It was ugly, but somehow I made it down. That's when Jim, the best ski coach I ever had, had me turn around and look up the hill, so he could tell me, "Look what you just skied down". It was a transformative moment. No comment about my "technique" or how scared I was; just, Look what you did. It changed my life. Whenever I got into a situation (or ski run) that seemed impossible, I would remember the feeling of looking back up the hill and realizing, I could do it, I could figure it out, I could make it work. Thanks for the gift of self confidence and for helping me begin the best career ever as a ski instructor. I will always be grateful to Jim Wilson. He is deeply missed.

Kathleen McCarty - December 10, 2024 at 09:32 PM

JJ

“ Dear Marolyn and Jim's family,
I was deeply moved and saddened to learn of Jim's passing. My heartfelt sympathy goes out to all of you.
I had the pleasure and privilege of knowing Jim for a brief time, being one of his caregivers from Landis At Home. He was always such a gentleman.
I was not aware how accomplished he was in his lifetime. He was truly a remarkable man. It appears he impacted many people in a very positive way.
God bless you all.
Sincerely, Judy Jesiolowski

Judy Jesiolowski - November 30, 2024 at 02:08 PM

RS

“ I worked with Jim at Crush PD. I always enjoyed seeing and working with Jim. We would occasionally speak a bit of French. I didn't know much but could always say the basic “How are you.” Marolyn and family I am so sorry for your loss. Though I am no longer a part of Crush PD my memories of Jim will always be cherished .

RIP Jim

What an amazing life you lived!

Rosemary Soles - November 24, 2024 at 07:39 PM

BD

“ Bruce D. purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of James B. Wilson.



Bruce D. - November 22, 2024 at 10:22 AM

AT

“ I was a former junior officer working with Captain Wilson in UDT and SEAL Teams in the 60s. Jim was personable and always had good advice on any number of issues for us JOs. Al Todd, Captain, USNR, Retired.

Al Todd - November 20, 2024 at 02:01 PM

BD

I served with then-Lcdr. Wilson in the late 60s. He was a terrific leader and boss. Over time we grew to become friends and ski buddies. We was always generous, of good humor, and a wonderful mentor. RIP Jim. You'll be missed. Bruce Dyer

Bruce Dyer - November 22, 2024 at 10:28 AM

SN

I met Jim at Crush PD. It was always a pleasure to see him in the gym. I many times would salute him as he entered the gym. Little did I know about the incredible life he lived. To Marolyn and the rest of the family, you are in my thoughts at this sad time. Sharon Nelson

Sharon Nelson - November 26, 2024 at 02:04 PM