



## James William Schmelzer

January 28, 1960 - September 27, 2023

SCHMELZER, James "Sir James". Passed suddenly on September 27, 2023, at the age of 63. Beloved husband of Lisa for 35 years. Loving and devoted father of Andria. Proud and adored grandfather of Liam. Cherished brother of Steve and Laura Schmelzer, Anna and Bill Hickner. Loving friend and photographer to all, he will be greatly missed by everyone that knew him. He was predeceased by his parents, Walter and Norma.

Visitation Monday from 3-9pm with a 12pm Funeral Service on Tuesday at Wujek - Calcaterra & Sons Inc., (Shelby Township), 54880 Van Dyke at 25 Mile Rd. Please share memories with the family at their online guestbook at [WujekCalcaterra.com](http://WujekCalcaterra.com)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT **2**. 3:00 PM - 9:00 PM (ET)

Wujek-Calcaterra & Sons - Shelby Township  
54880 VanDyke Ave  
Shelby Township, MI 48316

## Funeral Service

OCT **3**. 12:00 PM (ET)

Wujek-Calcaterra & Sons - Shelby Township  
54880 VanDyke Ave  
Shelby Township, MI 48316

# Tribute Wall

MD

“ Mairi Van Dyke purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of James William Schmelzer.



---

**Mairi Van Dyke** - January 22, 2025 at 10:24 PM

MD

“ Mairi Van Dyke planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James William Schmelzer.

---

**Mairi Van Dyke** - January 22, 2025 at 10:24 PM



“ It's been a little over a week since we bid farewell to our dear friend James Schmelzer. I first met James back in 2015 at a wedding event where I was performing music. He had never heard of me before that day, but we instantly connected. From then on, we stayed in touch, and he was always just a phone call away. James had a deep appreciation for our local musicians and often attended events on the east side of Michigan. He had a special love for wine, and we shared many glasses together with our mutual friends from the east side. I owe James a heartfelt thanks for always offering kind words of support, not just to me but to my family as well. He was a true champion of the local entertainment scene. At the time, I was a relatively unknown singer in the area, and I believe James played a significant role in spreading the word about our musical act. He even took all of our promotional photos, including the shots that were displayed at the Andiamo Celebrity Showroom for our final performance before the pandemic disrupted the industry.

James was there with several tables of friends attending Michelle L. Cancelmo and my very last show on April 14th. I remember telling him, "Don't take any pictures tonight, just sit back, enjoy the company, and savor the show." He responded with that infectious grin of his. The next day, I invited Jim to my house to take photos of family and friends who had flown in for the show. We had a wonderful time filled with wine, photos, laughter, and I made sure he was compensated for his work. Little did I know that it would be the last time I would see James and experience his warm smile and candid personality.

Beyond his talents as a photographer, James was a true people person. He surrounded himself with individuals who had big hearts and radiated kindness. I will deeply miss you, James. You were not just a friend but a "brother from another mother."

With fond memories,  
Byron Cancelmo





---

**Byron Cancelmo** - October 10, 2023 at 03:29 PM

AL

“ So sorry to miss 'Jimmy's' send off~I just found out. It is a sad day. I will never forget the hug we shared when his dad passed or the castle cake his mom made, amongst other memories. His mom was so fun. Did someone say 'mischievous grin'? Maybe he got it from her. Love always and forever.



---

**Aly** - October 04, 2023 at 04:11 PM

JE

“ New York & Vegas were entirely different experiences when shared with this lively Detroit soul. A fun and intelligent man gone too soon.  
~ Jennifer Holtsberry

---

**Jennifer** - October 03, 2023 at 02:44 PM

SS

“ I’ve seen Jim so many times over the 10+ years I’ve volunteered for non-profit organizations. My most memorable was this past summer at the Italian Festival at Freedom Hill. I was helping my dear friend Sandy Tornberg selling 50/50 tickets. Jim made it a point to reach out to me and snap my photo wearing a red, green & white Tu-Tu. I will never forget that moment, nor him.  
My heartfelt sympathy to all of you who loved him. His death has shocked so many. Cling to each other.

*(I empathize as I lost my husband suddenly & tragically 21 years ago).*

---

**Sandra Sims** - October 02, 2023 at 11:44 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



---

October 02, 2023 at 08:48 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



---

October 02, 2023 at 09:17 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James William Schmelzer.

---

October 02, 2023 at 09:17 AM



“ Jim and I met close to 15 years ago at the Henry's Photo & Video show up here in Toronto Ontario. Since that time we have been in shared groups, at the same conferences and workshops, and connected over and over again through our love of photography. Most recently I saw Jim at Shutterfest 23. We had the opportunity to chat many times throughout the conference, short hellos in passing longer convos when the show floor was quiet. What I remember most with Jim was the look on his face and enthusiasm in his voice anytime he had an opportunity to try out an idea or support someone in trying out one of their own to create something beautiful and learn through the experience.

Jim will be missed by many and remembered by even more. Thinking of everyone impacted by his sudden loss, especially his family, during this difficult time.

---

**Rebecca Nash Emerson** - October 02, 2023 at 06:58 AM

SR

“ I met the Schmelzet family in High School, as Anna was my best friend. Jim and Anna’s prayers for me led to my destiny and my love for God. In 1987, I asked Jim to edited and produce the ultrasound VHS video: “Window to the Womb” that showed capitulating images of unborn babies in the womb. A donar agreed to pay for the hours of production time but unfortunately after over a year of editing when the video was completed he refused.

Jim, told me not to worry about paying him and if one baby was saved through the video it would be worth all the time and effort. By Gods amazing grace and Jim’s obedience, God blessed the video and within a few years (and before the days of internet) millions of copies went around the world translated into 12 languages, shown in U.S House and Senate, national TV and saved millions of mothers from abortion. Jim stayed with me from the beginning.

In December of 2002, when my mother died, Jim and his staff produced a video capturing episodes of moms life for her funeral.

I always planned to visit Jim again to celebrate the huge impact he had made in my life, the unborn children and their Mothers... but time got away. I am sure there are millions of babies meeting Jim at the gates of Heaven thanking him for giving to the Lord.

I pray for Anna, Jim’s family and friends during their time of grief. Jim will be loved forever and missed. ❤️🙏🙏

Shari Reif Richard



---

shari Reif Richard - October 01, 2023 at 09:14 PM

MD

*Shari, I am touched by your memories of James. He was a mentor to me in many ways and I miss him dearly. He brought me away from the dark photographers lurking in Michigan and taught me to believe in myself. He allowed me to travel and work with him on an LA trip and caused me to envision bigger dreams. He was the most fun and we did over 25 shoots together. I too am a pro-life advocate and I have heard of your video before. I am so happy that his work impacted many people in this capacity among many others. God bless you and I know you look forward to seeing him again one day as do I.*

**Mairi Van Dyke** - January 22, 2025 at 10:20 PM



“ *A Full Life was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



September 30, 2023 at 08:52 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



September 30, 2023 at 04:28 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



September 30, 2023 at 12:27 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.



September 30, 2023 at 10:56 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.



September 30, 2023 at 09:07 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James William Schmelzer.

September 30, 2023 at 09:07 AM



“ I knew James from the photo education world. We spoke at many of the same conferences for years. I saw him speaking at BILD in NYC just a few weeks ago. I took a few extra moments to really listen. He was so so good at explaining lighting techniques, and he truly seemed to be enjoying sharing his vast knowledge. His classic knowledge and passion for sharing it will be severely missed. He was a remarkable educator, and I'm so sad for your loss.

cliff mautner - September 29, 2023 at 10:16 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



---

September 29, 2023 at 06:28 PM



“ *So very sad to hear of Jim passing. I remember when I was starting out as a videographer, he was so kind and helpful to both my husband and I. He really took pride in his work, and he generally cared for others trying to make it. Great mentor, will be missed.*

---

**Mary Burzynski (Bee's Video)** - September 29, 2023 at 04:08 PM



“ *Jeannine B. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James William Schmelzer.*

---

**Jeannine B.** - September 29, 2023 at 03:49 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



---

September 29, 2023 at 02:30 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James William Schmelzer.

---

September 29, 2023 at 02:30 PM



“ So hard to believe the news of Jim's sudden passing.

*The memories of our times together go back over 35 years and what great memories they are. From the first time we meet at a PPA Show in Chicago to the last time we saw each other in New York on September 6th at the B&H tradeshow we have been like "brothers with different mothers."*

*He always worked hard and played even harder. Jim left so many lasting impressions on all that knew him. His willingness to share his knowledge of photography and how to properly Light and capture images was never ending.*

*Jim was a big part of our Companies outreach to the Photography community over the years through his "Quality of Light" programs and seminars. His programs and lectures at Major tradeshow were in the hundreds and attended by thousands on a Global level.*

*On behalf of all my Associates at Westcott, our deepest Sympathy and prayers to Lisa, Andria, and all the Schmelzer family.*

*Rest in peace my friend.*

*Tom Waltz*

---

**Tom Waltz** - September 29, 2023 at 11:25 AM

JW

“ Jennifer & Lee Wilson lit a candle in memory of James William Schmelzer



Jennifer & Lee Wilson - September 29, 2023 at 10:16 AM

JE

James was a very kind man. He was so kind & wonderful to our daughter Sara. He will be greatly missed, RIP.

Jennifer - September 29, 2023 at 10:18 AM

MB

“ I met Jimmy 50 years ago, we went to junior high together. Though our current lives did not intersect I will forever hold our growing up in Detroit close to my heart. His smile and the “Schmelzer lean” in the caprice will always bring a smile to my face. We had all had a connection this Arthur /Denby group and I cherish all of you. I send my love and lift you all up at this incredibly difficult time. May he rest in peace and may his memory eventually bring a smile to your face and heart.

Mary Bommarito

Mary M Bommarito - September 29, 2023 at 06:55 AM



“ Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.



September 29, 2023 at 06:39 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of James William Schmelzer.

---

September 29, 2023 at 06:39 AM

RP

“ We wanted to take a moment to share a special memory of our dear friend Jim. We first met Jim when we were 21 years old, and he was the photographer for our engagement pictures. From that moment on, we knew he was someone special. His kindness and love radiated from him, and we knew he was the one to capture the special moments of our lives.

One memory that will forever be etched in our hearts is from our wedding day. Our limo driver was impatient to leave for Penna's, Dad got into an argument with the limo driver. It escalated to the point where Dad threatened to throw the driver into the lake where we were posing for pictures. It was such a hilarious and unexpected moment. Jim captured it perfectly, and it became a treasured memory for my husband and I. Every time we saw Dad, we would laugh about it together.

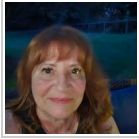
Jim became more than just a photographer to us; he became family. Our two girls adored him, and he was always patient and loving towards them. He had a remarkable ability to capture their smiles, looks, and even their sass. But most importantly, he showed them his genuine love for children. Those moments with Jim are ones that our girls and us will always treasure.

One other important gesture Dad did for me (Rosann) was take four photos of my brother from my wedding to create one full body shot of my brother since he died unexpectedly at the age of 34 and Jim had the photo to me within 24 hours for my family and funeral home to have for prayer cards. I will always treasure and love you for that. Jim, you will be so dearly missed. Your presence brought so much joy and laughter into our lives. We find comfort in knowing that we will see you on the other side. Until then, we will hold onto the precious memories you captured for us and cherish them always.

With love and gratitude,  
Gaspere, Rosann, Bianca & Ivana Palazzolo

---

**Rosann Palazzolo** - September 28, 2023 at 09:48 PM



“ *Sending prayers to his family, I first met Jimmy in High School and he was always such a great guy! Loved his laugh and his grin. May his memories bring you comfort*

---

**Anita Beaman** - September 28, 2023 at 09:46 PM

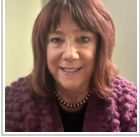
DV

“ *Attending weddings for most people can be a drag. The thought of putting on a suit and tie in the middle of summer for someone who grew up in the same mountain range of Greece as your parents can be challenging. Over the past 30 years of Greek weddings my attitude towards my parents and now my wife has been constant. "Do I have to go?" The mood to the ceremony was always sour. That state of mind magically disappeared the instant I walked into the church and noticed Jim was in charge of the memories he would capture that evening. That mischievous grin he would throw when our eyes locked will never be missed!! The ability to work and have fun is very special. Not many people are blessed with that trait. I cherish all the good times spent together. May your memory be eternal!!*

*Celebrating your life,  
Dimitri Vasilos*

---

**Dimitri Vasilos** - September 28, 2023 at 06:16 PM



“ Dear Lisa and Andria, we are sad that your wonderful husband and father passed away this week. Jim was always kind and friendly when we lived next door to you on White Water for 14 years. You are in our thoughts and prayers as you go through this most. Difficult time. With much love,  
Jim and Karen, Michael and Sara Harris

Karen Harris - September 28, 2023 at 06:14 PM

SW

“ Light will shine in him forever... even brighter than his ability to light up a photo! One of the most warm and gentle souls in the industry.

Stephen Weiss - September 28, 2023 at 05:58 PM

TS

“ I was happy to see my friend Jim teaching young photographers at many many professional photographers events. He always had a smile on his face, he loved teaching. Photographers that had a chance to learn from him were better for it. Jim, you will be missed. Rest In Peace my friend

Tom C. Stanley - September 28, 2023 at 05:58 PM

GT

“ Gagnon's and Cellar 104 Team purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of James William Schmelzer.



Gagnon's and Cellar 104 Team - September 28, 2023 at 05:56 PM

GT

“ Gagnon's and Cellar 104 Team planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James William Schmelzer.

Gagnon's and Cellar 104 Team - September 28, 2023 at 05:56 PM

BK

“ Betty Kuna lit a candle in memory of James William Schmelzer



Betty kuna - September 28, 2023 at 05:46 PM

AK

“ Jim was a great guy and amazing photographer! I worked for Jim maybe 25 years ago. I was a new photographer at the time and Jim taught me sooo many things some that I still use today as a photographer. I was always proud mentioning that I worked for Jim Schmelzer because he was an amazing photographer.

Amy Kurrie - September 28, 2023 at 05:35 PM

AK

“ Amy Kurrie lit a candle in memory of James William Schmelzer



Amy Kurrie - September 28, 2023 at 05:27 PM



“ *Jim was a genuine good guy. Jim and his brother Steve go back a long way with my family. He always had a smile on his face and would always ask how the family was doing, With a camera in hand he was always making you pose for the next great shot. Rest in peace my friend.*

---

**Robert Gagliano** - September 28, 2023 at 05:25 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of James William Schmelzer.*



---

September 28, 2023 at 04:08 PM

SV

“ I met Jim only a few years ago, through my friend Aaron Caruso. Jim filmed some videos for us in the fall of 2020. I Immediately knew that he was an expert at his craft, and also a very special man. Strong minded for sure.. BUT .. that's because he was a PRO, and KNEW what he KNEW was right. All the videos turned out beautiful. In addition, Jim was smart, funny, and a friend. He wa good man, and will be missed by all those that had the pleasure of knowing and/or working with him. \*\*Jim was the lead cinematographer on our latest PBS Special, "Journey to Highclere Castle with The Sicilian Tenors" which we filmed in England this past March. He fit right in place in England somehow and was quickly dubbed "Sir James". Just sitting here now dwelling on the fact that Jim was waaaaay to young to pass. The only thing i can think of is that the Good Lord must have needed him to come home to heaven to set the lighting up just perfectly (as only he could). Until we met again Sir James, you will be missed, and thought of fondly, - Sam Vitale, The Sicilian Tenors

---

**Sam Vitale** - September 28, 2023 at 03:50 PM

ML

“ Genuine thoughtful caring loving loyal and honest plus many more great words easily used to describe this amazing man. He once told me and i'll never forget. "Mark, Life is a stage and we're performing every day of our lives -so put your game face on and your best foot forward and never forget to smile"!! Spoken like a true artist. I love you my friend and i will always miss you until we meet again. ❤️  
Mark Lange

---

**Mark Lange** - September 28, 2023 at 03:47 PM

KB

“ *So, so many fun and happy memories around James. He never forgot those he worked with, was always helpful, encouraging, and compassionate - a very kind soul!* ”



---

**Kathryn L Brown** - September 28, 2023 at 03:19 PM