



James "Jim" Shaffer

May 21, 1953 - December 2, 2025

Jim was born on May 21, 1953, in Postville, Iowa. His family moved to Vinton, Iowa where he attended the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School. Jim's father was a farmer.

Jim was an amazing person. While in high school, Jim was a foreign exchange student in Argentina. He could still speak and understand Spanish!

Despite being born blind, he graduated magna cum laude from Luther College with a double major in physics and math. He moved to Austin in 1980 to work as a software engineer. He retired from IBM in 2008 after 30 years of service.

He was married to Julie Ryder for 10 years and briefly married to Jody Shaffer.

In October of 1997, he married Lynn Vaughan.

Jim was an avid ham operator and attended many international ham conventions. He also wrote software for blind ham operators.

In addition, he also played fiddle, mandolin and guitar. He played fiddle in a number of bluegrass bands including The Johnny Burnett Trio, Borrowed Time, Piney Grove Ramblers and Geezer Grass.

Jim enjoyed going on many ocean cruises including ones to Scandinavia and the British Isles. He was fun-loving, generous, and had a good sense of humor.

Jim passed away on December 2nd from complications of Parkinson's Disease. We would like to thank the staff of the Primrose Assisted Living for their care of Jim.

Jim is survived by his wife, Lynn Vaughan, son Kevin and wife LaTierra and grandson Alister, sister Carol Geater and brother-in-law Hank Vaughan. He is also survived by pets Wally, Rusty, and Brindi.

In lieu of flowers please contribute to the Health Alliance for Austin Musicians (HAAM): www.myhaam.org or the Parkinson's Foundation: www.parkinson.org.

He will be missed.

Tribute Wall

DS

“ Jim (Slim Jim was my nickname for him) was the sweetest man , I took care of him alongside all the other staff at bouquet homes and I'm very grateful to have been able to care for him . Jim was a jokester I remember the first time I told him my nickname for him and he said “I wasn't always slim” and I just burst out laughing he told me he actually used to have more weight on him . I'd do arts and crafts and make him one and he'd tell me what colors to do. He loved cobbler. And I'm glad I was able to meet him and his wonderful wife Lynn . We love and miss you slim Jim ☐ - Alexa play bluegrass music

Dynaesha Sheffield - January 23 at 06:31 PM

EF

“ I first met Jim when I got interested in ham radio in high school. Our little sisters were in the same class in grade school, and best friends. When my mom mentioned to his mom about my interest in radio, they decided I should go along the next time we took my sister to their house.

Jim showed me his radio setup, and explained how things worked. Over the next two years, we were the only two active radio hams in Vinton, and he and I attended many events and meetings of the Benton County amateur radio club.

After graduation, we went our separate ways, but I still heard about what he was doing because his parents and mine were still friends. We even talked on the phone a time or two.

After I retired, I got back into ham radio, and by a series of unlikely coincidences, ran into him on the air. We've maintained contact via radio and visits since that time.

I was always impressed by Jim. He never complained about what he didn't have, or what he couldn't do. He just charged full speed ahead with what he could do--and generally left the rest of us in his dust.

I will miss my friend.

Ed Fix - January 22 at 03:51 AM

VL

“ I assisted Jim at IBM on an 18 month contract back in the 90s working on things like error notifications in the AIX operating system. Great guy to work with except for his loud Braille printer. :-)
Sharp and knowledgeable and willing to help educate a young dummy like myself. I still remember his house off 183 with the large antenna for his radio hobby. Even accidentally caught him playing bluegrass with a couple other guys at Arts Rib House. I was honored to be invited to his retirement lunch when he left IBM. My condolences to his family.

Vince Layton - December 21, 2025 at 04:16 PM

JO

“ Lynn and Carol and all, I was taken aback by your memorial note in today's Austin paper. I remember Jim from my year working at IBSSS. I was Jim's campus nurse 1968-69 where I met my husband Doug. He was guidance counselor In the 60's until we married during winter break and moved to Austin in Fall '69 for his PhD studies.

I grew up in Vinton (I remember a Geater farm family). Although IBSSS was my first and just one year nursing job, I do remember Jim and a few other notable students! I had no idea Jim moved here... much less for IBM.

Mr Hansen and family moved here shortly after us as did Gene Healy and family - both to work at the Texas school.

janice wilson ozias - December 21, 2025 at 10:04 AM