



Millard James "Jim" Willis

January 12, 1943 - June 14, 2021

Frm; Albany Democrat-herold

Jim Willis was born in Portland and was adopted by Millard F. Willis and Anna Willis of Albany. His father, Millard, was a well-respected and long-time attorney. His mother, Anna, was a school teacher. Jim grew up in Albany and graduated from Albany Union High School in 1961. Immediately following

High School, Jim enlisted in the United States Air Force and served two enlistments as a Security Policeman. He was a Staff Sergeant at the time of his honorable discharge in 1968. Little did he know, his time as a Military Officer would shape the incredible career that followed.

After two enlistments in the Air Force, Willis joined the Douglas County Sheriff's Department; before moving to the Washington County Sheriff's Department. He then became Commander of the Police Academy, followed by various roles in the Oregon State Police, where he retired as a Major.

One of his greatest accomplishments was graduating from the 121st Session of the FBI National Academy, and in 1984 he was elected President of the Oregon Chapter. In 1978, Major Willis was awarded the Oregon Police Medal of Valor and, in 1993 was the recipient of the L. Dale Morris Award for dedicated service to Oregon Law Enforcement.

In 2003, then-Governor Ted Kulongoski appointed Jim to Director of the Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs. During his time as the ODVA director, his passion was to advocate for all Veterans by building relationships throughout the State of Oregon and to bring awareness to Veteran's issues. After almost 10 years, he retired from ODVA in 2013. still active in up to his passing. He coined the phrase "Everyday is Veteran's Day." Here is a quote he gave when he was asked why he joined:

"My father, a proud World War II veteran and Battle of the Bulge survivor, spent his life as a Legion member. He encouraged me to join after returning from Vietnam. Over the past three decades, The American Legion has given me the opportunity to serve my fellow veterans and their families. I often think of the example set by my father and his generation in setting the continuing course of service by The American Legion. I know we will continue to serve our veterans and our nation for the next 100 years and beyond, and for that I am grateful and proud." – Jim Willis, past department commander, Lebanon, Oregon, Post 51.

While retired he enjoyed spending time with his wife, Dee, tending to his beautiful home and garden, and enjoying their two dogs, Inga and Inky. He loved hosting holidays and spending time with family and friends.

Jim is survived by his wife, Dee, of 42 years, his daughter, Amy, his son, Jake, and his grandchildren, Kade, Kaylee, Kendall, and Elle Rose. He was preceded in death by his parents, his sister, Sandra, and his brother, Gary.

A Memorial Service will take place at a later date. Jim was an animal lover and asked that any contributions in his name be made to the local SafeHaven Humane Society. Huston-Jost Funeral Home is handling arrangements.

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