



Gerald "Jerry" Bruce Seed

January 4, 1933 - January 15, 2021

Gerald Bruce Seed, known to everyone as "Jerry", beloved father, grandfather, uncle and friend, passed away this past week in Bend due to complications from a recent stroke.

Jerry was born in a sharecropper farm house in rural Hayes County, Nebraska, the 4th of 5 boys to Walter and Miranda Seed. Growing up during the great depression in the dust bowl area of Southwestern Nebraska meant a lot of hard work, something that Jerry would never shy away from for the rest of his life. Regarding his childhood Jerry would often remark, "We were too broke to know it and too dumb to care". Farm life helped Jerry develop a quick wit and love of jokes from an early age.

At age 10, the family relocated to Missouri, then soon made a journey to St. Paul, Oregon, back to Missouri, and then finally settled in Silverton, Oregon where Jerry graduated from high school at age 16. It was at this age that Jerry owned his first business, buying the lease on the local Flying A service station. He would later hold jobs driving log trucks, building part of Oregon Highway 22 near Sublimity, and then being drafted into the U.S. Army.

Jerry served as a mess sergeant in the 1st Cavalry Division at Fort Lewis, Washington during the Korean Conflict. It was here that he honed his skill of cooking for large numbers of people in any situation, something he would do

when he went out fishing, hunting and for many family reunions later in life.

After his service, Jerry returned to Silverton to help care for his ailing father. He was working in a Salem department store selling shoes when he met his wife of over 55 years, Marilyn. The two were married in 1956 and relocated to Springfield where Jerry worked for Alexander's Department Store. Jerry would later rise to manage stores for Alexander's in Newport and Florence, Oregon.

In 1963, Jerry was recruited by the Northern Commercial Company and moved to Fairbanks, Alaska as a buyer for women's and children's clothing. It was there that Jerry and Marilyn welcomed their first child, James Walter, who tragically only lived for two days.

Jerry was soon relocated to Anchorage where he continued as the head buyer for Northern Commercial (NC), buying everything for the women's department except shoes. It was on March 27, 1964, just after Jerry had restocked the cosmetic counter, that the 9.0 Great Alaska Earthquake occurred. One of the few management level employees left with the store, Jerry made sure everyone was safe and then, answering a desperate call for any light source for the local hospital, walked 8 blocks by himself through rubble and in the dark to deliver all of the flashlights and lanterns he could carry. The next day he rallied the employees to transfer needed goods to a nearby vacant building and reopened the NC Department Store for business. This effort would change the minds of NC management, who had decided to close the Anchorage department store, and would later rebuild. The building is now the Anchorage Nordstrom.

Jerry left NC in 1966 and became Vice President of Nerland's Furniture. It was this 10-year period with the largest furniture and decorating company in the state that Jerry learned the furniture and mattress trade.

While in Anchorage, Jerry and Marilyn adopted three children, son Brian in 1966 and twin daughters Jodi and Jolene in 1968.

Wanting to own his own business and return to Oregon, Jerry and Marilyn purchased Ostrander's Country Furniture in Bend and relocated their family from Anchorage in 1976. Jerry would soon change the name of the business to Jerry's Home Furnishings and eventually open stores under this name in Madras and Sunnyside, Washington. Returning to his department store roots, he opened Kid's Stuff, a children's clothing store, inside the furniture store which continued into the early 1980s. Jerry would also open Central Oregon Liquidators in Prineville and co-own Wall Street Interiors in Bend.

A member of the Downtowner's, Jerry could often be seen putting up holiday decorations on the light posts in Downtown Bend and participating in "Zany Days", a fun retail festival held downtown every year.

Jerry was never one to pass up an opportunity and, in 1987, he bought an old machine that sewed mattresses together and opened The Mattress Factory. The rest, as they say, is local retail history. The Mattress Factory soon outgrew every location until settling on Highway 20 East of Pilot Butte. For over 20 years, The Mattress Factory was a fixture of the east Bend retail district. The largest mattress store in town and the only manufacturer in the region, The Mattress Factory soon became a household name, especially when Jerry's mother appeared on local television saying to everyone that she inspired him to start the store by telling him to "make his bed". "Can we make your bed today?" became the store's catchphrase.

Jerry could often be seen in his Mattress Factory shirt, Costco jeans and sneakers nearly every day - no matter what the occasion. From delivering

mattresses while listening to country music, at his desk at the store, or helping a customer, Jerry was never shy about sharing his latest joke - with his characteristic Nebraska farm boy charm. Spending a day in a truck driving between his stores in Bend and Moxee, Washington would be one of the high points of his week.

Jerry loved Bend and was always ready to help those in need. He served as President of Central Oregon Hospice in the organization's early years and would provide a hospital bed free of charge for patients so they could remain in their homes. He enjoyed driving local veterans to Portland for medical care in the VA van monthly and over his lifetime gave gallons of blood through the local Red Cross. In his later years he enjoyed judging local Boy Scout cooking competitions. Jerry was always there to help if local residents were displaced to make sure they had a bed to sleep in. Even though he was very much engaged in helping the community, Jerry never sought recognition for any of his community support.

Jerry was also devoted to his family, always ready to help when needed even if it was just by being present. His many nieces and nephews, and even more friends, will remember his kindness and fun-loving nature which was always no more than a phone call away.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents, his four brothers, his wife Marilyn and their son James Walter. He is survived by his son Brian and daughter Jodi, both of Bend, daughter Jolene of Wilson, Wyoming, grandchildren Jerri, Miranda, Riley, Sean-Michael, James and Mark, two great-grandchildren, and many nieces and nephews.

A memorial viewing will be held at Niswonger-Reynolds Chapel in Bend on Friday, January 22, 2021 from 1 until 5 PM. A formal memorial service will be held at a later date.

Memorial contributions in Jerry's name may be made to Partner's in Care - Bend, 2075 NE Wyatt Court, Bend, Oregon 97701, Crater Lake Council of Boy Scouts of America, 61383 S. Highway 97 Ste. F, Bend, Oregon 97702 and/or donate a pint of blood to your local Red Cross.

Tribute Wall

PI

“ Brian, Jodi, Jolene and families, my family has so many special memories of both Marilyn and Jerry and I know my parents greatly valued their friendship with them. Both of your parents were very special and amazing people. Our condolences- Moritz/Iannacchione families

Pennie Iannacchione - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

EF

“ Gerald "Jerry" Bruce Seed

EF - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

EF

“ Uncle Jerry was the most kind, generous and giving man. He exemplified the saying "he would give you the shirt off his back if you needed one or asked for one!" Living in a different state, whenever I returned to Oregon, he and Marilyn or one of my cousins would always make the long trip over to Salem to see me, even though he was very busy, had a thousand other things to do, and was running a business. I was always in awe of Uncle Jerry's business savvy and foresight. He had an amazing ability to see potential in business opportunities and to identify value. He never stopped thinking of business possibilities or ways to help people, always thinking and always working hard. We had so much fun, as young children, running through the store, sitting on couches, or picking out the unique and fun clothing at Kid's Stuff. We were and still are so proud of him! They do not make people like my Uncle Jerry any more. We love you so much and will miss you. Rest in peace and try not to work too much in heaven!

EF - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

CB

“ We were saddened to hear of the passing of Jerry Seed. I posted a memory but don't know if it went through or not so am resending. We didn't know Jerry "personally" but met him in 1996 after losing our home in the Skeleton Fire in Bend. After rebuilding we went to The Mattress Factory to replace beds and furniture. Jerry greeted us and asked how he could help. When we told him we needed "everything" he asked if we had lost our home in the fire. He offered us whatever we needed at cost. Yes, that helped financially but his kindness was worth a million. The world needs more humans like Jerry Seed We are grateful that our paths crossed. From our family to his we send peace to your hearts as you remember his life and legacy. Sincerely, Candace & Tom Brey

Candace Brey - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

CB

“ Gerald "Jerry" Bruce Seed

Candace Brey - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

CB

“ Our family is saddened to hear of the passing of Jerry Seed. We didn't know him "personally" but have a story. In 1996 we lost our home in a wildfire in Bend. When we rebuilt and had to get beds and furniture we went to The Mattress Factory. When we arrived we were greeted by Jerry who wanted to know how to help. We told him we needed 3 beds and all the bedroom furniture. He immediately asked if we had lost our home in the fire and offered to sell us anything we needed "at cost". Yes, that helped monetarily but it touched our hearts to be treated with such kindness at such a difficult time. Jerry was a truly caring and kind person and the world needs more like him. To his family we send our prayers for your peace as you remember his life and legacy. Sincerely, Candace & Tom Brey

Candace Brey - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

JF

“ Dear Jodi, Jolene, Brian we are thinking of you as you go through this sad time. It is hard to lose someone we love so much. What a wonderful obituary that tells so much of his interesting and active life and how much he did to help others. Our family has such wonderful memories of his generosity and care for his family and all the fun we have had together over the years. He lived his life well! And he loved you all very, very much. We will miss him and his jokes that we usually cringed at! We love you and all his family--grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and in-laws. We wish we could be there in person but know that we will celebrate his life together when things are safer and we can be together. You are in our prayers. Love, Joyce and Gary

Joyce Frame - January 22, 2021 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ I worked with Jerry starting when he had the furniture store in downtown. I created TV advertising for him for many years, including at the Mattress Factory on Hwy 20. What a nice man. He was always smiling and told great jokes. I was always impressed by how business smart he was. He had a used store upstairs in Jerry's Home Furnishings, and explained to me one time, how there was a lot of money to be made selling used stuff. And he really made good mattresses, I still sleep on one he made like 10 years ago, and it's still in great shape. We will miss you Jerry. Bless you. Dave Stalker Bend, OR 541-350-0619

Dave Stalker - January 21, 2021 at 12:00 AM