



Arthur Steven Pels

March 25, 1950 - April 20, 2024

Art passed away on April 20th, 2024, at his home in Milwaukie, Oregon. He was 74 years; 26 days old. He fought hard to stay with us and raged against “the dying of the light” for as long as he could. In the end, he lost the struggle and, blessedly, his passing was both gentle and peaceful. His wife was by his side, as she had been for 47 years.

Art was born on March 25th, 1950, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, to Manfred and Florence Pels. He was the second of four brothers. His family crossed the country when he was a small boy to settle in the San Francisco area of California, where he grew up listening to the Beach Boys and surfer music, and riding motorcycles. After his father's passing in 1966, Art's mother moved the family back to Pittsburgh where Art suffered a huge cultural jolt—he was asked to trade surfer shirts for school ties. He was restless and found some solace hanging around a local motorcycle shop, but it was not enough. Art joined the Army at age 17 during the height of the Viet Nam war. He was stationed in Germany, working in the Army Quartermaster Corps, Specialist 5th Class. While in the Army, Art traveled throughout Europe and Asia. One of his best memories of that time was hearing Jimi Hendrix live, in a small bar in Amsterdam; his hardest memories were the many losses from that war. After his military service discharge, Art traveled around the United States quite a bit, before ending up again in San Francisco. There, Art found work as a BMW motorcycle mechanic. He was sponsored by his shop to race BMWs in the super bike class during the early 1970s (he was champion in 1974). Art

moved to Oregon in 1972 and, with a partner, opened a BMW motor cycle repair shop. His partner left the business, but Art continued to build, repair, and sell motorcycles throughout the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. His career choice allowed him freedom during the slower winter months, and he took full advantage of that freedom to travel extensively in Central and South America. He achieved a lifetime goal in 1984, when he and a friend crossed the Amazon, traveling the Amazonian highway on dirt bikes, from the furthest point east in Brazil, to the mountains of Bolivia and Peru.

In the early 2000s, Art decided to change career directions, and returned to college to earn an English BA and Education MA, with the goal of teaching children to read. He worked for thirteen years in the Woodburn School District, as a high school English teacher. Art was an eclectic thinker and learner. Anthropology, archeology, paleontology, astronomy, physics, early civilizations, classical and contemporary literature, blues music, motorcycles, airplanes, basketball, Formula 1 racing--he was passionate and interested in it all.

Art's friends recognized him as a very unique individual: ethical, loyal, and generous of self. He lived his life at full throttle, and invited others to join him. Art was greatly loved and will be greatly missed.

Art was predeceased by his grandparents, parents, and three brothers. He is survived by his wife, cousins, and many friends. Services for Art will be held privately. A celebration of life to be scheduled for a later date.

Cemetery Details

Willamette National Cemetery

11800 Southeast Mount Scott Boulevard
Portland, OR

Tribute Wall



“ Artie was my go-to buddy back in '61 when he lived across the street. I put his name into Facebook and was amazed to find this as the first hit. Lots of great times together, my parents couldn't stand him, but to me, he was The Man. I remember his mom had a triangle out front that she'd ring to bring the kids home for dinner (we lived on a dead end street, all the kids would just turn it into a private playground), like we were on a ranch or something... I only wish I had looked for him years ago and been able to get together.

Ron Green - February 27 at 09:48 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Adventures



C - April 27, 2024 at 05:45 PM



“ Mr. Pels was my high school English teacher back around 2006-2007. He was one of my top favorite teachers without a doubt. I regularly have positive memories of him and his class. He put much time and effort into helping me improve my writing skills. I was sort of a teacher's pet in his class. He always advocated for me when I was too shy to do it myself. Such a unique, fascinating and unforgettable man with his motorcycle helmet always near his desk. He will be sorely missed.

Anamaria - April 25, 2024 at 02:28 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Arthur Steven Pels.*



April 25, 2024 at 02:17 PM