

James Widener Ray

Philanthropist, Artist, Gentleman

November 25, 1952 - October 9, 2005

The extraordinary life of our son, brother and friend transitioned to another plane this past week, leaving us saddened by his passing and grateful for the time we had with him. Jim was one of those rare human beings filled with the challenges of life and enthralled with the possibilities of what could be. He was gentle, generous, stubborn, demanding, filled with fight and overflowing with compassion.

A talented photographer and artist, Jim excelled at airbrush painting, collages, and architectural and interior design. He was a madman skier who amazed anybody who saw him on the slopes, listening to exquisite jazz as he did his "Jimmy Shimmy" or headphones blaring dancing disco as he barreled down the mountainsides of Telluride, CO, Sun Valley, ID, and Whistler, BC. He loved yachting and was the very proud owner of two luxury crafts. In the '90s, he owned and operated Eagle Eye Gallery on Capitol Hill, providing a space for new and budding artists and many of his own works.

Jim's gallery experience led him to formalize his role as a philanthropist, creating and exclusively funding the Raynier Institute & Foundation to support health care, animal protection, the arts and music, with a focus on youth. Through the foundation's "No Wasted Notes" division, Jim was a producer of several jazz festivals and served on the advisory board for the Telluride Jazz Celebration. The "No Wasted Notes Gallery" at Experience Music Project was recently dedicated to honor his support. His love of jazz welcomed many musicians of great renown into his home, including Herbie Mann, Les McCann and Larry Coryell. Nothing eased his mood like sitting at the piano or standing at the vibes and blissing out to some homegrown and

spontaneous jazz.

His creative and artistic mind created a unique home, filled with great treasures, whether found in a junk shop or Manhattan boutiques. He traveled the world with an entourage of friends, enjoying late night dancing in the discos, tantalizing meals in wonderful street cafes, exploring museums and galleries and meeting new friends. He could exhaust the heartiest of us with his energy and always enjoyed a hearty, from-the-gut laugh. His puns were notorious and abundant.

Everyone was Jim's friend. He invited everyone into his life with no judgments and recognized goodness when he saw it and potential where others didn't see it. He was a kind and loving man, with nary a negative thought in his mind or mean bone in his body. We are diminished by his passing.

Written by:

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