

James Bryant Obituary

James Elvin (Jim) Bryant was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, on February 2, 1942. He went to be with his Lord and Savior on December 3, 2023, after a sudden decline in his health due to Spindle Cell Sarcoma cancer. He was 81 years of age.

Jim is survived by his wife of 35 years, Debbie Bryant; his sister, Betty Ann Osborne; his son and daughter in law Joe and Barbara Bryant; his grandchildren, Sam Bryant (Regan), Allie Forward (Taylor), Jake Bryant (Jess), and Julia Bryant; great-grandson Maro Forward, great-granddaughter Zetta Forward; step daughter Kimberly Cleek (Chad); step grandsons Tyler Bernard (Laura), Trent Hazelip, Brycen Hazelip; step great-granddaughter Ember Bernard along with nieces, cousins and innumerable friends.

Jim is preceded in death by his mother, Alice Houston Bryant; his father, Elvin Bryant (who died when Jim was just ten years old); his first wife and mother of his children, Linda Leigh Jordan; and his son, Richard Charles Bryant.

Jim attended Central High School in Knoxville and the University of Tennessee.

As Forrest Gump said, Jim "didn't lead no humdrum life."

A lifelong entrepreneur, he launched Thunder Craft Boats in his mother's garage in the early '60s and sold that business in 1989. In 1990, he founded Bryant Boats with Debbie Bryant and Joe, Barbara, and Rich Bryant. He retired from Bryant Boats in 2012 and created and operated a 200-plus acre Beef Cattle operation in Roane County until 2022.

Jim was a Master Fabricator, Race Car Builder, and Hot Rodder. He owned NASCAR and Grand National race cars in the '70s. In the mid-80s, he pioneered Pro Modified Drag Racing, building and owning the world's fastest 1957 Chevrolet, driven by Rob Vandergriff. He built multiple award-winning Hot Rod cars and trucks and often had the featured car at car show events.

During his career, he had additional business ventures in Coal Mining, Harvestore Farm Silo Sales and Construction, a 600-acre Dairy Farm operation producing for Mayfield Dairy, and more.

But his primary joy and focus were his Family, Friends, Church, Community, and Employees. He was an active member of Dixie Lee Baptist church. Jim had a heart for those in challenging situations and faithfully helped serve BBQ monthly for hundreds of Knoxville's homeless folks.

He'll be remembered for his kindness, generosity, and magnetic spirit.

He was blessed with material things but never held them too closely. An example was how he displayed his Hot Rod cars at shows. While many owners placed signs on their cars warning onlookers not to touch their cars, Jim saw his cars as something to be shared. Not something

precious. He placed placards on his cars, inviting people to open the door and take a seat. We are thankful to have had a seat in life with Jim.

A Celebration of Jim's Life with lunch to follow will be held December 30, 2023, at 12:00 Noon at Dixie Lee Baptist Church in Lenoir City.

Instead of flowers, the family kindly requests donations to one of these organizations.

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, 501 St. Jude Way, Memphis, TN 38105

Shriners Hospitals for Children, 2900 Rocky Point Drive, Tampa, FL 33607

Dixie Lee Baptist Church, Building Fund, 14650 Old Stage Road, Lenoir City, TN 37772