

Jim Westbrook: Neighbor, Outdoors Man & Electronic Whiz

Jim lived at 215 Green Ridge Road for 13 years. He loved hang gliding, and that's what brought him to Colorado, according his brother Paul. The first thing he did was clear the slash knowing that wildfires could easily destroy the land he loved. "He never wanted to leave here," Paul said.



A quiet man, a solitary man, he had a few good friends he stayed in contact with his whole life. Jim loved skiing, camping, anything to do with being outdoors.

After the Bobcat fire, he offered his help to SMERT. His knowledge of electronics and radio frequencies enabled emergency responders to be able to talk as well as listen on radio channels. Jim was a ham radio operator and instructed Karen Debenham, so she too became a ham. Jim, known as JW to many in SMERT, was there to help when they needed advice on electronics.

Jim had an extensive record collection, which has been donated to raise money for SMERT. He could not imagine not being able to drive. When Jim learned he had Parkinson's disease, he worried that he wouldn't be able to drive safely, and this was devastating to him. Also, doing the fine work with his hands that working with tools in the field of electronics required would become impossible. He was laid off from Qualcomm several years ago. That was a hardship that also bothered him, and he felt he could no longer afford to live up here.

Jim Westbrook took his own life on the morning of August 27, 2004. He left letters for close friends and family. He said that he had had a good life, that he was happy and upbeat. He mentioned his love for the beautiful land and said he wanted his ashes to be scattered in the mountains. He did not want friends to grieve for him. He wanted them to remember him with gladness and to have a beer. He is missed, this quiet, thoughtful, and caring man who so loved the land here he never wanted to leave it.

Pat Maslowski