

James H. Crosby

June 24, 1943 – April 17, 2023

James Herbert Crosby, 79, died peacefully at his home in Pana, on the morning of April 17, 2023.

He was born on June 24, 1943 in Granite City, Illinois, the son of Byron and Pearl (Walker) Crosby. He was the second of six children, all of whom survive.

He graduated from Pana High School in 1961 and joined the U.S. Army, serving for two years. He married Carol Jean “Jeannie” Berroyer in 1965. She survives and was by his side his entire life, including during the last decade as his health declined. Together they had three children, all of whom survive.

Jim, or “Herbie,” as many of his friends called him, was never satisfied with what many would consider enough fun.

As a teenager, he didn’t just own A fast car, but what all agree was THE FASTEST car in town, a two-door ’55 Chevy that remains legendary among those who grew up with him.

As the story goes, his father, Byron, didn’t believe the car would beat his Buick, and so young Jim happily proved it to him one night during a friendly, family drag race on the outskirts of town.

As a young man, not content to simply serve in the military, Jim tried out and qualified for an elite and storied assault unit – the 101st Airborne “Screaming Eagles,” based in Fort Campbell, Kentucky – making numerous jumps from C-130 and C-47 aircraft during his two-year hitch, and riding his motorcycle home to visit Jeannie in college whenever he could.

Following his time in the Army, Jim and his brothers satisfied this ongoing desire to take to the sky by purchasing a fully aerobatic, two-seat Taylorcraft airplane, teaching themselves the minor detail of how to fly it along the way. Later in life, after raising his family, the flying bug took hold again as Jim and his brothers and a few friends began buying and building ultralight aircraft and flying them from an airstrip at the Crosby home on Illinois 29 just north of Pana. The group spent many a happy hour among the clouds above Central Illinois, sharing the thrill of flight, as well as suffering a few engine-related, unscheduled “landings” along the way – all of which they managed to walk away from to fly another day.

Jim didn’t just build a family home on that site. Instead, he built a modern log cabin – one of the first of its kind in the area – that became a local landmark after its completion in the early 1980s. The home remained in the family until 2022.

Professionally, Jim wasn’t satisfied simply working as a journeyman electrician out of IBEW Local 146 in Decatur. Instead, and often to his wife’s chagrin, he had to be one of the few who volunteered to work on the highest structures in the area, including wiring the lights and scrubbers on the smokestack at the Kincaid power plant, which stretched upward to about the same height as the Gateway Arch in St. Louis. He made people laugh and feel good about themselves. He taught his children how to be tough and tender. He could build anything and fix anything, and he took care of everyone. He shared a long, successful and loving marriage with Jeannie, his soulmate and partner with whom he built his life.

James H. Crosby is survived by his wife, Jean, of Pana; son Timothy James (Andrea Hahn) Crosby of Makanda, Illinois; daughter Kimberly Jo Hainline (Danny Hainline) of Niantic, Illinois; son Steven Paul Crosby, of Pana; and grandchildren Katherine P. Crosby, of Carbondale, Illinois; William H. Crosby of Alamogordo, New Mexico; Anna Hainline of Niantic; Mya Crosby of Pana; and Riley Hainline of Niantic. One grandson, Daniel T. Crosby, of Carterville, Illinois, preceded him in death in 2020.

Surviving siblings include Gerald (Judy) Crosby, of Pana; Curtis (Rose) Crosby of Pana, Steve (Gina) Crosby of Atlanta, Georgia; Marshall (Mickey) Crosby, of Jonesboro, Georgia, and Gail (Bill) Hawker of Pana.

The Crosby family wished to thank Quad County Hospice and in-home caregivers Joyce Dennison and Kelly Mahan for their wonderful, loving care and friendship during the last few years.

The family is planning a memorial service in Pana, tentatively scheduled for June 24, 2023.

