



## Curtis Austin

June 5, 1933 - August 16, 2016

Husband, father and teacher Curtis Joseph Austin passed away peacefully at home in Moses Lake on August 16, surrounded by family, after a long battle with cancer. Services will be announced when set.

He was born on June 5, 1933 in Missoula, Montana to Curt James Austin and Mary Monahan Austin. Curt was the sixth of seven children. His father converted to Catholicism in order to marry his mother, and Curt was proud of his Irish Catholic heritage. His father owned a general store, the "C.J. Austin Co." in Missoula for many years. The store, where Curt grew up, has been named to the historic register. He graduated from high school in Missoula, and after working for a number of months at the Mercantile (a local department store), decided college was preferable to working, enrolling at the last minute at what was then Montana State University, since renamed University of Montana. He confessed to his family that he was a somewhat indifferent student in high school, which everyone finds funny given his lifelong love of reading and learning. After completing a degree in business, Curt was drafted and joined the Navy in 1955. He spent nearly two years in the Pacific, spending much of his time at sea reading history and literature from the Yorktown's library, including Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*, citing that as one of his inspirations for becoming a teacher. He returned to Missoula after a short stint as a clerk at the State Department, and pursued a master's degree in education.

He was recruited from Montana to teach in Moses Lake, where he taught language arts and history at Frontier Junior High, starting in 1960. A few years later, he met Patty Jo, his wife of 52 years, when she joined the Frontier Junior High teaching staff straight out of college in 1963. They were married a year later. This romance was quite the talk at a junior high!

Despite never having wrestled, he coached wrestling at Frontier for six years, four years as head coach. In 1970, he moved from Frontier to Moses Lake High School, where he taught English for the next 22 years until his retirement in 1992. During his tenure at the High School, he was a creative teacher, who pioneered many different courses such as "Psychological Literature", and he heard back over the years from many of his students about their memorable time in his class. He's remembered for his irreverence, his somewhat sarcastic sense of humor, and also for his patience with students having difficulty in class. He loved teaching. Curt taught English as a second language to Japanese agricultural trainees at Big Bend, and traveled to Japan in the late 1970s to visit his former students, returning to Japan for the first time since his service in the Navy.

Curt was an author and playwright, having written a number of novels and plays. He loved opera, theatre and classical music, going to New York twice during his teaching career on National Endowment for the Humanities scholarships to study literature and drama. He was one of the early proponents of Columbia Basin Allied Arts, and served as executive director there for a year while on a sabbatical from teaching.

Curt and Patty Jo moved out to Cascade Valley in 1971, building their home in the summers and after school. An unlikely artisan, Curt, along with Patty Jo and his young children, did all the work except for the framing up of the house. He was a loving husband and father, encouraging of exploration, fair with discipline and unlikely to freak out when something (or somebody) went

wrong. Sometimes exasperating, often a bit stubborn, he was also able to admit error and to apologize. He set high standards, and generally expected people to always do their best, whatever that might be. A life-long liberal and devout Catholic in the Jesuit tradition, Curt combined a sense of the importance of social justice with a deep spirituality. He was always happy to discuss politics and the issues of the day, spending many a Wednesday at Big Bend reading the New York Times Sunday edition and discussing politics with friends and colleagues.

In 2004, Curt was diagnosed with prostate cancer, receiving treatment at UCSF for nearly three months in early 2005 before returning home. Unfortunately, the cancer had already spread, and further treatments succeeded in slowing, but not stopping the progression of the disease. Until recently, he was still able to get around his home and take trips to town. While the cancer eventually spread so that over the last couple of months he was mostly confined to bed, Curt was able to stay home, fully alert and enjoying visits from friends and family. During his final weeks he said over and over how lucky he was for his family. Curt is survived by his brother Pat, his wife Patty Jo; five children, Christopher (Tracy), Stephen, Kathleen (Steve), Brandon (Wendy) and David (Julia); and eight grandchildren; Sarah, Maia, Margot, Cassidy, Patrick, Braydon, Farron, and Finnegan. He is (and will be) sorely missed.

Viewing will be from 10 a.m. to noon, Saturday, Aug. 20, 2016 at Kayser's Chapel and from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., Monday, Aug. 22nd at Our Lady of Fatima. Holy Rosary will be prayed at 10:30 a.m., Aug. 22nd followed by Mass of Christian Burial at 11:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Fatima. Interment will be in Guarding Angels Cemetery. Please sign the online guestbook at [www.kayserschapel.com](http://www.kayserschapel.com) Arrangements are in care of Kayser's Chapel & Crematory. Thank you to Assured Hospice, Dr. Smith, and Dr. Kubasumi.



# Cemetery Details

## Guarding Angels Cemetery

2595 Road L N.E.  
Moses Lake, WA 98837  
(509) 765-7848

# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG **20**. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

Kayser's Chapel of Memories  
831 S. Pioneer Way  
Moses Lake, WA

## Visitation

AUG **22**. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (PT)

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church  
200 N. Dale Road  
Moses Lake, WA

## Service

AUG **22**. 10:30 AM (PT)

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church (Holy Rosary)  
200 North Dale Road  
Moses Lake, WA

## Service

AUG **22**. 11:00 AM (PT)

Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church (Mass of Christian Burial)

200 N. Dale Rd

Moses Lake, WA

# Tribute Wall

KB

“ Like so many people have already said, Mr. Austin was one of my favorite teachers in high school. I had him for Honors English in 10th grade and then dropped calculus in 12th Grade to take a regular English class from him. In 10th Grade I surreptitiously wrote a poem about him which circulated for a year or two before I confessed to being its author and writing out a copy for him. I think he had suspected all along I was the author - Mr. Austin was nothing if not intelligent - and luckily he was amused by what I had written. And certainly I had written it ultimately out of my strong sense of admiration for him. My life is and has been more for what he introduced me to in terms of literature and writing, and will be less, knowing he's gone.



Kristi Bryant - September 17, 2016 at 04:49 PM

AG

“ Ande & Roger Glaese lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin



Ande & Roger Glaese - August 26, 2016 at 10:39 AM

AG

He was a true gentleman, The wonderful memories we have of him will endure.

Ande Glaese & Roger Glaese - August 26, 2016 at 10:51 AM

AH

“ *Annemarie Hermann lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin*



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**Annemarie Hermann** - August 25, 2016 at 08:45 PM



“ *Tanya Kanoff lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin*



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**Tanya Kanoff** - August 24, 2016 at 11:33 AM

SG

“ *Patty Jo & Family, Condolences, thoughts & prayers for all of you. Sally Goodwin*

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**sally Goodwin** - August 22, 2016 at 09:16 PM

DI

“ *Patty Jo,*

*So sorry for your family's loss.*

*Diana Corbisier*

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**Diana** - August 22, 2016 at 12:29 PM



Annette  
Uhlenkott

“ I was lucky to have Mr. Austin (as he'll always be to me) as my honors English teacher my sophomore year of High School in 1985/6. I particularly remember a project where we were each assigned a philosopher and had to discuss the concept of "beauty" in the perspective of the assigned philosopher. It was definitely challenging work for us, which was what Mr. Austin was all about: challenging us to think in new and creative ways. He truly loved teaching and learning, and he was an inspiration for me as a student. He prepared me well for college and beyond, and for that I am truly grateful. I also remember seeing him at Our Lady of Fatima church, and being a regular presence there with his family. He put his stamp of intellect and love of learning on Moses Lake, and the whole community was the better for it. I send my deepest condolences to his family. I am grateful to have benefitted from his wisdom.

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Annette Uhlenkott - August 21, 2016 at 01:15 AM

SM

“ Mr. Austin was one of my favorite teachers in High School. I learned so much about how to write from him and he introduced me to one of my favorite books, *A Separate Peace*. My favorite memory in his class came as I was reading that book. I found out what happens to one of the main characters and was pretty upset. I might have even cried but Mr. Austin took the time to talk to me about why an author might do that to a beloved character. That talk opened a world for me. I didn't know it then but that day is the day I truly became a lover of literature. I began to learn to think that day also. Thank you Mr. Austin! I look forward to seeing you again someday.  
Susan (Volke) McElmurry

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Susan McElmurry - August 20, 2016 at 11:09 PM

DD

“ The first time we ever met at was at Frontier Jr. High (Sept. 1960), where we both started our teaching careers. Our classrooms were across the hall from one another. Curt, in a loud piercing voice, would holler out, "Sidney Richard," and I would respond with a "Curtis J!" This greeting could be heard again, just several short months ago, at an art showing at the Moses Lake Museum & Art Center (MAC). Our friendship and mutual respect never waned and together, we shared many fun memories.

*I was the head wrestling coach and needed an assistant coach for 75 enthusiastic athletes. I loved the way he managed kids and they all had great respect for Curt. He was a natural. When I moved on to the high school, he stepped in as Head Coach, producing many talented state champions and state placers.*

*During the early years, Curt and 3 other Frontier teachers (all single) rented the home of the former Moses Lake School District Superintendent. Our Frontier staff and spouses had many fun and memorable parties there! Superintendent Smith was none the wiser!*

*Later, Curt moved to the high school, where our friendship continued. A handshake from him always made for a good day!*

*Patty Jo: You and "Curtis J" made a great team. Just look at your wonderful children and grandchildren. You have been a blessing to our community and to our profession.*

*With respect,*

*Dick Deane "Sidney Richard"*

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**Dick Deane** - August 20, 2016 at 07:40 PM

VA

“ I took several English classes from Mr Austin- he really taught me how to write a cohesive essay and to live Shakespeare. Rest in peace Yoda!

*Viki Waites Anderson MLHS '82*

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**viki Waites Anderson** - August 20, 2016 at 12:36 PM

D(

“ Diane (Riebli) lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin



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**Diane (Riebli)** - August 20, 2016 at 03:48 AM

DE

“ I was fortunate to have Mr. Austin as an English teacher at Frontier and at BBCC. He was interesting and always seemed to enjoy a lively discussion. While taking a night course at BBCC, my step-daughter went into labor and I skipped his class to be at the hospital. After a few hours, I decided to get a cup of coffee. Heading down the stairs I ran into Mrs. Austin (who was my Home Ec teacher at Frontier). I told her that I had skipped class to be there at my grandchild a birth. She said they were also having a grandchild that night but Mr. Austin had gone to class anyway. I said that Grandpas and grandmas were different! She just laughed. My prayers go out to the family. He is surely resting in some peaceful garden enjoying a great book.

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**Diana Ekstedt** - August 19, 2016 at 06:42 PM



Dani  
Bolyard

“ My memories of Mr. Austin involved pranks. As we walked into our first day of class (fall of '89), he informed us that we could pull any prank on him we desired, as long as it had never been done before. We spent that year planning, scheming and laughing as he spurred us on to greater and greater creativity amidst the learning. As a class ('92), we were honored to share our graduation with his retirement as well. He will always be remembered fondly! Prayers and comfort to the Austin family. 1 Thess 4:13-18

*Dani (Leighton) (MLHS '92) and Dan Bolyard (MLHS '90)*

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**Dani Bolyard** - August 19, 2016 at 05:30 PM



MH

“ My favorite teacher . He made me feel important. He was the best  
❤️

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**michele haddican** - August 19, 2016 at 05:26 PM



“ Mr Austin (yes he will always be Mr Austin) was the one teacher who made me love some classic authors. I will never forget walking into his class thinking omg who is this ! Plaid pants striped shirt and large flower tie. Oh yea the white belt and shoes but he did hold my attention to Macbeth and several other classics.hold onto you memories of a great man.My favorite memory after I was out of school is seeing him after he was.shopping in the store thought after some " punk" tried to car Jack his car and he was determined they wouldn't get it he told me the scars and bruises would heal but that kid will remember a old man fought him. Remember him with laughter and sadness your memories will get you through the months ahead

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**Donna Anderson** - August 19, 2016 at 04:24 PM

CZ

“ I will never forget the impact Mr. Austin had on me in school as a teacher and coach. I had the utmost respect and admiration for him. He was a great teacher and a great coach. I wish there were more people like him in this world. My prayers are with him and his family. God Bless all the Austins. Carlos(Charlie)Zamora

Carlos Zamora - August 19, 2016 at 03:01 PM

KV

“ I am so very sorry to hear of Curt's passing. Childhood memories of our fathers as wrestling coaches together in the early years and the potlucks and birthday parties our mothers orchestrated for us all--- Memories to treasure. With respect, Krista Deane Vela

Krista Vela - August 19, 2016 at 10:29 AM

PZ

“ Paula Zanter-Stout lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin



Paula Zanter-Stout - August 18, 2016 at 09:36 PM

Krista Jones

“ One of my most favorite teachers. You made me think beyond the surface of what I was reading. You made me love looking for what the author was really trying to say. My condolences to your family. May you rest in sweet peace and may we all come to know the story you really wanted us all to hear.

Krista Jones - August 18, 2016 at 08:08 PM

AK

“ Such a great teacher-understood us so well and had a great bs detector. We had our disagreements and we're lucky to have had a second chance. His multi-year investments in me reset my confidence and helped me stay college-bound. I'll never forget him.

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**aron knapp** - August 18, 2016 at 07:27 PM

JM

“ I am saddened to hear of Mr Austin's passing. My thoughts are with all of you. He was my 9th grade English teacher in 1983. I have many memories of his class, including discussing Billy Budd. I didn't love it the way he did, but I remember it.

- Joy Matthews

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**Joy Matthews** - August 18, 2016 at 07:25 PM

SR

“ Thank you Mr. Austin for your gift of teaching.....and patience! To the entire Austin family I wish you grace and peace during this very difficult time.

Steve Rimple and family

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**steve rimple** - August 18, 2016 at 04:41 PM

NP

“ Remembering Curt's laugh, his cutting edge wit, his love of music and the arts. He touched our lives over the past 40 years. He was such a good sport; he loved to tease people to everyone's delight. Deepest condolences to his family and all friends. May you be at peace in the Lord's hands, Curt.

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**Nancy & Dennis Parr** - August 18, 2016 at 04:02 PM

MM

“ My thought and prayers are with you, I had your father for a teacher and loved him!

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**melanie moody** - August 18, 2016 at 12:22 PM

RH

“ I know Christopher loved his Dad very much. I don't want him to be sad too long. I love Christopher and hope that will make him feel better. 💔 to ❤️  
Love,  
Romey, age 9



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**Romey Hart-Martyna** - August 18, 2016 at 11:31 AM

RH

“ Romey Hart-Martyna lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin



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**Romey Hart-Martyna** - August 18, 2016 at 11:25 AM

 Carrie Riebli

“ Carrie Riebli lit a candle in memory of Curtis Austin



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**Carrie Riebli** - August 18, 2016 at 12:42 AM

SZ

Jeff and I lift you all up in this difficult time.

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**Sharon Zornes** - August 18, 2016 at 09:24 AM

RH

“*Kate I am so sorry to hear of your loss. My prayers and condolences are for you and your entire family. I never had the privilege of meeting your father but from what I have learned in the last several weeks he must have been amazing.*

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**Rina Hanson** - August 17, 2016 at 09:49 PM

SS

“*As a former student of Mr. Austin, I am saddened to hear of his passing! He was my English teacher at Frontier Jr. high, in 1964. As his photo shows, he was always smiling, and had a great sense of humor. I also, remember his wife, teaching at Frontier, and have their wedding pic from the paper in my scrap book. Very happy that they had a long happy life together! RIP Mr. Austin! Condolences to your family!*



*Shryleen M. Abbott Stice*

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**Shryleen Abbott Stice** - August 17, 2016 at 03:05 PM