



James M. Spence

January 20, 1926 - November 23, 2014

James Maxwell Spence died at home in Wenatchee, Wash., on Nov. 23, 2014.

Spence, the fourth of five children, was born in Spirit Lake, Idaho, on Jan. 20, 1926, to William and Carrie Spence. He graduated from Wallace High School, then joined the U.S. Army Air Force in the waning days of World War II.

Following the war, Jim served as a smokejumper for a number of years. He jumped on 50 wildfires around the West before shattering his left ankle during a bad landing in rugged terrain. He was on crutches for 18 months.

The accident turned out to be one of the most fortunate events of his life. It gave him a chance to enroll at the University of Montana, where he met his future wife, Margaret. Twirling around on one crutch like a burly Fred Astaire, he captured her heart. They were married for 56 years; on their last anniversary, Jim told her she was the source of everything good in his life.

After earning his degree at UM, Jim served as an administrative officer for the U.S. Forest Service and later worked on the Alaska pipeline. Upon retiring, he and Margaret became world travelers, driving across the United States and Canada in their motorhome, taking a 'round-the-world cruise for their 50th anniversary and visiting six continents during multiple trips.

Jim is survived by his wife Margaret, son Bill of Pullman, Wash., daughter Tana Finnesand and husband Martin of Copper Center, Alaska, grandchildren Neil and Katie Finnesand and great-granddaughter Coralyn Tillo.

No memorial service is scheduled at the request of the family. Please express your thoughts and memories on the online guest book at jonesjonesbetts.com. Arrangements are by Jones & Jones-Betts Funeral Home.

Tribute Wall

BB

“ Jim was like a big brother to me. My wife, Norma, and I had many good times with Jim and Margaret. How well we remember the Panama Canal cruise, the Kennicott Mine trip, the Grand Canyon helicopter trip, the Amsterdam to Budapest river cruise, the Mt. McKinley flight seeing trip, the Brooks camp bear viewing trip and numerous other adventures. Most of all, the conversations and a toddy we shared after a "hard" day of retirement! Some the most pleasant and memorable times of our lives. These good times can never be duplicated. Rest in Peace Jim, knowing you and Margaret has been a terrific experience in our lives.

Bruce and Norma Barber

Bruce Barber - December 16, 2014 at 02:47 PM

DW

“ I first started my career in the Chugach National Forest in Anchorage, AK in June 1973, Jim was my Admin Officer. He taught me well. So sorry for your loss. Dona Walker

Dona Walker - December 15, 2014 at 02:07 PM

JR

“ Jim was a well-spoken, thoughtful, and wise man. I enjoyed any opportunity to speak with him and talk about his travels or life experiences. The tragedy of the modern family is the amount of time that passes between each visit.

My condolences to Margaret, Bill and Tana.

Jason Rock - December 03, 2014 at 05:19 PM

KE

“ Hello to the J,M,Spence Family!! my name is Kent Daniels from Florence,Mt. I wish to extend my condolences! My brothers-Dan(Boon) and Jack were Smoke Jumpers W/Jim in the '50s! Dan and Jack roomed w/Jim whilst they attended U.of M Forestry School.I hunted pheasants and ducks with him,north of Missoula on the Reservation.Great times were had--and a great number of stories about the times they had living in the "SHACK" of Mister Prescott's,whose Old Home is on the national registry (I believe). Bev Smith was Dan's wife. I told her about Jim's passing this a.m. I read about him in in THE MISSOULIAN TODAY--12/02/'14.---Great picture! I remember his looks well!! All my memories of Jim are fond ones!!! yours truly Kent

Kent(Dan)Daniels - December 02, 2014 at 02:27 PM

DL

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with you Margaret and family at this difficult time. We enjoyed James through the association of the senior center..Don and Renae Lau

Don Lau - November 25, 2014 at 07:31 PM