

James "Jim" Brunette (1922-2011)

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James "Jim" Brunette

Born June 23, 1922 - Died April 24, 2011

Jim Brunette died at home, per his request, under the care of his granddaughter Lori and the Willamette Valley Hospice. His grandson Kenneth and great-grandson Jason were also in attendance.

James was born in Cumberland, Wisconsin and grew up on a farm. He wrote a story of the life spent growing food, plowing the fields with horses, and getting to school 15 miles away for an education.

After graduating from school in 1941, he traveled with a friend to Oregon in a 1929 Model A Ford to work for relatives in a cannery for the summers.

March of 1943 he joined the Navy, and they provided him training in diesel mechanics. He was put into service on the PT boats in the Pacific, and his tales of the night patrols along the coast of New Britain, the combat, lack of good food and crude hospital care (he was shot in the leg) are invaluable. A live interview is recorded of his war years. He was discharged in February of 1946 with many ribbons and a [Purple Heart](#).

His desire for adventure and money took him to Juneau Alaska in the fall of 1946 where he worked at the Subport storing and shipping lumber. The National Guard was reorganized in the Alaskan Territory so he joined as a recruit, thus beginning his almost 30 years in the Alaska National Guard. He was active in the [VFW](#) and became Commander of Post 5559. He was an advocate in securing benefits for Alaskan veterans traveling all over the State helping remote vets. His leadership in increasing the membership of the VFW took several delegations to the National Conventions, helping to promote statehood for Alaska. One particular trip found Elsie wearing a fur coat in a parade in New York City.

He also worked as an accountant for the Fish & Wildlife Service, owned his own real estate office, was a member of the Elks and joined the Masons.

Upon retiring from the National Guard, Jim and Elsie bought a marina on the Siletz River in Lincoln City, Oregon. There they became involved in the local community developing a well known business of renting small boats on the river, a store with supplies for fishing, and a repair shop for boat motors that Jim enjoyed running. Family and friends came for the hospitality of their cozy home, along with the many animals that seemed to find their way to Jim and Elsie's door.

In 1986 they sold the marina and moved to Salem Oregon to be close to Elsie's doctors. Jim joined with a group of [WWII](#) PT boat veterans and together they restored a Higgings

PT boat.

His concern for the wellbeing of people, and his courage to forge ahead tackling life will be missed greatly by family and friends.

James J. Brunette was preceded in death by his wife Elsie, his sister's Alice Nord, Dolores Hansen and Shirley Kuhn. He leaves behind his sister Viola Braem, stepson Kenneth Hildreth (Sharon), grandchildren Lori Mitchell (Paul), Kenneth Soldin (Mary), Rick Soldin (Sharon), Nita William-Harborough, along with many special nieces, nephews, great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.

His ashes will be spread at an undetermined date in Stevens Passage north of Juneau Alaska. Donations can be made to the
Willamette Valley Hospice
1015 3rd St NW
Salem, OR 97304
Attn: Accounting Office

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