



Gerald Lee Jensen Sr.

May 23, 1926 - January 2, 2020

Gerald (“Coach”) was born in Dallas, Texas May 23, 1926 to Alfred Marinus Jensen and Anna Belle McLaughlin Jensen. He passed away January 2, 2020 in Dallas.

During his early elementary school years the family traveled with his father, Alfred, who operated heavy equipment for Vilbig Brothers during the era of road building across the state of Texas. He attended at least 10 different elementary schools. The family established a permanent home base in Dallas so the kids could have a consistent education when Gerald entered 7th grade at JL Long, and younger sister Esther attended Mount Auburn Elementary School in East Dallas.

Gerald attended Woodrow Wilson High School and graduated in 1944. At Woodrow he was a star 3-sport athlete lettering in football, basketball and baseball.

After high school graduation, he served in the US Army 36th Division during WWII, deployed to Europe. Post war end, he served in the Occupation Army with the 10th Combat Engineers, 3rd Division. During his deployment, he sent his pay home, which helped his parents purchase a house. Not being a smoker or drinker, he sold his alcohol and cigarette rations to fellow soldiers and used the proceeds to buy a camera and a typewriter. Photography became a lifelong hobby and he put the typewriter to good use, sending dozens of typewritten letters home during the war.

He returned to Dallas in 1946 and thanks to the GI Bill he became the first in his family to graduate from college. He attended SMU (1951 graduate), where he played baseball from 1947-1950. He walked on to the Freshman team in 1947. His mastery of abusing baseballs was immediately noticed. After scrimmaging against the varsity team and hitting home runs he was soon in the varsity lineup.

SMU baseball highlights:

1947 – 1950 Varsity letters all 4 years

1948 – 1950 Played every inning of every game Sophomore through end of Senior year

1950 became SMU's first All-American baseball player

1950 All Southwest Conference team

1950 Team Captain

After graduation George Schepps recruited Gerald to play for the Corpus Christi Aces from 1950 - 1953. He was a Gulf Coast League All-Star in 1951.

When a shoulder injury ended his baseball career early, he put his Physical Education degree to work as a coach at Reinhardt Elementary. He met Ann Peterman (the school nurse's daughter) on a blind date. When they married in 1954, nepotism rules forced him to leave the DISD, and he began a 31-year career with the Dallas YMCA. He started as an Associate Physical Education Director at the old Downtown Y, where he crossed paths with Jack Ruby and Lee Harvey Oswald and was interviewed by the FBI as part of the Warren Commission investigation. Beginning with its inception in 1968, he was very involved with the Y's Dallas Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot. During the Y years the family vacationed annually at the YMCA of the Rockies in Estes Park, Colorado, where they explored Rocky Mountain National Park. After the Downtown Y he served stints as director for the Southeast and White Rock Y branches before finishing his career back at the Downtown Y.

Following his 1986 retirement, he married his high school sweetheart, Ora Steward Webb, and they enjoyed 29 years of fun, travel and loving companionship until her death in 2015. Highlights of the retirement years include seasons of Senior Softball, travel to Major League Baseball stadiums, several YMCA of the Rockies vacations, and a European vacation where they retraced Gerald's WWII movements.

Many of those that have had the pleasure of knowing Gerald refer to him as "Coach." He has coached and coordinated many athletic activities throughout his life including baseball, football, soccer, volleyball, running, handball, and senior softball to name a few. He continued to swing a mighty bat throughout his life. In 2001, he received the MVP Award for the Men's 75+ Major Division in the Softball Players Association North American Championship.

The family wishes to thank the staffs of Walnut Place and Faith Presbyterian Hospice for

their compassionate care.

Gerald is survived by three children: Jerry Jensen, Jr. (Heidi), Gina Paschal (Scott), and Chris Jensen. Other family includes 8 grandchildren, numerous nephews and nieces, and Ora's adult children and their families.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to The YMCA of the Rockies, Estes Park Center, where Gerald's ashes will be interred, or the Rocky Mountain Conservancy.

YMCA of the Rockies: <https://donate.ymcarockies.org/>

Rocky Mountain Conservancy: <https://rmconservancy.org/join-or-give/donate/>

Funeral Service will be at 3pm on Saturday, January 11, 2020, at Restland Wildwood Chapel, 13005 Greenville Avenue, Dallas, Texas.

Cemetery

Restland Cemetery

13005 Greenville
Avenue
Dallas, TX, 75243

Events

JAN Service

03:00PM

11

The Wildwood Chapel at Restland Funeral Home
13005 Greenville Avenue at Restland Road, Dallas, TX, US,
75243

Comments



“ Chris Jensen is following this tribute.

Chris Jensen - January 15, 2020 at 09:22 AM



“ Jerry was a very special person and a dear friend! He was my first Boss that I had at the YMCA. I learned so much from Jerry and his teachings lead to my 38 year career with the Dallas YMCA. So sorry for your loss and I wish I had known so I could have attended his service. My prayers are with you all! Mike Hamilton

Mike Hamilton - January 11, 2020 at 06:19 PM



“ I remember him as a great man influencing my youth for years to come. I was one of his "Junior Leaders".

Larry Dolan - January 11, 2020 at 01:29 PM



“ To the Jenson family and all whom loved Gerry, we send our sympathy and join you in celebrating Gerry's life. His gentle spirit, positive outlook and active life all serve as an inspiration to us. We are touched by his active duty patriotism and athletic and professional successes. He is clearly someone who followed his passion throughout life and one can only imagine the impact he has made to all those he coached. We are so sorry to miss the funeral due to a flight cancellation. We will keep you all in our prayers.
Love, The Troup family (Gordon, Laurie, Kelsey, Kaitlin and Pete)

Laura Troup - January 10, 2020 at 03:16 PM



“ Dipti, Mark, Tim and Kim purchased the Basket Full of Wishes for the family of Gerald Lee Jensen Sr..



Dipti, Mark, Tim and Kim - January 07, 2020 at 01:08 PM