



Gerald W. Bridgewater

December 11, 1935 - August 5, 2018

Jerry Bridgewater was born in Wainwright, Oklahoma, on December 11, 1935. Number eight out of ten children, Jerry was a long time shy of his 18th birthday when his mom accompanied him to the Air Force recruiter in Miami to enlist. (He claims she whistled all the way -- although that is extremely doubtful.) She signed the paperwork, and it wasn't long before this very young Oklahoma boy with a beautiful singing voice found himself trained at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, and on his way to Korea. Even though it was near the end of the war, tensions were high; and Americans were targets. One of many soldiers geared up to cross from Japan's Itazuke Air Force base into Korea, Jerry and a few others were pulled back to continue serving in Japan. He worked in the motor pool dispatching heavy equipment, chauffeured high-ranking officials, and sang at the Officer's Club.

God spared him from going into hand-to-hand combat, but traumatic events occurred even in Japan; and wearing a side-arm was mandatory. To the end, things still haunted his dreams and triggered nightmares, especially the worst assignment that he had: body-bag detail when a pilot and wingman missed the runway and flew their planes nose-first into a mountain. That's something that couldn't be forgotten.

However, he was blessed. He came home with "only" a severely ulcerated stomach -- but he came home.

Once out of the Air Force, Jerry wandered -- never settling for long in one place. He'd do carpentry and masonry in Oklahoma and then decide to work his way to California where some of his brothers and sisters had relocated. There he'd do whatever he needed to do to keep body and soul together -- even sometimes living in orange groves.

He played the country/western "B" music circuit from Northeast Oklahoma to Wyoming and back. A couple of times Jerry found himself on stage in California with Bobby Bear. He even turned down a record contract with Green Apple Records (the company that represented the Beatles in the U.S.). With the drug and alcohol problems in the music industry, that was God watching after him once again.

After earning a Class A radio license from Elkins Radio Institute in Dallas, Texas, he often worked in radio when he was in Oklahoma using both his own name and the name Jerry Western. He worked at KITO in Vinita, WMBH in Joplin, and was a DJ and sports producer for KGLC in Miami off and on for almost fifty years, finishing in December, 2017.

Jerry's meandering lifestyle continued until July, 1980, when his ulcer perforated from all the alcohol it had had poured into it. After having ice water pumped into his stomach to stop the bleeding and taking nine units of blood, he asked the doctor if he would "make it." The answer was a simple, "I don't know." That is when the airman learned to really pray and when his life totally turned around.

When Jerry was released from the hospital, he went back to the construction job he had been doing for Trudy Farrier. Trudy sat him down and led him to the Lord. A few months later, in February, 1981, she introduced him to his future wife. He and Pat Boyd were married June 4, 1983.

Jerry was living proof that God always has a plan, and parts of that plan included his serving as music leader at North Miami First Baptist Church for over five years, singing in gospel music groups in the area for over twelve years, and playing rhythm guitar and singing at Grace Church in Miami from 2001 until his health no longer allowed him to attend.

His eight years in the service were a defining force in Jerry's life. Sadly, he lost to the recesses of his memory many with whom he served, but he saluted other veterans from all wars. They stopped, talked, and walked away from one another with a different look on their faces. His words will always ring true: "Only a vet can understand another vet." Even so, when people stopped him to shake his hand and thank him for his service, the appreciation was deeply felt and brought a rather sad smile and a heartfelt, "You're welcome." He and the others of his generation who walked into a war did so because they loved their country and were willing to do whatever it took to keep citizens safe at home. When the Persian Gulf war started in 1990, he was almost 56. His first words were, "I wonder if they'd take me to serve somewhere?" He would have willingly gone.

Jerry is survived by Pat, his wife of 35 years, sons J.R. Bridgewater, Tony Freeze, and Rusty Cummings, daughters Karen Rice and Marilyn Cummings, his brother Allen of St. George, Utah, ten grandchildren, nine great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild plus numerous nieces, nephews, and friends. As he celebrates his new life in Heaven, his love, his talent, and his sense of humor will not be forgotten on Earth.

There will be a Celebration of Life for Jerry 6:00 PM on Tuesday, August 6, 2018 at Grace Church with Pastor Phil Shyers officiating. Interment will take place at Glen-Abbey Memorial Gardens at a later date.

Friends and family may send the family notes of encouragement by viewing Jerry's Tribute Page at www.brown-winters.com.

Cemetery Details

Glen-Abbey Memorial Garden

58915 East 100 Road
PO Box 1511
Miami, OK 74355
(918) 919-9904

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 7. 6:00 PM (CT)

Grace Church of Miami
130 A Street NE
Miami, OK 74354

Tribute Wall



“ Mom used you as my baby sitter.....what was she thinking.!

Connie England - August 08, 2018 at 04:14 PM



“ Jerry, you will be missed. You saved me when I was a kid, many times. Oh the troubles we got into and you were watching me. lol My mom loved you dearly,you were the brother I never had. connie

Connie England - August 08, 2018 at 04:12 PM



“ I love you Jerry. You are singing with the angels now. Thanks for the wonderful memories that we all created. Pat & I will continue to make more memories with you in mind. See you soon.

Charlotte Carder

CHARLOTTE CARDER - August 06, 2018 at 11:44 AM



You have been a friend longer than I can remember and you usually left us laughing. I look forward to seeing you again when we bow together at the feet of Jesus. GOD bless and comfort Pat as she learns a new way of life without you. Love from Darrel & Kay Simmons

Kay Simmons - August 07, 2018 at 08:16 AM