



James Alan Butler

January 14, 1957 - January 6, 2025

James Alan Butler, 67, of St. Albans, West Virginia, known by many as “Jim” and some as “Sergeant”, died suddenly on January 6, 2025, following a severe anoxic brain injury. He took his last breath surrounded and loved by his family.

James was born on January 14, 1957, in Charleston, West Virginia, the oldest of three children born to the late Richard Lee Butler and Nora Elizabeth Grass Butler. In addition to his parents, he is preceded in death by his maternal grandparents, Samuel Jordan Grass and Ruchie Lanham Grass, paternal grandparents, George Dewey Butler and Hazel Lee Gardner Butler; and his nephew, Christopher Michael Boggs of St. Albans.

James is survived by his high school sweetheart and wife, Rebecca Alice Mariani, with whom he shared a loving relationship of more than 29 years. He is also survived by his sisters Deborah Butler-Case (Charles) of St. Albans, and Sallie Butler Levander (Carl) of New Albany, Ohio; sons Aleksandrs Karlis Ozolins (Jenny) of Charlotte, NC and Jon Anthony Ozolins (Destiny) of Myrtle Beach, SC; nephew Richard Samuel Boggs (Veronica) of Wheeling, WV, and niece Cathryn Butler Levander of New Albany, Ohio; brothers-in-law Robert David Mariani of Victor, WV, and Steven Wayne Mariani of Richmond, VA; one grandniece, Jaley Ann Braley of Nitro, and one great grandnephew, Bryson Clark of Nitro; and those who brought him the most joy, his granddaughters,

Ariel Nicole Rodriguez, Upland, CA, and Zoey Marie Ozolins of Myrtle Beach, SC.

He grew up in St. Albans, graduating from St. Albans High School in 1976. James recovered from a catastrophic injury suffered to his hand at age 14 to become a talented drummer at McKinley Junior High School. He went on to perform in the St. Albans High School Marching Band, Orchestra, and “Jesters” Jazz Band. He was also active in local rock bands and truly enjoyed playing gigs around the state with his friends.

He continued his life of service to the community into his retirement as a part-time police officer with the Kanawha County Parks and Recreation. In 1978, James enlisted in the United States Army serving his country with pride overseas for four years operating the Army’s newest (at the time) portable defense systems. It was during this time that his interest in aircraft was sparked. Following his active duty, he served in the Reserves as a professional photographer and editor for the WV National Guard Magazine, “The Defender”.

James joined the St. Albans Police Department and served his community for 20 years as a crime scene photographer and canine handler, retiring at the rank of Sergeant in 2010. His patriotism and dedication were hallmarks of his character, and he carried those values into all aspects of his life.

He continued his life of service to the community into his retirement. He was a long-time supporter of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, President of the Mountaineer Radio Control Club of Tornado and an Affiliate Member of the Flying Hillbillies RC Club of Winfield. He was influential in obtaining a lease on property outside of St. Albans, now known as the Mountaineer Radio Control Club Flying Field. James could be found there frequently, either cutting grass or flying one of his many RC models. He also enjoyed the artistry of replicating actual aircraft in his models, including Air Force One, a C-130

recently retired from the WV Air National Guard fleet, and his pride, an FMSP-15 lettered as WV native Robert “Punchy” Powell’s ship, the “West By Gawd Virginian”.

Because of his love of aviation, the Mountaineer RC Club went from operating solely as a flying club to becoming an educational organization which invited young people to the field for “buddy flights” and to expand their aviation knowledge. The club welcomed cadets from the West Virginia Civil Air Patrol as well as any other youth who stopped by. He also took great pride in supporting Marshall University’s Girls in Aviation events by displaying his models and encouraging young people to embark in aviation careers.

James also was instrumental in the creation of the St. Albans C&O Modelers Club in 2000 and worked tirelessly to acquire and refurbish its building located at 901 Tenth Street, St. Albans. James’ love for his city is reflected in an intricate detailed layout of the City of St. Albans which can be viewed at the Club’s building. His affection for the City of St. Albans was clear, not only as a resident and Police Officer throughout his life, but through his efforts in maintaining the St. Albans C&O Railroad Depot on 4th Avenue.

In addition to his interest and aeronautics and trains, James served as the President of the WV Chapter of Beat the Heat, Inc. which was founded by first responders to combat the problem of street racing and drunk driving among young drivers. WV Beat the Heat offers teens the opportunity to “challenge a cop” to a legal drag race in order to stop illegal street racing and ultimately saving lives. He purchased and modified three police cars over the years which all citizens enjoyed seeing in parades, as well as visits to schools and conferences in St. Albans and across the Nation.

James also distinguished himself as a writer and photographer, being

published in several media including the Academy of Model Aeronautics Magazine and the Wonderful WV Magazine to name only a couple.

James Alan Butler was truly a very special person who leaves an enormous void in the hearts of his family and friends who knew him best!

A Celebration of James' life will be held at 11:00 A.M. Saturday, January 18, 2025, at Bartlett- Nichols Funeral Home, 409 6th Ave, St Albans, WV 25177. A short graveside service will be held immediately thereafter at Teays Hill Cemetery, St. Albans, with full military honors. Friends and family are invited to visit Friday, January 17th from 6:00 - 8:00 P.M. and one hour prior to the service on Saturday.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial gift may be made in James' honor to any of the following non-profit organizations:

Mountaineer Radio Control Club, Attn: Secretary, 202 School Drive, Shrewsbury, WV 25015

St. Albans C&O Modelers Club, 901 Tenth Street, St. Albans, WV 25177 or paypal@sacomrr.org

Civil Air Patrol may be sent to: Charleston Composite Squadron Capitol Campaign, 114 Airport Road, Charleston, WV 25311

You may visit Jim's tribute page at BartlettNichols.com to share memories or condolences with the family.

Bartlett-Nichols Funeral Home, family owned and located at 409 Sixth Avenue, St. Albans is honored to serve the Butler family.

Cemetery Details

Teays Hill Cemetery

Coal River Road
St. Albans, WV 25177

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 17. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Bartlett-Nichols Funeral Home
409 Sixth Avenue
Saint Albans, WV 25177
(304) 727-4325

Funeral Service

JAN 18. 11:00 AM (ET)

Bartlett-Nichols Funeral Home
409 Sixth Avenue
Saint Albans, WV 25177
(304) 727-4325

Tribute Wall

RW

“ RIP Jim (Mr. Skittles) you will be missed. My son (now 13) and I had the pleasure of meeting Jim here on the Elk River at Coonskin Park years ago when he was an LEO there. Jim would always have a treat to give my son Jax since we practically lived at the park when he was little. That treat was usually a pack of Skittles so my son always referred to him as Mr. Skittles. You will always be missed especially when we're doing the R/C thing or attending a model railroad show....our paths always seemed to cross there. Prayers for your family. R.Whitehair USMC (Ret)

Robert Whitehair - January 30, 2025 at 11:02 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 17, 2025 at 01:08 PM



“ A grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Alan Butler.

January 17, 2025 at 11:44 AM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 17, 2025 at 09:10 AM



“ Hope Siler planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Alan Butler.

Hope Siler - January 16, 2025 at 10:12 PM



“ Hope Siler purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of James Alan Butler.



Hope Siler - January 16, 2025 at 10:12 PM



“ Jim and Pam Hanshaw planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Alan Butler.

Jim and Pam Hanshaw - January 16, 2025 at 08:09 PM



“ Jim and Pam Hanshaw purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of James Alan Butler.



Jim and Pam Hanshaw - January 16, 2025 at 08:09 PM

JO

“ I remember James from the high school band and orchestra. Good man, good drummer. My condolences to his family. God bless.

Joe.wolfe.304@gmail.com - January 16, 2025 at 11:46 AM

CI

“ Charles E Montague III planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Alan Butler.

Charles E Montague III - January 16, 2025 at 11:32 AM

CI

“ Charles E Montague III purchased the Large Basket Garden for the family of James Alan Butler.



Charles E Montague III - January 16, 2025 at 11:32 AM

CI

“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Alan Butler.

January 16, 2025 at 11:26 AM

CI

“ Lavender Reflections Spray was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 16, 2025 at 11:26 AM

TF

“ *The Dobyys/Binau Family purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of James Alan Butler.*



The Dobyys/Binau Family - January 15, 2025 at 06:08 PM

JM

“ *Jim was a good friend we worked together when I was on the Kanawha County Sheriffs Dept. The one thing I always admired about Jim, was that matter what he did he gave it all he had and then some. He will be greatly missed by those who knew and loved him.*

Jim Meddings - January 15, 2025 at 05:49 PM

SC

“ *I'm just so very sorry to hear that my friend and fellow Soldier, Jim, is gone from this world. We shared some great adventures in the 153rd/196th Public Affairs Detachment in the WV Army National Guard. There were numerous times he saved me from prison (our other team members know what - or WHO - was at the root of these occasions) all while training me as a photojournalist back before there were computers or digital cameras. We kept in touch through the years and I loved reading about all the interesting hobbies he gave himself to so completely. He saw some old photos of my wedding on one of my posts and they weren't the best. He took it upon himself to fix them for me and the results were amazing! The world has lost a great man and I have lost a great friend. So very thankful for his presence in my life.*

Sherry Claus - January 15, 2025 at 04:49 PM

DH

“ I didn't know Jim well but was fortunate to have played in band with him at McKinley and SAHS. He was truly a good guy. My condolences to the family.

Doug Hutton - January 14, 2025 at 06:07 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Alan Butler.

January 13, 2025 at 10:37 AM



“ Pink Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 13, 2025 at 10:37 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Alan Butler.

January 12, 2025 at 07:31 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 12, 2025 at 07:31 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James Alan Butler.

January 12, 2025 at 07:24 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of James Alan Butler.



January 12, 2025 at 07:24 PM



“ Sorry for your loss prayers for your family

Dale Kennedy - January 11, 2025 at 09:19 PM



“ RIP buddy. You will be greatly missed. Thanks for all your years of friendship and your photography action of us and our dogs at the field. You made everyone welcomed and brought joy to our time together. Our family will forever miss you.



Tonia McCarty - January 11, 2025 at 04:03 PM

ES

“ *What stands out, Blockbuster, Gordon Lightfoot, "If you could read my mind". Blocking traffic. Great support. Honest. Kind. Understanding. A true Friend. Took amazing photos of nature especially of birds. My mom loved them. One of the few who were there for me through my difficult times without passing judgement. I will miss you, my friend. Until we meet again. Liz*



Elizabeth G. Martin Sullivan - January 11, 2025 at 10:19 AM