



James Wheeler Seal Jr.

October 14, 1944 - May 24, 2026

James Wheeler Seal, Jr of Dale City, VA passed away at Sentara, Northern VA Medical Center on May 26, 2026. Jim was a cherished friend, colleague, and teacher. He will be deeply missed.

James Wheeler Seal, Jr was born in Fort Worth, Texas on Oct 14. 1944. Son of James Wheeler Sr and Lucille (Lawrence) Seal. His family moved to Idabel Oklahoma where he attended high school and graduated with many honors. Jim graduated from the University of Oklahoma in Physics with a BS in 1968. He received a Phi Beta Kappa Award. Jim participated in ROTC for two years while at the University and was chosen outstanding cadet each year. While at the University, Jim completed Historical Geology cementing his interest in minerals. After graduation, Jim served in the army from 1968-1972 in the field of cryptography.

In 1989, Jim graduated from Purdue University with a PhD in Theoretical Physics. During this time period, Jim also taught at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire and focused on astronomy related topics as part of his research. Jim made a real effort to provide research opportunities for his undergraduate students. He was respected and well -liked by his students and they often celebrated holidays together. His friendships with some of his

students endured until his passing.

Jim joined the US Patent & Trademark Office(PTO) in 1998. One only had to have a conversation with Jim to recognize not only his extensive background and knowledge in mathematics and cryptology, but to also feel his passion for sharing this knowledge. He continued his love of teaching at the PTO where he patiently helped newer examiners understand the basics of cryptography. Jim readily shared his knowledge and resources, including his cryptography book, with the all examiners. Jim was writing a very comprehensive book covering the history of both cryptology methods and the various devices used to implement them. Jim was an invaluable resource not only in terms of teaching the current technology but for providing a historical perspective as well. He was greatly missed by the examiners when he retired.

In addition to his passion for physics and mathematics, Jim had many interests and his many collections reflects this. Anyone who knew Jim has to know of his love of books, particularly science and science fiction, but not many of us knew he could also recite Shakespeare at will. After he left the PTO, Jim continued writing his comprehensive book on cryptography.

In addition to his beloved books, Jim collected coins, locks, keys, antique devices such as radios and lightning rods, foreign currency, and minerals. During the 1990's, Jim and his friend Lane Dottl built a laboratory to house their own cyclotron particle accelerator. Jim was a ham operator and had an amateur radio license. His irrepressible curiosity would never allow him to stop learning and exploring; instead, he continued to explore life with much joy and passion. In fact, at the time of his death, was happily studying for a more advanced license as a ham operator and had begun a book on the history of baseball. May we all be so lucky as to nurture the explorer within us and live our life to the fullest!

Jim's story would not be complete without mentioning his longtime feline companions Tiger and Tara. His two fierce mousers stayed by his side until their passing.

Jim is survived by his long-time friends Mark Bundy, Lane Dotti, Gail Hayes, Tamara Kyle, William Rice, Shawn Shoemaker, Matthew Smithers as well as his friend and caretaker Samuel.

POEM

I did not walk the straight and narrow path of life,

I never hid from the troubles of life's storms.

But instead, i embraced them and turned every storm an adventure.

I chased the Wildest of life, placed feet on earth sought the sun,

And enjoyed every opportunity in front of and won.

My life was well-lived, explored, With every memory softly stored.

The mountains high, the world endless to explore,

I took the world in fearlessly.

With an able body and sound mind eyes so full of wonder and dreams,

I lived each day with enjoy and excitement.

I loved life's the journey,

As daring soul, a loyal friend

I now leave my legacy of faith, adventure, exploration to you.

Cemetery Details

Quantico National Cemetery

18424 Joplin Road
Triangle, VA 22172

Previous Events

Burial w/ Military Honors

JUN 18. 2:00 PM (ET)

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Triangle, VA 22172