



Jerry R. Birkey

March 15, 1950 - July 2, 2021

Jerry R. Birkey, 71, of Bourbonnais, formerly of Mt. Zion, IL, passed away on July 2, 2021, at Riverside Medical Center in Kankakee. Jerry was born on March 15, 1950, in Peoria; the son of Elmer and Mary Lou (Ritthaler) Birkey. Jerry married Sherry McKelvey on January 12, 1980, at Zion United Methodist Church in Pekin.

Jerry was a devout Christian that loved his fellow man and God; he served in various positions at different churches over the years. He worked as the principal of Morrisonville High School for 5 years and then served as an administrator for Mt. Zion Junior High School for 21 years. He had a passion for mentoring his students and took over 2,000 students to Disney over his career: earning himself the nickname Mr. Disney from his students. During his career as an educator Jerry was very involved with the IESA for 17 years where he served on the board and was a former president. After retiring Jerry was elected to the Mt. Zion School Board. He was an avid Cubs fan, Notre Dame Football Fan, and longstanding proud fan of Olivet Nazarene University men's basketball. Jerry enjoyed traveling, but most of all loved his family and lived to spoil his grandchildren.

Jerry is survived by his loving wife of 41 years Sherry, his children: Stephanie (Lee) Reffey of Irving, TX, Zachary (Briley) Birkey of Monee, IL, and Nick (Ashley) Birkey of Bourbonnais, IL, 5 grandchildren: Parker, Creighton,

Maddon, Layla, and Scotlyn Birkey, his mother Mary Lou Birkey of Morton, IL, a brother Terry Birkey of Deer Creek, IL, as well as numerous nieces, nephews, cousins and a beloved uncle and aunt Bob and Dar Schimmelpfennig.

Jerry was preceded in death by his father Elmer Birkey.

Visitation for Jerry will be held on Tuesday, July 6, 2021, from 4-7 pm at River Valley Christian Fellowship 800 N 2000 E Rd. Bourbonnais IL, 60914.

A funeral service will take place on Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at 11 am at River Valley Christian Fellowship.

Jerry will be laid to rest at Groveland Evangelical Mennonite Cemetery in Groveland, IL on Wednesday, July 7, 2021 at 3 pm.

Those who wish may leave memorials in Jerry's name to Samaritan's Purse or to the Alzheimer's Association.

Cemetery Details

Groveland Evangelical Mennonite Cemetery

Queenwood Rd
Groveland , IL

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 6. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

River Valley Christian Fellowship
800 Cardinal Dr.
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
(815) 933-7353
<http://myrvcf.org>

Funeral Service

JUL 7. 11:00 AM (CT)

River Valley Christian Fellowship
800 Cardinal Dr.
Bourbonnais, IL 60914
(815) 933-7353
<http://myrvcf.org>

Tribute Wall

WW

“ Dear Sherry and family. You all are already in my prayers. I can't tell you how sad I am at Jerry's passing. I met Jerry at our Freshman year at Olivet and we became very good friends. We had a lot of good times and lots of laughs together. Could not of had a better friend. He came to see me off to Japan for the U.S. Air Force in 1970. you could not ask for a better person than Jerry. I have read all the memories of Jerry and all are spot on about him. With Love to you all Bill Walters

william J Walters - July 08, 2021 at 08:14 PM



“ We had the pleasure of being neighbors with Jerry and his sweet family. My brother and I were very lucky to have him as our middle school principal. My mother and father considered him and his wife friends. I wanted to share a sweet memory I had of him and the boys giving me a ride to school one day. The song Sherry from Frankie Valley and the Four Seasons came on. Jerry, Zach and Nick, started singing it. It was so sweet.

Our love to his family,
Kristin And Darin Doty
Doug and Joanna Nolen
And Tim and Donna Nolen

Kristin Doty - July 07, 2021 at 11:01 AM

KM

“ Mr. Birkey was my 3 children's principal at Mt. Zion Jr. High. He was a very kind man. Always had time to talk to the parents as well as the students. A wonderful, Christian man. My condolences to his family. He was loved and admired.

Karen Mayberry - July 07, 2021 at 07:34 AM

AR

“ We are so sorry to hear of the passing of your dad, Nick. He was a staple in the gym of the Tiger Basketball games. Although we didn't know him personally, we recognized that he always enjoyed being there. We will be praying for you guys. Losing a dad is so hard.

Adam and Marci Reynolds - July 07, 2021 at 02:21 AM

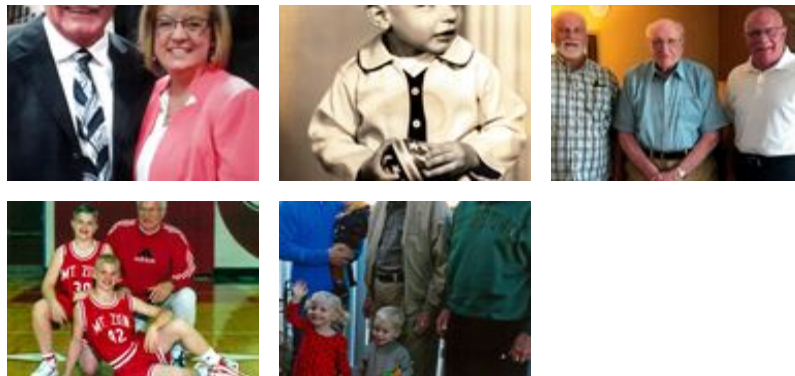
DS

“ My family lived in Morrisonville during Jerry's tenure as principal. He was an excellent administrator whose voice could be heard throughout the building. My children Monica and Todd remember him well. He liked the tape of the national anthem that my husband Eric gave him and used it often. Monica student taught at Mt. Zion High while Jerry was there. I now live in Manteno because my daughter and family are here. You will be in my thoughts and prayers. May your memories comfort you.--Deberah Smith

Deberah Smith - July 06, 2021 at 09:18 PM



“ 95 files added to the album Life Tributes



Clancy-Gernon Funeral Homes - July 06, 2021 at 12:22 PM

MN

“ Dear Sherry and family:
I was so sad when Stacy called to tell me of Jerry's passing. You are in my thoughts and prayers. I am so sorry for your loss.
Mary Norton

Mary E Norton - July 06, 2021 at 10:37 AM

BM

“ What a life! He was always a mobile party and brought energy and fun to every situation. He was a bright light in my life during our shared time as Mohawks. Sherry and family, you're all in my heart today, he loved you so much. One of my all time favorite people.

Bob Montgomery - July 06, 2021 at 10:34 AM



I agree! I treasure having been both a student of Mr. Birkey's and a colleague. Very good memories. Hi, Bob. It's Monica (Smith). 😊

Brad Monica Wilhelm - July 06, 2021 at 12:59 PM

DL

“ He was the absolute BEST principle. Even when I made stupid decisions to get expelled and I saw him around my old neighborhood. He let me know people make mistakes. Thanks to his encouragement I am a high school graduate with 2 jobs. May he forever rest in paradise. And prays to the family!



Devin L - July 06, 2021 at 03:12 AM

JU

“ Jerry was always supportive, had a great heart and a great sense of humor. Judy and my prayers of comfort are with you all. Joe Sidwell

JudyJoe - July 05, 2021 at 10:32 PM

CC

“ Sending heartfelt sympathy to the Birkey family . We enjoyed the Birkey family while they lived in the Mt. Zion area. Jerry was well respected in our area. He will be missed greatly.

Cathy Carter. Mt Zion il

cathy carter - July 05, 2021 at 09:13 PM

DO

“ Sherry and family. So sad to hear of Jerry’s passing. Prayers for your family, that you find comfort in the fabulous life he lived and the many lives he touched. He will be missed.

Dave and Cindy Overlot - July 05, 2021 at 08:27 PM

SA

“ I got to work with Jerry at Dennis. He was such a kind person. He walked his faith each day in the way he spoke and worked with both staff and students. I am so sorry to hear of his passing and am praying for all of his family.

Sarah - July 05, 2021 at 08:03 PM

TB

“ So sorry to hear of Mr Birkey’s passing, he was a wonderful principal, treated all the kids equally and made Jr High enjoyable foe all the kids! Prayers to his family & friends!

tonya butler - July 05, 2021 at 08:02 PM

BR

“ *Mr. Birkey was the principal at Mt. Zion Jr. high for as long as I could remember. He hired me while I was in high school to be the receptionist 1/2 days for 2 years. He would always make sure I was doing well and really cared for every person that walked into the office. He always made me laugh and would make me change the wallpaper on his computer. A few times I would surprise him by changing it to a seasonal Disney wallpaper and he loved it! After graduating I moved to Florida and while he was vacationing with Sherri we met up for ice cream and enjoyed catching up. He was always on the go & I know he will be helping to continue guiding us all in life. Heaven sure gained an angel. He will be missed.*



Bradi - July 05, 2021 at 04:10 PM

HM

“ *We are so sorry to hear of Jerry's passing. Our prayers are with Sherry and family.
Bill and Linda McCormick, &
Holly (McCormick) Martinez*

Holly Martinez - July 05, 2021 at 04:01 PM

MW

“ *So sorry to hear of Jerry's passing. Sherry and Jerry were a wonderful witness of a Christian couple. Praying our Lord keeps you in His loving and comforting arms.*

Malinda Wightman - July 05, 2021 at 03:57 PM

TS

“ So sorry to hear this...Mr. Birkey was my principal all 4 years...i think his first year at MHS was my freshman year...a lot of fond memories of him. My grandpa, Smitty thought a lot of him & i know they had many conversations while he was on the school board & at basketball games. Thoughts with everyone. Trisha Smith class of '93 MHS

Trish Smith - July 05, 2021 at 01:11 PM

SH

“ I was a fellow educator in the Peoria Area. Jerry was from Morton and that was where I lived when we met back in the early 90's. We became acquainted through the Gus Macker basketball summer circuit when my son played against Zach. Jerry used to coach with a towel around his neck and was probably at Morrisonville at the time. What was impressive was the attitude and way Jerry approached his coaching that caught my attention. He was an outstanding model of what youth coaching should have been like. My co-coach at the time was Roger Phegley, the former Bradley and NBA great. We both extend our sympathies and acknowledge that Jerry is now where there is no more sickness and suffering. A life well lived. Steve Hutton Morton, IL.

Steve Hutton - July 05, 2021 at 01:08 PM

DS

“ I was 14 when Jerry was born, he was first grandchild! Marylou would let me rock him while she hung up wash outside! I pretended Jerry was my doll!

My freshman year in homec I made Jerry and I PJs and Marylou, Aunt Ginny, and Grandma brought Jerry to school so we could model our outfits!

He was our ring eater 63 years ago!

Early years in our marriage Bob worked 3rd shift and I was fearful of being alone in Morton, so Elmer would bring Jerry and his teddy bear over to spend the night!

Uncle Bob and Jerry spent endless hours playing catch in our back yard, then he was THRILLED when Bob gave Jerry the job of carrying the Ball/Bat bag to the ballfield!

In 1963, Jerry and Terry lived with us for 3 weeks because of a family accident! We all got along very well!!

Bob and I were always supportive of Jerry's endeavors!!

He and I had some of the same traits (habits)

Always ready to GO!, if just around the block!!!!

We were both night owls!!

And, WE like Drama!!!

Jerry, we loved you like our own, and now there is a big hole! Thank you for sharing your life and beautiful family (who you were sooo proud of) with us! Will always cherish the years you and Sherry lived in Morton and we shared our meals so many times!

Now that I'm writing this, memories after memories are coming to mind! Our lives intertwined for 71 years!! We know you are safe in the arms of Jesus! Thank you Jesus and Thank you, Jerry Birkey!!!

Dar Schimmelpfennig - July 05, 2021 at 11:16 AM

DB

My sympathy to Sherry, Stephanie, Zach and Nick. I am praying and thinking of you! Sorry for your loss! He will be greatly missed!! My sympathy to Mary Lou Birkey and to Terry Birkey.

David Bellmore - July 06, 2021 at 10:47 AM

RP

Our prayers and sympathy to the Birkey family. He was a great colleague and mentor. He will be missed by so many who were fortunate to have his acquaintance.

Russ abd Pat Peterson - July 06, 2021 at 06:41 PM