James Luke Christopher Williams

OCTOBER 27, 2021

WILLIAMS, James

Nov 30, 1988 – Oct. 27, 2021

James Luke Christopher Williams passed away on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 at the age of 32 years. He was an adventurer, a photographer, and a man who formed deep friendships.

James was born November 30, 1988 in Red Deer, Alberta. He was welcomed by his parents Marianne and Milton, and by his three older brothers John, Andrew, and Daniel.

From the beginning James was a lovable boy, called “My Sweetness” by his mother. In a house with three older brothers he grew up as a quiet, shy, and very giving person. One morning when Marianne was still in bed, James, a toddler and looking for a good cuddle, went to her bedside and asked, "Mumma can I be your husband today?". She lifted the quilt, said "sure come on in", and laughingly snuggled her sweet little boy.

James loved hockey, soccer, volleyball, basketball, rugby, and rowing. He excelled in a variety of sports so much that he represented his schools and local clubs provincially and at national competitions. He showed physical strength, skill, and leadership in his sports. James was also highly valued by his coaches and

teammates. In fact, when the top tier Red Deer rugby team had asked his brother to join them, Daniel was amused to think one of the reasons he made the team was so that the Titans might entice James to play for them too!

As children, Daniel and James played together and were the closest of brothers. As they grew, they remained best friends. They cemented their bond on their journeys together as adults. Their most notable adventure was their backpacking trip to South East Asia, India, China, Pakistan, and Kazakhstan. On this odyssey, they got food poisoning, crossed mountain rivers on rickety wire and wood bridges, rode motorbikes over many miles, and took some great photos along the way. Once they finally found their way home safely together, James created a video of their epic travels. *Dirt Bags*.

James was an enthusiastic traveller. His solo adventures included bike treks along the Cowboy Trail and parks in Alberta. When he had enough riding for a day, James would pull over, and find a ditch or field to pitch his tent for the evening and have a quick meal. He rode his fat bike cross country through Dry Island Buffalo Jump Provincial Park over the winter landscape. His longest bike trek was the year long adventure from Patagonia, Argentina to Colombia. He rode over 14,000 km of dusty roads with amazing scenery and dozens of flat tires. *A Year on my Bicycle: Riding South America*

On back-country ski trips, James was always warmly welcomed by his friends. He was up for anything and wouldn't complain about ill fitting gear or his macerated feet. One ski trip on the Wapta Icefields, James fell head first into a rocky section. Although he ended up with a separated shoulder, he wasn't worried about his shoulder or the pain. He was more excited about the free helicopter ride back to civilization and returning the borrowed and broken skis to his brother, Andrew.

On these trips he was highly skilled at thieving unattended food. We weren't sure what he enjoyed more, taking the food or eventually getting caught and playing

innocent. His travel mates eventually started bringing more food than normal when hiking with James. He particularly relished eating all of the smarties from a bag of trail mix. We loved him anyway.

When you spent time with James, you understood what a warm and kind person he was. His nephews and nieces loved being with him. He jumped right into their worlds and adored spending his time painting, wrestling, and playing make-believe with them in cardboard boxes. He was a big kid at heart and took joy in playing friendly pranks on those he loved. His friends remember how easy he was to talk with and he always made you feel welcome.

Ever the explorer, James wasn't committed to a single career path he wanted to take. So, he tried several. He first followed in his brother Dan's footsteps and went to Red Deer College for two years of philosophy. He finished this degree at the University of Alberta. After graduating, James decided to follow in his brother Andrew's footsteps and began fighting forest fires in Northern Alberta out of Manning Air Tanker Base. A standout moment was when James worked tirelessly in High River during the 2013 Floods. He and his crew were tasked with going through the destruction and sewer overflows to get the community back to safer conditions. Within this bleak environment, James happened upon a black box. Within it he found a wedding ring and a phone number. Upon calling the number, James was told that the flood had washed the soon-to-be groom's ring away from the jewellery store. It just so happened that the engaged couple were reconsidering their forthcoming marriage, but it was the discovery of the ring that they took as a sign to marry. James's Unit Crew supervisor only heard of this story secondhand from other crew members. The story became widespread and helped to bolster morale during the floods.

It was inevitable that James eventually became a well-respected crew leader. It didn't take long for him to create new long lasting friendships up north. He

worked hard, but was loved most of all for the fun he got up to with his crew mates. One friend shared that, “He was an amazing firefighter, but the memories I have were always the pranks or shenanigans we got into during the slow parts of the job.” He loved playing board games with his brothers, which evolved into dominating board games with his friends and crew mates.

Although James was successful at anything he put his mind to, he particularly loved telling stories through videography and photography. These two passions were what he poured his heart and soul into. After receiving a full grant to complete a Diploma in Film at Red Deer College, he worked on set for the television show Heartland and won a Big Rock Eddie award in 2013 for a commercial his team created. He had just founded his own business where he beautifully captured weddings and created gorgeous travel videos. Even though his business was in its infancy, his talent and creativity were undeniable. James’s Facebook and Instagram are filled with breathtaking videos that friends and family can still view even though he is no longer with us. One of our favorite videos that James created was about two of his favorite things: coffee and nature. *Helmecken Coffee.mov*

James inherited a natural virtue from his mother. In spite of the struggles and doubts that life in this world brought, he always turned to his Catholic faith to heal. His faith was often understated in conversation, but it was obvious to those close to him that it was a faith deeply held. His earnest love of God, in his own simple way, was a silent but constant witness of Christ’s Church and the Sacraments, offering comfort to family and friends. To know James was to know Christ laughing, loving, and suffering here on earth.

He is lovingly remembered by his father, Milton; brothers, John (wife Katherine), Andrew (wife Rachel), and Daniel (wife Maureen); his 7 nieces and nephews, Owen, Luke, Eliana, Bria, Emilia, Harrison, and Benedict; as well as many other

relatives and friends.

He is predeceased by his mother, Marianne.

A private Funeral Mass will be held in Red Deer.

He will be sorely missed, but he will always be with us. *The Laughing Heart*.

Messages of Condolence

There simply are no words for expressing my sadness in the loss of your son, Milt. I pray the Lord will give you peace and comfort in the very difficult days to come. Much love to all your family. With sincerity, Penny Dymianiw

— Penny Dymianiw

We heard the news from Laura and we are so sorry for the pain you must have right now. Just know we have been and will continue to pray for your family. Love Bob and Brenda

— Brenda McKenzie

Chers Milton, John, Andrew et Daniel,
Nous sommes profondément attristés par le décès de James. Nous gardons le souvenir d'un élève extrêmement gentil, souriant, courtois et des plus agréables à côtoyer.
Nos plus sincères condoléances à toute votre famille.

— Andrée Caron et Marc-André Roy

My dear Milt and family . How sorry I was to see the obituary for your son today. My deepest condolences on your loss. God bless you all at this time.

— Ken Johnston

I was in French Immersion in high school with James. Having such similar last names, we were often thrown together when the teachers decided to seat us in alphabetical order. For this same reason, we also sat on the plane together on the France trip! I sometimes got asked if me and James were cousins. I will always remember his smile, and his kindness. He never joined in when the other kids were teasing somebody. Even though I haven't talked to James in many years, I followed his outdoor adventures on Instagram. He was an adventurous, down to earth guy, and I'm very sorry to hear that he is gone. I'm so very sorry for your loss.

— Mandy Williamson

Milton,
My heart is with you. Sending prayers and hugs.

— Barb Hanson(Eklund)

Milt & Family, We hold you all in very high regard and were so very saddened to hear of your loss. We have such happy memories of our boys growing up together, sitting on the stands with you and Marianne watching the kids at concerts, graduations, playing sports, and in general just making us proud. As others have expressed, we too, know James to be a thoughtful, kind, caring, gentle, and sensitive human being. -a success in life by any accurate measuring stick. Heaven's gain is our loss. His passing is very difficult to accept or comprehend even by those of us on the periphery. We can only barely, begin to imagine, what this must be costing your family. You are on our minds, in our hearts and in our prayers at this excruciatingly difficult time. You have each other and you are dearly loved by ONE greater than all of us. Susan & Jack Bromley

— Susan Bromley

Milt and family,

My thoughts and prayers are with you and your families.

I found this poem for you:

May you find STRENGTH from the love and care that surround you…

COMFORT in the memories of all you shared …

PEACE as you move forward with you loved one in your heart.

— Charese

Dear Milton and family,

Our hearts are deeply saddened by the news of the passing of your son and brother, James. All of your family is close in our thoughts and prayers as you mourn his loss. May he Rest In Peace and may the infinite Peace of Christ dwell with you and your family.

Most sincerely, Joanne and Elton (Katherine’s aunt and uncle)

— Elton and Joanne Kelln

On behalf of all of my family, we offer sincerest condolences in your loss.

May all the great memories comfort you and bring you peace in this difficult time.

(Katherine’s Auntie,Uncle and family)

Val, Barry, Dalyace,Sean,Braeden,Connor, Jodi,Kenna,Kason and Tyler.

— Valerie Hallet

Milt and family, We are so sorry for your loss. I remember James as a sweet and caring boy who brought joy to his family, looked up to his big brother Daniel and was always willing to help a friend. May your memories comfort you. Sending prayers and hugs.

— Carol and Ron Villeneuve

Milt & family

We’re so sad to hear of James passing. Would see him bringing his Mother to church. Such a fine young man! What a painful & challenging year for your family. Thoughts & prayers to you

— Ted & Terri Loughlin

Dear Milt, John, Andrew and Daniel - We are heartbroken to learn of your loss. Katrina & Garreth were always sharing James' amazing photography & videos with us. We all were in awe of his outdoor pursuits and talents. Words cannot truly express our condolences. May all your loving memories of James help heal your pain at this difficult time.

— Bob, Jill, Katrina and Garreth Burrows

I'm so incredible sorry for your loss. I worked wildland fire with James for a few seasons. He was a crew leader and friend. He really was one of a kind, and I feel so very lucky and privileged to have had the opportunity to have met him. I built a cabin here in Nova Scotia, and it always reminds me of him. He told me once that an uncle of his, his namesake, James, built a cabin somewhere in Northern Alberta. He said he wanted to follow in his footsteps and do something equally cool - build himself a place. For both of us then, it was just a dream, a fun idea, nothing more. As it went I did build myself a little place and kept James apprised of developments, I sent him videos and offered updates. Somehow it always felt like I was building his dream, he was the one who was more interested in building a place than I was, so it just seemed right to keep him in the background. And now, I think, my place will always remind me of James, and I have to say, I'm really really grateful for that. Again, my heartfelt condolences for you loss.

— Julie Gillis

Milton, our entire family sends condolences over the loss of James. A wonderful man who brought joy wherever he went. He will be missed. God Bless.

— Tim Forest

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