



## James M. Miller

March 2, 1947 - December 2, 2025

James Michael Miller, 78, passed away peacefully surrounded by his children in Houston, TX on December 2, 2025.

Jim was born in Wabash, Indiana on March 2, 1947, and raised on a farm, which taught him the value of self-reliance and an exceptional work ethic. He learned to cook at age three on a wood-burning stove in a home with a hand crank telephone. He played the organ and piano as well as competed in community euchre tournaments in his youth. Jim raised rabbits and loved animals, including his pet bull. He showed a great talent for working on mechanical equipment. Jim would figure out how to build, design, or repair just about anything on the farm, where he continued to work until deciding to serve his country.

Jim enlisted in the Regular Army Artillery and was Honorably discharged in 1967 as a "91 Bravo" Medical Specialist 91B20. He served in Korea as well as locally at the Nike Hercules Nuclear Missile unit outside of Marine, Illinois. He was a Sharpshooter with the M14 Rifle and .45 Pistol and was awarded the National Defense Service Medal.

While in Korea, Jim would use his spare time to visit the nearby village and lend a hand within the local community wherever he could be of assistance; he told stories of putting up a building, working on machines and engines, and

sharing in the food and traditions. Jim remained a member of the American Legion and was proud of his military service during the Viet Nam era.

Jim met Mary Bircher while stationed in Illinois. They were married on July 8, 1968, and remained devoted to each other throughout their lives. They began married life outside of Chicago until an employment opportunity brought them to Houston, Texas in 1974. Jim was a respected electrical design supervisor who worked on large projects over the years for Sargent-Lundy, Brown & Root, Loomis, ABB, CB&I, and McDermott. At the time of his retirement at age 72, he was still training the younger generation of designers.

If you were willing to learn, Jim was willing to teach you with patience and encouragement. He especially loved working with children, and he volunteered in any capacity needed for a variety of after-school activities. As parishioners of St. Thomas More Catholic Church, Jim supported fundraisers, built drama and choir sets, helped with Girl Scouts cookie sales, and assisted with his son's Boy Scout troop campouts and merit badge lessons. He also coached a Westland YMCA Baseball team. In his free time, Jim enjoyed watching Disney movies, John Wayne westerns, college basketball, and Andy Griffith but was often found in the garage rebuilding car engines, fixing something, or just "tinkering."

In recent years, Jim looked forward to trips to Indiana to see his daughter from his first marriage, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He enjoyed doing DIY projects and other family activities during these visits.

Jim is preceded in death by his parents, Glenn E. Miller and Betty J. (née Boggess) Blackman, and his wife of 54 years, Mary P. (née Bircher) Miller. He is survived by their children, Stephanie E. Miller, James B. (Katie) Miller, and Patricia M. Miller (Mario Uresti), and grandson, Cody Miller, as well as daughter Mitzi Swihart, granddaughter Latasha (Adam) Young, grandson

Joshua Swihart, and also many great-grandchildren, cousins, nephews, sisters-in-law, and brothers-in-law, all of whom he loved very much.

A visitation will be held on December 27, 2025, from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home in Highland, IL. Following the visitation, a Rosary Service will take place at Spengel-Boulanger Boulanger Funeral Home at 11:00 am.

Interment will follow at St. Joseph's Catholic Cemetery in Highland, IL, with full military honors.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 27. 10:00 AM (CT)

Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home - Highland  
1501 9th Street  
P.O. Box 187  
Highland, IL 62249  
(618) 654-2133  
info@spengel-boulanger.com

## Rosary Service

DEC 27. 11:00 AM (CT)

Spengel-Boulanger Funeral Home - Highland  
1501 9th Street  
P.O. Box 187  
Highland, IL 62249  
(618) 654-2133  
info@spengel-boulanger.com

# Tribute Wall

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“ Jim and Mary lived in Plainfield, Illinois, in the early 1970s. Mary was our first cousin, and my six siblings and I were thrilled to have cousins living in our town. We have many fond memories of visiting their little acreage on the edge of town for picnics and summer evenings.

Jim loved to put on a show—he’d shoot off firecrackers and roman candles in the yard, and afterward, he’d build a roaring fire in the yard—something you couldn’t do in town—so we could roast marshmallows.

He genuinely liked us kids. (That’s something that you can’t fake.) Jim was always interested in whatever we were up to—science fair projects, baseball games, or swim meets—and he often had a suggestion or idea to share. He was the one who showed us the best way to clip baseball cards to our bike spokes so they made a super loud clackety sound as we biked around our neighborhood.

Jim treated us four younger kids like an indulgent big brother, piling us into his car for trips to Fitzer’s Frosty and letting us order whatever we wanted. When I was twelve, I told him my favorite song was “Smoke on the Water” by Deep Purple. He smiled and said, “Yeah, they’re pretty good,” but then introduced me to Tommy James and the Shondells. Ever since, I have never heard a Tommy James song without thinking of Jim.

He was the coolest.

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Erin T Lonergan - December 16, 2025 at 05:08 PM

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“ 33 files added to the tribute wall



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**Patty Miller** - December 12, 2025 at 12:35 AM