

Jim Giles, 1939-2006

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Longtime News on 6 meteorologist and colleague Jim Giles has passed away. Jim had been hospitalized for the past week, battling a series of health problems and struggling to regain strength. Despite a valiant fight and a determined effort by his doctors, he died shortly before 10:00 PM Wednesday.

Jim conquered a public bout with congestive heart failure two years ago. He also conquered cancer in the early 70's. But this latest battle was too much for him to overcome.

Jim began his distinguished career in the early 60's, serving with the Air Force in Vietnam as a weather commander at Na Trang weather station.

When he came home, Jim served in the prestigious Severe Storm Forecast Center in Kansas City. In the late 70's, while teaching meteorology at the University of Texas, Jim made the move to television in Austin and later in Dallas. He had an opportunity to continue that career in Dallas, but fortunately for us, he chose to come to KOTV in Tulsa in 1981 as Chief Meteorologist, forecasting for both radio and TV, introducing viewers to live Doppler 6 radar in 1988.

Jim was instrumental in refining that technology. And In 1991, Doppler 6 Pathfinder was key to the precision forecasts that tracked a deadly tornado north and west of Tulsa.

In 1993, devastating tornadoes swept across northeastern Oklahoma again, near Catoosa. Jim was able to pinpoint those storms as well, saving countless lives.

Over the years, Jim devoted time on and off the air to a community project that became one of his signatures, Giles Coats for Kids. He was involved in that right up until he became ill most recently.

When asked recently how he'd like to be remembered he said in his

usual, understated way "just for doing a good job". He did a great job. We'll all miss him, greatly.

I'll always remember Jim's friendliness. He treated everyone he met as a lifelong friend. During the summer after my freshman year at OU, I applied for an internship at KOTV. I went in for an interview and met Jim. He immediately treated me like he had known me for 10 years. After speaking for about 5 minutes, he said, "Well, you go to OU, so I know you're capable. You seem to have a pretty good head on your shoulders. Come over here. Here's how you run the radar. This is what I want you to do for me while I'm on-the-air tonight....Mr. Intern."

The following summer, I was hired as a part-time Weather Producer and Storm Chaser. I've been doing that since. He tried to push me into getting a job in front of the camera, which I don't really want to do.

He would direct little jabs at me, taking advantage of my lack of full time job saying, "You know, if you ever get hungry and decide you want to eat, you might think about a job in TV." Almost daily, for the last few months that he worked, he would corner me and take a little shot at me like that. It became a big joke among the rest of us because he was so determined to get me on TV. I loved that about him.

But, I learned so much from the man. He was a great friend, and a great mentor. He gave me my first job in the field of meteorology, and I will be eternally grateful.

He loved the weather so much, that he couldn't completely walk away from it. Upon retiring, he started a safe room business, so he could keep doing what he loved...trying to keep people safe from severe weather.

Jim was truly a class act, and a rare character in the TV business. The TV business has some dark sides and can get dirty at times. But Jim was always constant and will remain as one of the classiest individuals I've ever met. I'm proud to say that I had the honor of getting to work with him and for him, and that I got to produce the graphics for his final weather forecast.

Jim touched a lot of people during his life. I can only hope to have a positive impact on just a fraction of the number of people that he did.

He fought hard and pulled through congestive heart failure in 2004. He retired the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and died the Wednesday before Christmas. This is a tough holiday season for his family. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers.

R.I.P, Jim.