



Kim de Rubertis

November 24, 1937 - September 7, 2019

The family and friends of Kim Palmer de Rubertis mourn the passing of this exemplary and exceptional man. Kim was born in Kansas City, MO, on November 24, 1937. He was the first of three children born to William Joseph and Marjorie (Palmer) de Rubertis. Kim's father was a professional cellist at the time, playing in the Kansas City Symphony and teaching at the Kansas City Orchestral Training School, which was under the leadership of Kim's grandfather, Dr. Nazareno de Rubertis.

During World War II, the family moved to Sandusky, OH. After the war, they moved to Lawrenceburg, IN, and then to Catonsville, MD. Kim graduated from Catonsville High School and was granted a scholarship to attend Colorado School of Mines, where he graduated with a professional degree in geological engineering. Throughout his high school and college years, Kim was an exceptional athlete, playing both soccer and baseball. He also held jobs throughout his academic career and served in student government.

Kim married Barbara Kay Lehde on August 19, 1961, and they began their life of adventures. While Kim served in the Army Corps of Engineers, he was stationed at Fort Belvoir, VA, Fort Riley, KS, and the Naval Amphibious Warfare Training School in Coronado, CA. After serving in the Army, Kim and Barbara moved to Cincinnati, OH, where their first son, Corbin Palmer de Rubertis, was born. In 1965, Kim went to work for Harza Engineering

Company in Chicago, IL. The family frequently traveled with Kim on domestic assignments. In 1967, the family moved to Iran, where for several years, he worked as resident manager for a dam being constructed on the Karun River. During this time, a second son was born to Kim and Barbara, Benjamin William de Rubertis.

In 1972, the family moved to Ann Arbor, MI, where Kim was resident engineer for the reconstruction of three dams on the Huron River and then to Bacova, VA, where Kim was resident manager during the investigation, design, and construction of a large pumped storage facility. In 1974, Kim took the position of resident engineer for the addition of a second powerhouse for Rock Island Dam on the Columbia River. Kim's family moved to Cashmere, WA, bought their first house, and settled into the wonderful community that would be their permanent home.

In 1976, Kim went into private practice as a consulting engineer, working on both domestic and foreign assignments. He was a dam engineering professional, but he also served the community pro bono whenever someone needed help with a water well or a foundation. He would often perform these services in exchange for a donation to Children's Hospital. Also as a commercial construction arbitrator and testifying expert, Kim enjoyed helping people settle disputes.

During these years, Kim also devoted time and expertise to passing on knowledge to the next generation through volunteer teaching stints at various universities, teaching classes at the offices of a number of utility districts, federal regulatory agency offices, and power companies and through mentoring young engineers as they began their careers. He published papers, gave presentations at conferences, and served on several ASCE committees that produced handbooks and guidelines for dam engineering. Kim was particularly concerned with the role of human error in dam safety.

In 2016, the United States Society on Dams (USSD) gave Kim their Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing his 54 years of civil, geotechnical, and construction engineering experience and service. The same year, he was awarded the Rickey Medal by the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) for contributing to the advancement of knowledge in the field of dam engineering and safety assessment and for capturing the state of the art in technical guides.

Kim was preceded in death by his parents, William and Marjorie de Rubertis; and by his brother, John Derek de Rubertis. He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Barbara de Rubertis; his sister, Wendy Anne de Rubertis; his sister-in-law, Tess de Rubertis; his son, Corbin, Corbin's wife, Kathleen, and their children: Frances, William, and Celeste; and his son, Ben and his children: Benjamin and Emma.

At Kim's request, his family will hold a private celebration of his life at a future date. Donations in Kim's memory may be made to Uncompensated Care at Children's Hospital in Seattle, WA, an organization he generously supported over the years, at 4800 Sand Point Way, Seattle, WA, 98105, or at giveto.seattlechildrens.org/give, or to a charity of your choice.

Tribute Wall

TT

“ I’m so sad and sorry to just hear of Kim’s passing. Our family sold our home in Cashmere to the DeRubertis family many years ago. We have kept in touch with him and his family, visiting their home often. They are such a warm and welcoming family. I’m keeping his relatives and friends in my prayers and thoughts. Tina Tarver.

Tina Tarver - October 08, 2019 at 12:27 PM

MR

“ Kim de Rubertis was an iconic figure in our profession of dam engineers. His knowledge and experience gleaned over a lifetime of dedicated service to engineering for dams and hydropower made him the “go to guy” for many difficult and challenging assignments. What made him special to me was his passion to teach, train and mentor the younger professionals, including me. He made great contributions to professional societies like USSD and ICOLD, as well as a guest lecturer at the Colorado School of Mines. Kim and I shared a common lineage back to Harza Engineering and I was always glad to get a note on dam history from him. Our industry will miss his expertise and I will miss my friend. I offer my sincerest condolences to the de Rubertis family.

- Mike Rogers

Mike Rogers - October 03, 2019 at 04:00 PM

IA

“ I'm very saddened to hear of Kim's passing. Several weeks ago, he told me was "winding down" from engineering practice, and I didn't realize what he meant.

Kim was an eminent dam engineer, and I was among the many who benefitted from his influence. He saw the big picture in dam engineering, and he encouraged my work on the role of human factors in dam safety. Coming from someone of his stature, that encouragement meant a lot to me, and will continue to mean a lot to me going forward.

My deepest condolences to Kim's family and friends. I wish you peace and strength at this difficult time, and I hope you will cherish your fond memories of Kim.

Irfan Alvi

Irfan Alvi - October 02, 2019 at 05:39 PM



“ So sorry to hear of the passing of Kim. He was a friend and a mentor who taught me so much early in my career as a geologist. He taught me so much on how to be a geologist, a consultant, and a better person. He and Barbara have always opened their house to Karen and I and we have appreciated their friendship and generosity. So many interesting projects, Baker River Dams, Copper Creek Dam, Wainiha project, Chignik, Okanogan River pump stations, and so many interesting conversations. He will be missed, my condolences to Barbara, Corbin, Ben and their families.

Cliff Knitter

Cliff Knitter - September 25, 2019 at 04:28 PM

EK

“ The news that Kim had died was a shock to me as I had spoken to him the day before and he told me his health was improving. Kim was not only a superb dam engineer; he was one of my closest friends. Working with Kim on engineering jobs was a joy and I always learned something new about dam geology and foundations. He would edit my contributions to our reports and cut down my wordy paragraphs to a sentence or two saying the same thing more concisely. He took the time to pass on his engineering knowledge to young engineers. He presented lectures to students at the Colorado School of Mines each year on his own time and expense. I recall seeing him use his airline miles to upgrade the airline ticket of a young engineer travelling with us, so we could all ride together in the better seats on the flight.

I will always remember the time we picked pears together at his orchard ranch near Cashmere and I will miss the box of fresh cherries that came every year, but not nearly as much as I will miss my friend Kim.

My deepest sympathies to Barbara and Kim's family,
Eric Kollgaard



Eric Kollgaard - September 14, 2019 at 05:55 PM



“ *The news of Kim’s passing was extremely sad for me. He was my good friend and colleague in geological engineering. I first met Kim about 1987 when he walked into my office at the Colorado School of Mines (his alma mater). He told me about his experience and said he wanted to give back to his profession by passing on to students some of the knowledge he had learned over the years. That was the beginning of over a 30-year relationship between us. Kim began visiting the school once a year to take over a couple of my senior and graduate classes for a day. Over the years he began coming each semester and covering a week of classes each time. Through lecture, pictures, and videos he presented various projects and challenged the students to apply their knowledge of geological principles and basic engineering mechanics to develop design solutions. Then he would present the solutions that were adopted on the project. Kim had a way of quickly developing a relationship with students and his visits were very popular. He also found some opportunities to get graduate students out on some of his projects for field experience. He encouraged students to contact him for advice and job opportunities and many did. Kim served several terms as the chair of our department’s Industrial Advisory Committee and made several recommendations for program improvements that have made a significant difference to program quality.*

Kim got me involved in several hydro-power projects to advise on slope stability issues. I have never worked with anyone that I enjoyed more than Kim. I clearly remember our drive back to Sea Tac from Lower Baker Dam (one of our last projects together) and our great discussion of how much we have enjoyed our careers, experiences and colleagues. I will always remember Kim. He was smart, kind, compassionate and a true friend.

Jerry Higgins

Professor Emeritus

Colorado School of Mines

Jerry Higgins - September 13, 2019 at 02:37 PM

DT

“ In short, Kim was a good friend. I admired how in recent years he did all he could to do a mind dump to younger engineers to help the dam safety community continue from the foundation Kim laid. Many of us will fondly remember these efforts and tough questions he asked to make us think for ourselves. Much good has come from Kim's sacrifices. He never quit working until now. It goes without say, but I'll say it--Kim will be sorely missed.



Dave Thompson - September 12, 2019 at 12:46 AM

DJ

“ I was saddened to hear of Kim's passing. Kim was a colleague, a mentor and a friend and will sorely be missed by me and all of the dam engineering community. Kim was there when I first started my Dam Safety engineering career in 1985, peering into “the gut” in the Asamera tailings dam foundation, and as Kim always reminded me, “wondering what the heck I was looking at!” Kim always was a big help to the Washington state dam safety program, often offering his services pro bono to help resolve difficult technical challenges. He also provided mentoring and training for our younger staff at the Portland FERC office, again without cost. Thank you Kim, for all you've done and Rest In Peace, buddy. My sympathies to his family

Doug Johnson

Doug Johnson - September 10, 2019 at 12:45 PM

DC

I too started my Dam Safety engineering career with the WA Dam Safety Office in 1985. The first inspection trip that I took was to the Asamera tailings dam where I first met Kim. He was friendly and fun to work with. My favorite memory of Kim was flying by helicopter into the Alpine Lakes Wilderness with Kim, another WA Dam Safety engineer, and the director of our agency. Since we were pretty heavily loaded with people and equipment, we all had to report on our weight loudly at least three times to make sure the helicopter had enough lift to keep us in the air. As a result, Kim felt he could inquire about my weight every time we ran into each other. Fortunately about half of the times, he said I looked pretty good, continuing the joke for 35 years. Footnote about the Leavenworth flight. Kim was there as a pro bono consultant for the State of Washington. He resolved the issue in about 15 minutes, then the dam owner tried unsuccessfully to hire him to supervise the repair. He was quite a guy, an incredible example for younger engineers, and I will never forget him.

David Cummings

David Cummings - September 11, 2019 at 06:18 PM

JP

Early in my career I had the pleasure of working with Andy Eberhardt, then a Vice-President of Harza Engineering Company. I was a 20-something. He gave me a great piece of advice.....accept any opportunity I got to work with Kim DeRubertis, then a 30-something. I followed Kim on the Ann Arbor Dams projects and several others while based in Chicago. Later Kim left the company and relocated to the Pacific Northwest, working on Rock Island Dam on the Columbia River and after it ended, starting his own consulting practice. In 1992 I was transferred to Harza's Bellevue, Wa, office. Soon thereafter we connected again and as Mr. Eberhardt recommended I worked to have the opportunity to work with Kim again.....on FERC Dam Safety Reports and other types of dam rehabilitation projects. What a joy to work with Kim.....not only for the significant engineering learning experiences but also the jokes, golf, beers, stock discussions, and other good experiences. A health issue ended my engineering career and Kim was instrumental in providing me with his support completing my last few assignments. After my retirement we stayed in contact and I greatly enjoyed Kim's descriptions of the projects he continued to work on. He affected the professional careers of many young engineers, not just with technical wisdom but also with wise counsel/observations on how to deal with others, young and old, smart and not so smart. A shock to hear of his passing but I'm confident he's hiking somewhere in heaven commenting on life, the many dams he's known, geology and the great life he lived around the world with Barb and their boys.

Jim Passage - September 12, 2019 at 01:00 PM

AL

What a wonderful man and father. I feel fortunate to have known him for a time during my life and association with his son. Sending much love and condolences to the family.

Alexandra Lexton - December 11, 2019 at 05:42 PM

GT

It was with great sadness and shock I learned of his passing just now. I met Kim in the late 1990's on a dam project in the Philippines. He really was a character and we were in touch over the years. I was always touched by his concern for my welfare whenever there was a typhoon or volcano eruption in my area and I would more often than not receive an email checking in on my well-being. I certainly hope he's now in a better place where he's always going to get a bountiful cherry harvest.

My thoughts and prayers go out to his family. I'll miss him.

Glenn Tadiar

Glenn Tadiar - May 04, 2020 at 05:50 AM

SJ

I worked with Kim in 1987- 1989 with Ott Engineering, He was a wonderful person, who mentored me in the consulting business. May he be at peace with his Lord.

Steve Bucknam Jr - October 21, 2022 at 10:32 PM