



Jerri Lei Frey

April 12, 1960 - April 27, 2020

Jerri Lei Steward Frey

Words cannot describe our loss. Words can begin to describe our joy.

Wife, mother, grandmother, sister, friend. Matriarch. These are words that start. The lessons that last call for more. From Jerri we learned and shared:

Be courageous. Over and over, Jerri brought the bravery. For example, as a young mother, she had dropped out of high school. Years later, with a supportive husband and two kids to wrangle, Jerri did what needed to be done to go back to school. She was not satisfied with finishing high school, and went on to obtain Associate's degrees from Ivy Tech in Computer Science and in Accounting. She was determined to set a good example for her daughters, who were inspired to go on themselves and become an accountant and a lawyer.

Follow the rules, except when the rules are inconvenient. When a surgical recovery had taken longer than expected and she had an extended hospital stay, Jerri sorely missed her dog. Jerri loved animals, and none more than the family dog at the time, a friendly, smart Bichon-Frisee named Marlee. The hospital, however, did not allow animals into patient rooms. One of Jerri's daughters, feeling that the dog also missed Jerri, agreed to a plan to circumvent the no-pets rule. At Jerri's request, the daughter smuggled the dog into the hospital in a duffle bag, taking Marlee right into Jerri's room, so that Jerri and the dog could visit! Luckily, none of the nurses found out and when the visit was over the dog was spirited back home with no issues.

Work hard. Until she became too ill to work, Jerri always worked. Her work included positions as a loan officer at the bank, as the postmaster relief for the Jonesville Post Office, and as a paralegal. Often she held multiple jobs at a time. Similar to her father and grandfather, Jerri had a talent for woodworking and she opened a shop, Leigh's Crafts, in the Vehslage Building in Seymour. Jerri served on the Jonesville Town Board. There,

among other things, she worked to ensure that the town of 180 people would have regular trash pick up, even though it was far from the city.

Be generous. During her life, Jerri experienced times of abundance and also times of serious lack. Whatever she had in talent or treasure, she tried to share generously. After she was too ill to work, her generous heart called her to start her own charity, Guardians of the Night. Guardians supports police department canine units by providing treats and toys for the dogs. Jerri secured donations of supplies for the police departments' dogs. She also arranged for police officers to bring the canine units to elementary schools for school demonstrations. Two of these events were at schools dear to our hearts: White Creek Lutheran – the very small rural school that educated Katea, Mika, and several of the grandchildren, and St. Peter's Lutheran – attended by both Mika Mosier and Agnes Ravega.

Trust your instincts. The family vacation home in Hilton Head came to be as a result of a hurricane and a hunch. Don and Jerri had been visiting South Carolina with friends and stayed at a place that had been severely damaged by storms at the time. Seeing letters of complaint written by other owners about the way the property manager handled clean up, and the still-damaged unit, Jerri spotted a bargain. She felt that the place would eventually be restored and much improved, and in the meantime, they could obtain it at a much reduced cost. She was right on both counts, and she and Don have made annual visits back since the 1980s.

Be welcoming. Growing up in the Frey household meant that friends needing a home always had a place to stay. Over the years, Jerri made sure we had space and a warm welcome for many family members, friends, and even a stranded foreign exchange student. Her unconventionality and “my house is your house” perspective meant people passing through were always warmly received. Hospitality was rooted in family tradition. It seems that Jerri's ancestors had, occasionally, been inadvertently hospitable to the train robbing Reno family. Evidence found in family farm buildings of that era at Peters' Switch indicated that members of the Reno gang from time to time sought refuge in these outbuildings while evading law enforcement (or local vigilantes).

Seek adventure. Somehow Jerri and her husband Don managed to cook up many escapades over the years despite the limitations of her health. They went to see Elton John in concert. They saw Hamilton. They traveled to Georgia to go to church with Jimmy Carter. They drove to California to visit when Jacob was born. They went to a Space-X launch at NASA in Florida, watching the rocket leave to deliver a supply pallet to the International Space Station and then land itself out in the water. They recently toured the

Biltmore and played golf at Table Rock. With their daughters, they visited Yankee Stadium where they saw fellow Hoosier Don Mattingly hit two home runs for the home team in a victory over the Twins. Their travels also included several Star Trek conventions. Closer to home, they went on long bike rides, camped, played tennis, hosted many epic card nights, and pranked the neighbors. She also went on trips with her daughter to St. Louis and Las Vegas, and traveled across the country to visit her new-born grandchildren in California and Arizona. Wanderlust runs in the family, and Jerri's love of road trips began as a child, on long family vacations west to Yosemite, Mt. Rushmore, and other places.

Accept the spotlight when the time is right. At events in recent years, Jerri attended in a wheelchair. At an Elton John concert, she was in the wheelchair section, and waved her arms when the spotlight shone where she was sitting. The artist saw her, and pointed at her from the stage, causing the whole section to erupt in cheers. Somehow, Jerri managed to have experiences like this nearly all of the time.

Appreciate nature. Jerri grew up on the family farm in Peter's Switch, between Jonesville and Seymour. The farm was obtained by her great-great grandfather Ruel Steward and either farmed or leased to a farmer ever since. Her favorite childhood memories were all outside. Riding a tractor with her dad. Picking a fresh tomato from the garden, salting it, and eating it while walking or playing in the fields. Fishing in the pond with her dad. Climbing trees. As an adult, she continued to find beauty and peace in the outdoors. A breeze rustling the trees, providing a home for a stray cat, enjoying a rain shower from the porch swing, watching the birds and the flowers and the seasons. She was electrocuted by lightning, twice, and still was willing to sit on the porch in the rain. Jerri loved all of it.

Family matters. Jerri is descended from about 10 Revolutionary War soldiers and is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution. After the war, many of them gave up on the early colonies and beat a path to Kentucky as pioneers. This strong propensity to reject the status quo is reflected throughout many members of our family. "If that doesn't work, we'll try something else" may be the unofficial family motto. Jerri is descended from people who started businesses, had severe cases of wanderlust, and lived as storytellers, craftsmen, clockmakers, farmers, and more. She did her best to create a stable life with her husband that her children and grandchildren could build on, and we all have and are and will.

Use your talents. We don't know what Jerri might have accomplished had she been blessed with health. She was so bright and quick. Jerri faced life with an attitude of "bring it!" and met challenges with grace and joy and lots of cussing. She played piccolo and flute as long as she was able, and was a valued member of the Columbus City Band. She

was an accomplished volleyball player who helped coach her daughter's grade school volleyball team. She swam competitively in high school, and later taught her husband, daughters and grandchildren to swim. She learned sign language to better communicate with hearing impaired friends and law office clients. She also had a talent for counting cards! She enjoyed euchre and other card games, and when it was her turn to deal, if she wanted to end the game quickly, Jerri could make sure her team received winning hands to speed things along.

Follow your heart. In many matters of life, Jerri had great sense and confidence. When Jerri met Don, she knew the shy but quick-witted attorney was for her. She began riding her bicycle through town one evening, hoping to run into him on his nightly rides on the country roads. One night on a hopeful ride, she was hit by a motorcycle, breaking her leg quite seriously and causing other injuries. She didn't see Don that night, and he didn't know she was looking for him. A friend told him he should go see her in the hospital, and that is how he learned of the injuries. Don picked around 50 or 70 lily of the valley from the yard, and took them to her in the hospital. This event has become the "first show of interest" from the shy attorney and it never would have happened if Jerri didn't trust her heart and seek out the man she knew was her future.

Have a sense of humor. "Dad remembers things whether they happened or not."

Jerri was born on April 12, 1960. She died April 27, 2020. Though she got in as much as she could with us, sixty years of life was not enough. Jerri is survived by her husband of 36 years, Donald M. Frey, and their two daughters, Katea Ravega and Mika Mosier. She is survived by seven grandchildren – Jacob Schluckbier, Alexander Schluckbier, Matthew Schluckbier, Wyatt Mosier, Gennah Mosier, Agnes Ravega, and Marilyn Ravega. She is also survived by her sister, Bobbie Muncy. In addition, there are many dear friends who are with us as family and miss her as if she were their own mother, grandmother or sister.

Jerri was preceded in death by her parents, Billy Steward and Barbara Bogard, as well as two of her sisters, Weslynn Davis and Sandra Trimnell, and a daughter, Jenna Mary Agnes Frey.

Jerri met death in a courageous way, sadly accepting that it would be so soon, but also grateful for her amazing life and for an end to so much physical pain. She said goodbye to all of us, telling us she knew it was soon, though perhaps sooner than even she thought. Right to the end, she tried to prepare us for losing her and it's one more way she demonstrated her bravery, generosity, and love. Navigating this during the coronavirus

pandemic made it all that much harder and even though she was not ill because of the virus, fear of inadvertently exposing her to it robbed us of crucial time together this past month and affected the types and timing of some of her care. Nevertheless, we endeavor to be at peace with her passing. She is.

A private family graveside service will be held at St. Paul Lutheran Cemetery in Jonesville, Indiana. Memorials may be left in Jerri's memory to Project Paws Alive at www.projectpawsalive.org or to the St. Paul's Lutheran Church Education Fund at Burkholder Chapel of Thorne-George Family Funeral Homes, 419 N. Chestnut Street, Seymour, Indiana 47274. Please share memories and condolences at www.burkholderfuneralchapel.com.

Cemetery

St. Paul Lutheran Cemetery

Jonesville, IN, 47247

Comments



“ Joan Quillen lit a candle in memory of Jerri Lei Frey



Joan Quillen - May 26 at 02:22 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Jerri Lei Frey.



May 03 at 04:06 PM



“ I met Don and Jerri at Indivisible. She was principled, knowledgeable, and fired up about injustice and the degradation of our country's values and traditions. We would discuss an issue one week, and the next time she knew all there was to know about it. We took a road trip to downtown Indy to meet with our rep's staff, and she didn't let the wheelchair stop her. We wheeled her down the city streets and right through security and up the elevators to fight for healthcare rights for everyone. She was a real warrior and champion of the people. Thank you for sharing her with us.

Liz Patton - May 02 at 10:22 AM



“ I meet me momma Nana a few years ago even though we were not blood related she treated me like her daughter I will always remember momma and when she would call baby girl that was what momma called me I miss momma every day tears falling down my face R.I.P until we meet again .I thank God for blessing me with one of the most loving Angel there could be ."I Love you Momma Nana"

Lynette Wilson - May 10 at 02:26 PM