



Jesse Eugene Pulley

May 10, 1943 - January 13, 2023

Gene (Jesse) Pulley of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, surrounded by his loving family, passed away Friday, January 13, 2023 at Southeast Hospital at the age of 79. Born to Georgia Pulley on May 10, 1943, he grew up in McClure, Illinois. He spent his childhood days hanging out with cousins and friends and attended Shawnee High School in Wolflake, IL. While a student at Shawnee, he enjoyed playing the tuba in the band, and continued playing as part of the Golden Eagles marching band while attending Southeast Missouri State University. He studied education and met his future wife, Judy, at the university.

Gene and Judy married on Christmas Eve in 1966 at First Baptist Church in Cape Girardeau and celebrated their 56th anniversary at the end of 2022. They spent the early years of their marriage caring for and riding horses.

Upon graduation from SEMO, he taught in Farmington for one year before returning to Shawnee High School for the remainder of his career. He went back to SEMO and received his Master's Degree in Counseling. At Shawnee he taught history, government, economics, sociology, and psychology. He served as guidance counselor in the last few years of his career until his retirement in 2004 after 38 years of dedication and service to Shawnee High School. He often told stories of students and teachers, and was proud of his work at the school during his tenure. It was rare that he could go anywhere

without seeing a former student. Upon his retirement, he spent time caring for his father-in-law.

Gene was a loving father to two children, son Jeff, and daughter Kim. He was always willing to take the kids to the pool or the waterslide in the summer, and they had countless fun times together with family and friends. He welcomed John Spear into the family with open arms as a son-in-law. One of his happiest days was welcoming grandson Max into the world. Gene and Max have been best buddies ever since. He also shared his life with beloved dogs and cats through the years.

Always a teacher, he volunteered his time as a coach for youth baseball and flag football coaching son Jeff. He found his passion in life after signing his son up for a new soccer league that had started in town in the early 1980s. The league was looking for volunteers and he stepped up as a coach, groundskeeper, referee, or any other role that was needed. When his daughter was old enough to play, he continued his role as coach. He was part of a group of wonderful volunteers who formed CAYSA (Cape Area Youth Soccer Association) that provided an opportunity for all kids to play soccer in Cape Girardeau for over 30 years.

Throughout these years, he served CAYSA in many ways on the board, but his defining role was that of Referee Coordinator. He became a certified referee instructor and district administrator through the United States Soccer Federation. He taught hundreds of kids and adults the laws of the game and the importance of appearance and common sense while on the field. He understood that the point of youth sports was for kids to have fun and to want to come back and play again the next season. He enjoyed watching referees improve their skills, and met so many incredible people in this role, with several still involved in soccer today. Gene was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award from Cape Parks and Recreation in 2015 for his

dedication to youth sports.

Soccer basically became the family business with Judy serving the role of ultimate soccer mom, doing whatever needed to be done to help. Both of his children followed his footsteps into volunteering with CAYSA and into refereeing. Kim as a referee and CAYSA board member. When Gene retired from refereeing, Kim carried on his legacy as referee coordinator. She now continues as a coach and referee. Jeff became a certified referee in his teen years, and continues today officiating at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels. Gene enjoyed watching Jeff referee at the highest level of high school competition and collegiate games and when unable to attend in person, he would tune in to watch online-always cheering for his son and dissecting the calls made on the field. He loved watching Max's soccer practices and cheering for him and his teammates in games, and at times was able to see Jeff referee, Kim and John coach, and Max play all in one game.

In addition to soccer, he enjoyed numerous other activities. Gene and Judy loved attending concerts together and spent many nights together at Riverport Amphitheater, The Fox, and other venues enjoying live music. In the early 1980s he attended many St. Louis Steamers games at the St. Louis Arena. He was a St. Louis Cardinals fan and enjoyed attending games with his family. He played slow-pitch softball for many years, for both city and church teams. His favorite position was pitcher, another role that his son continued. One of the last games that he played before hanging up his glove for good, he got to share the field with both of his kids. He and Judy were active members of the Velo Girardeau bicycle club and enjoyed riding as a family with club members. Some memorable rides he completed were the Bike Across the Bootheel, Moonlight Ramble, and the Hilly Hundred. In addition to riding, the club was integral in the establishment of the LaCroix trail, and he was involved in this effort.

A family tradition began after the blizzard in 1979, and he looked forward to it every year. Inspired by a book that Judy would read to the kids, "The Summer Snowman", they started building a snowman on the Fourth of July each year with snow saved from the winter. Various neighbors, friends, and family have participated in this tradition throughout the years, and these days it typically ends with a family snowball fight.

In recent years, Parkinson's Disease had affected his mobility, but he was able to meet new friends and get some exercise through the Parkinson's boxing and exercise program.

May Gene be remembered as loving husband, dad, and grandfather, a life-long teacher and volunteer, and a friend.

Loving survivors include wife Judy Pulley, son Jeff Pulley (Nikki Goodwin-Caldwell), daughter Kim (John) Spear, grandson Max Spear, cousins Jessie (Kenny) Raines and their son Brad (Laura) Goodman, cousin Frances (Gene) Myers and their children, Lizzy Stone (Kenny, Audrey, and JD) and Jimmy Myers. He also leaves behind many other cousins and their families.

Visitation will be at First Baptist Church in Cape Girardeau on Saturday, January 21st from 10-2. The funeral will be at 2:00 at the church with Pastor Wesley Tew officiating, and burial will follow the service.

In lieu of flowers, the family is asking for donations to the Gene Pulley Memorial Fund at First Missouri State Bank, 2 S Mt. Auburn Rd., Cape Girardeau MO 63703. The fund will benefit youth soccer referees and other things local soccer-related.

Online condolences may be made at www.fordandsonsfuneralhome.com.

Ford & Sons Funeral Home - Mt. Auburn is in charge of arrangements.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 21. 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church
1289 Lexington
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Funeral

JAN 21. 2:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church
1289 Lexington
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701

Tribute Wall

CH

“ *I'm proud to call him my cousin. Loved you Butch*

carrie hurley - January 21, 2023 at 11:27 AM

LD

“ *We met Gene and Judy at the Parkinson's exercise classes this summer. We send our deepest condolences to Judy and all the family.*

Lindell and Ruth Dunivan

Lindell and Ruth Dunivan - January 19, 2023 at 11:08 PM

DK

“ *So sorry for your loss. May your sweet memories comfort you and May the Lord give you peace.*

Donna Komorech - January 18, 2023 at 02:29 AM

SA

“ *Gene & Judy loved to bring Max to the Cape Girardeau Public Library. All of the youth services librarians have warm memories of this family in our programs and storytimes. Thinking of you all and sending our condolences.*

Sharon Anderson - January 17, 2023 at 06:53 PM

SK

“ I'm so very sorry for your loss. Mr. Pulley was a great teacher and friend to all his students, always there for anyone who needed him. He will be greatly missed by all. Prayers for peace and comfort for each of you

Sonnie (Randol) Keller

Sandra L Keller - January 17, 2023 at 04:14 PM

SU

“ Gene was a great guy who contributed so much to this community. He was a wonderful mentor for many young men and women, including all three of our sons, as they learned to be soccer officials. He was so good at working with all of the youth involved in the soccer program. Our condolences to Jeff and the rest of the family. Gene will be missed.

Steve Unterreiner.

Steve Unterreiner - January 17, 2023 at 04:07 PM

CC

“ Jeff and family...so sorry to hear of your dad's passing. You all are in my thoughts and prayers.

Carolyn Clary

Carolyn Clary - January 17, 2023 at 01:06 PM

DB

“ I remember Mr. Pulley he was a good teacher and friend. He was a good person. I'm sorry to the family

Deanna Baine - January 17, 2023 at 01:57 AM