



James Rylie Hietbrink

September 6, 1950 - August 15, 2024

James Rylie Hietbrink, 73, of Chicago's Buena Park neighborhood, died on August 15, 2024. He passed away peacefully at home in Imperial Towers, surrounded by the attentive love of his husband Vee, sisters Carol and Mary, and brother-in-law Bill.

He was born in Holland, Michigan. When James was ten, the family relocated to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, where he later graduated from Northeast High School. After attending Calvin College, he went on to the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and completed his degree in Science, Industrial and Operations Engineering.

James had true passion for his work at the University of Chicago Medicine. He enjoyed a successful career as Facility Director, retiring after 27 years. James served as the principal planner of the U of C's 1.2 million-square-foot hospital pavilion, named the Center for Care and Discovery, which opened in 2012.

He was also an ardent audiophile, investing in his love of electronics and music.

Cherished husband of seven years to Verasak "Vee" Kongdanpai, adored brother of Carol (Bill) Zabilansky and Mary Hietbrink, brother-in-law of Suthathip Kongdanpai and Soraya Chonmala, son-in-law of Buye

Kongdanpai.

Preceded in death by parents John Thomas and Marian Hietbrink.

Services are private.

Arrangements by Inclusive Funeral Care, 773-318 1305 or www.InclusiveFuneralCare.com.

Tribute Wall

JB

“ I had the pleasure of working with Jim during his years at the University of Chicago Medical Center. His intelligence, sense of humor, and old-fashioned work ethic were much appreciated and made work with him a joy. Many good things were accomplished with Jim's help. I'm grateful for knowing him.
John Beberman

John Beberman - September 04, 2024 at 01:41 PM

MH

“ I miss my brother - his voice, his laugh, his humor, his brilliance, his passion for his work and his life.

I miss everything about him.

Mary

Mary Hietbrink - August 25, 2024 at 03:46 PM

CZ

“ It's hard to imagine life without my big brother. Jim, you were there to lean on when Dad died. Your advice has been invaluable. Your fight for life was inspiring to all, even your doctors.

You truly embodied the Hietbrink way of working hard, planning ahead, and always trying to do the right thing.

I'll treasure the last few days we spent together, sharing your vast knowledge and interests along with your wry sense of humor.

May God be with you. Love always - your sister, Carol.

Carol Zabilansky - August 25, 2024 at 03:38 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Team Inclusive Funeral Care - August 15, 2024 at 03:43 PM

BC

RIP James. You will be sorely missed.

Beverly Conley - August 16, 2024 at 05:31 PM

AR

I'm so sorry for your family's loss. Sincerely, Jim's neighbor Amber.

Amber Ryan - August 18, 2024 at 06:56 PM

CZ

Thank you from the family, Beverly & Amber!

Carol Zabilansky - August 25, 2024 at 03:48 PM

GM

I had the privilege and pleasure of working with Jim on the UC NHP (Center for Care and Concern) project. Jim was a great teammate and valuable contributor to the success of the project. He was a professional colleague and friend.

Gary Munding

Gary Munding - September 05, 2024 at 07:46 PM

RB

My memories of "Rylie" (as we called him in high school) mostly revolve around our end of summer boating excursions from Fort Lauderdale down to Everglades National Park. Rylie, Tom and I would go boating, skiing and shark fishing for a week on a boat that Rylie's Dad borrowed from Chris Craft for the summer. This occurred every summer for 3 years while we were in high school. Rylie more than once took out our entire youth group from Church out on the boat. I think he really enjoyed being the "captain" and going on adventures in the summer as a break from the intense study habits he had in High School. As I remember, he was super intelligent and a fun person to be around. I lost track of him when we all went away to college so my memories are from a long time ago. Mary and Carol, may the God of all comfort be with you.

Russell Bleeker - December 14, 2024 at 10:25 AM

TG

As the Tom referenced in Russell's memories, I'd like to echo everything he shared. Ryl was my roommate at Calvin for two years. During that time he did his best to make sure I was aware it was more important to spend time studying than spending time in the gym. Although that message ultimately fell on deaf ears, it wasn't from lack of trying on his part. I'll always be grateful for the memories and to have called him my friend.

Tom Gritter

Tom Gritter - December 14, 2024 at 10:16 PM

AR

This is more than a memory, but please bear with:

Almost every time I listen to music I think of Jim, especially when I am trying out a new piece of audio gear. We worked together at the hospital and spent many after work hours and weekends evaluating and modifying audio gear, and drowning our musical sorrows in brew pubs like Goose Island.

I'll never forget first hearing of Jim before he became my boss and friend. I was at a local watering hole talking to a friend who started telling me about this wonderful guy he was dating. His date bore a striking resemblance to Jim. As it turned out, it was Jim. Imagine telling my new boss how I learned of him.

We soon discovered a common interest, and for many years we obsessed and spent way too much money on audio. Our ongoing debate was he was intent on making his tiny speakers sound big. I was into big planar speakers and could not convince him that his tiny tots were never going to sound big. He was persistent.

I called him Mr. Mod. He could buy anything he liked even if it had flaws, always believing that he could modify it to his liking. His engineering instincts were always alive.

I would love to drive his cars. I still remember opening the car roof of a new one just as he started to advise me not to. The window stopped halfway to opening and it took a trip to the dealer to close it and get it fixed. It was the only time I know his skills failed him.

My husband of 31 years, his name is also Jim, and I used to travel from Mount Prospect to the city on Saturdays. For the first hour, without fail, they would chat on the couch while I caught up with my sleep inches away. We would later have dinner.

The only area where Jim lacked imagination was in home colors. He would proudly show us a new color strip eagerly wanting to know what we thought. Invariably, we laughed and said it was just another version of off-white.

Jim and I moved to Palm Springs, CA in 2000. Jim visited a few times. We visited Chicago a couple of times, but it was hard to maintain a long distance friendship while we were busy with new jobs and home remodeling.

Upon departing we left Jim our cat Carmen. She was very skittish, a cat that only someone with Jim's patience could love. Jim called her Ms. Kitty. I am glad he found a loving pet, and later a cherished

husband to love that we've never had the pleasure to meet.

Good-bye, Jim. We'll never forget you.

Armando and Jim

Armando Rancano - December 27, 2025 at 03:10 AM