



## Raymond Arthur Oelke

May 12, 1945 - February 7, 2023

Ray Oelke died during heart surgery in Corvallis on February 7. He had a number of previous heart procedures and in his later years his heart issues caused weakness that slowed his previously active life. In recent time his dream was to receive and drive the new Lotus sports car he had ordered – but unfortunately it was not delivered in time for him to achieve that in this life.

Ray was born in Portland, Oregon May 12, 1945, and thus claimed he was a “native Oregonian” – even though he did not grow up in the state. His parents, Raymond Ivan Oelke and Edith Ellen (née Pierce) Oelke, lived in Portland during WWII where both parents worked in the ship yards – his mother being a true example of “Rosie, the Riveter.” After the war, his parents moved to Ephrata in Eastern Washington where his dad built up a construction business, and Ray grew up helping his dad and learning that trade. Ray graduated from high school there and went off to college in Cheney, Washington.

About this time Ray also joined the Army Reserves and later received an Honorable Discharge in 1973. He graduated from Eastern Washington University with degrees in Art and then Education. Following this he moved to Corvallis, Oregon in 1968 to begin teaching art at Western View Middle School. After about 13 years of teaching, Ray decided he wanted to concentrate on his own art and took additional classes and worked on many different art projects – especially theater set production which he did for local

high schools and community theater groups. In 1988 he earned an M.A.I.S. (Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies) from Oregon State.

Also in 1988, Ray returned to home construction - a field he'd learned long before while working for his dad. He was employed by The Village Builder from that year until his retirement in 2007.

Outside of work the activity that occupied most of his spare time was working on and "cruising" cars. He owned many British sports cars, but of those his favorites were made by Lotus. He owned a Europa, Esprit, and an Evora; but he was looking to receive the new Emira model as his "ultimate" sports car. As to his classic cars and hot rods, the vehicle he possessed the longest (and had at his death) was his 1930 Model "A" Ford coupe. Other Fords he owned included a 1927 Ford Model "T" roadster pickup and a 1953 Ford Victoria. He had owned a '53 Victoria in high school and jumped at the chance to have another.

Ray belonged to the Rollin' Oldies Car Club in Lebanon, Oregon, and had many friends through that club. For many years he was also a participant in "Cruise Oregon," a charity fund-raiser put on by the Route 26 Cruisers of Sandy, Oregon.

Ray was an only child and single, but he is survived by his many friends who will sorely miss him. At his wishes there will be no formal service, but his car club will later hold a memorial in his memory.