

James William Pontier

January 7, 1947 — November 12, 2025

Spirit Lake, Idaho

A few weeks before he passed away, my dad told me that his favorite era from his life was his air force days, when he piloted a Cessna 0-2 and passed gas in a KC 135 during the Vietnam War. When asked why, he answered, "Because it was exciting. Scary, but exciting. And I felt like I was doing something. Making a difference." I think maybe he didn't realize how much of a difference he made during every era of his life.

As a kid, he and his twin/best friend, John, were good students, excellent athletes and respectful sons. They took pride in keeping a clean room and working around the yard with their father. Aside from some occasional sibling chaffing, they brought pride to both their teachers and their parents, Grace and Les. As any teacher or parent knows, a hard-working, mild-mannered child makes a world of difference.

After high school, he attended Grove City College. During his time there, he continued to make good grades, and contributed to the success of his soccer team, a fact that was exemplified when he was inducted into the Grove City College Soccer Hall of Fame. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science, then joined the best branch of the military, the US Air Force.

After the war, he met and married his first wife, Susan. What was maybe even more remarkable was that he didn't just fall in love with a woman, he also fell in love with her children, and became Lisa's father. Susan soon bore Jim another child, Matthew, and his new family traveled to bases in Guam and Nebraska. He supported his family, served his country, and helped his neighbors.

Through one of these neighbors, he met his second wife, Shelley. She bore him his last child, Nicole, right before retirement. In retirement, he moved to Montana, but was not content to just sit around and relax under the Big Sky. He continued to feel the call to serve, which endeared him to everyone he met. Not only was he an excellent Deck Time companion, he was also the friend who could be relied on to help build a house, take care of your horses during a vacation, or shovel your driveway after a blizzard.

While helping erect a horse barn, Jim met his final wife, Loretta. Together they moved to a picturesque cabin in the woods in the Idaho panhandle. He became a beloved member of Calvary Lutheran Church, where he delighted in growing food for the local food bank, built multiple houses with Habitat for Humanity, and led a backpack program to feed local children. He only stopped when forced to by either the health of his wife or himself.

Until the day he left this world, he did everything in his power to not be a burden and to actively help others. This funny, kind, intelligent, handsome, humble man made a positive difference for his family, his friends, his neighbors, his community, and his country. He's allowed to have a favorite era from his 78 years of life, of course, but his life in general was, "Doing something. Making a difference," and he will be missed by every life he touched. We find comfort in knowing the joyful reunion he'll have in God's country with his parents, Lisa, and all others who have gone before him.