



Jerry Donald Blackburn

October 7, 1947 - May 16, 2026

It is with heavy hearts and profound respect that we announce the passing of Jerry Blackburn, a beloved partner, devoted family man, and cherished friend, who left this world on May 16, 2026, after a lengthy illness. Born in Pulaski, Tennessee, on October 7, 1947, Jerry's life was one of service, love, and dedication to those around him.

Jerry was the son of Donald Eugene Blackburn and Annie Ruth Pierce Blackburn, both of whom predeceased him, along with his sisters Sandra and Charlene Blackburn, and step-brothers Dan and Robert Summers.

He is survived by his loving partner of 32 and a half years, Charlene Luther. Their relationship began November 27, 1993, and every 27th of the month was a mini-celebration of their enduring love (happy 27th). Their affectionate nicknames for each other, 'my Sweetman' and 'my Sweetie Pie,' spoke volumes of their deep connection.

Jerry embraced Charlene's children, Benjamin Luther and Erin Vingiello, as his own. He also leaves behind Erin's husband, Anthony Vingiello, and their son, Reade Charles Vingiello, who brought immeasurable joy to his life. His sister, Jan Blackburn Whitworth, and her husband William, stepmom Polly Blackburn, stepsisters Sue Hamby (Wendell) and Claire Strunk (Jesse), stepbrother Macy Summers (Sherry), close friends Bob and Betsy Luther, and Wendy Trunrud also mourn his passing.

Jerry never shied away from hard work. He spoke of feeding / watering 2000 laying hens before school and distributing eggs with his Mother after school.

Stories from his youth included night fishing and squirrel hunting with his Father as well as weeding / harvesting tobacco plants and working at a service station while in high school.

A graduate of Lenoir High School in 1965, Jerry furthered his education with a degree in Civil Engineering from Tennessee Tech University, and later an MBA from the University of Tennessee. His commitment to service saw him enlist in the United States Navy during the Vietnam conflict, where he served as an Aviation Structural Mechanic aboard the USS America (CVA-66), maintaining the Vigilante aircraft. He shared countless stories of the ship personnel, flight deck and ship life experiences.

Jerry's professional life was marked by his work as a Civil Engineer for the Tennessee Valley Authority, where he designed and oversaw the construction of numerous projects throughout east Tennessee, including a notable pavilion at Ocoee for the 1996 Olympic Whitewater Games. Following retirement from TVA Jerry worked for BVI / FEMA sharing his civil engineering expertise to evaluate hurricane and/or flood damaged areas of Texas, North Dakota, Washington state, Montana and North Carolina.

His contributions to his east Tennessee community extended to supporting the Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church and the Oak Ridge High School Band, even driving the band equipment truck to events.

An avid lover of nature (especially trees) he was often seen picking up acorns to cultivate and procuring seedlings to plant. He was known for his passion for storytelling, quick wit, and deep understanding of financial instruments, engineering applications, car mechanics, and natural forces (especially water). His love for history and biographies fueled his avid reading, while his spiritual practice involved Sunday contemplation and reading from his King James Bible.

Jerry's legacy is one of love and generosity. He was a man who deeply cared about his family, always ready to lend a helping hand to his neighbors without expecting anything in return. His thoughtful nature and humility made a difference in the lives of many, and he will be dearly missed.

Jerry Blackburn's life was a testament to love, service, and kindness. His memory will forever be cherished by those who knew him, and his spirit will continue to inspire those he touched. May he rest in peace, as his legacy lives on in the hearts of his loved ones. A celebration of Jerry's life is planned for the fall.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to the American Cancer Society in Jerry's honor, as a testament to his enduring spirit and commitment to helping others. Donations can be made at (<https://www.cancer.org>). Kyker Funeral Homes, Sweetwater, in charge of arrangements. www.kykerfuneralhomes.com

Tribute Wall

KK

“ Jerry was a great friend to the animals and a loyal supporter of Oregon Humane. Sending our condolences to Charlene, Erin and the family. Oregon Humane

Kathryn Karr - May 29 at 03:02 PM

RE

“ A good Blackburn and hard worker. I still remember the bicycle he got me as a kid. It was a Murray with black and white spots. He even got glow in the dark beads that fit on my spokes. He said "I thought you would think these were cool."

Reese Edgel - May 22 at 03:23 PM

CH

“ Jerry, Janice , Sandra and Charlene were my first cousins. We always enjoyed getting a chance to see them and catch up a little bit when they visited our grandparents. Having been the oldest of their Uncle Leonard's four daughters, I was just a tiny bit jealous of how my dad countenance would light up when Jerry visited. My dad did not have the unique pleasure of a son but I always felt Jerry gave him a taste of how special that would have been. When Jerry visited dad would drop everything to spend time with him. I think each of them gave and received a wonderful blessing in each other. Jerry was always so sweet to all of us. I'm thankful he still had Janice and Bill and a most special lady in Charlene. I look forward to their Christmas card and how they shared updates and joys of family. I could go on and on. Even though I didn't see him often, I feel an emptiness where he belonged. And he always will belong. "I give thanks for my every remembrance of you."

Cheryl Hewitt - May 19 at 05:37 PM

CS

“ Our opportunities to visit were limited as children and adults, yet his genuine compassion generated heartfelt passion no matter the situation. His ability to communicate with a servant's heart was apparent when he drove his father to visit my childhood home and other nearby relatives. His calm demeanor with difficult situations was an asset to all that received his presence.

Charlene, soulmates living, learning, and loving is exactly what our grandmother prayed for all of her grandchildren. Her legacy lived in your precious life together.

Charlene may you find rest and grace in unexpected loving kindness for yourself. May an inner strength power you through grief and longing. The precious memories you created and shared are an everlasting legacy.

Love,

Jerry's cousin, Janette Vaughan Smith, Ruth Page Blackburn's daughter, Dorothe, 'Dot' Roberson Horne's niece

Carolyn Smith - May 19 at 08:08 AM

SL

“ I met Jerry Blackburn at Oak Ridge Unitarian Universalist Church on a beautiful Sunday in late spring several years ago. He was escorting his dear friend and love of his life, Charlene Luther that day. Both of them glowed with good health and the joy of each other's company. Jerry shook my hand and instantly showed the kind of respect that you do see very much these days. He, I came to learn, was an old fashioned gentleman with all of the attributes that have almost disappeared from today's rules of behavior. I felt immediately like we were friends even though we had just met. He had that certain charisma that just reached across barriers and invited you in. With his genuine smile and that twinkle in his eyes, I knew instantly that he was a really good guy.

We would run into each other at various events and he never lost that genuine niceness. He was special.

Though he was special, I don't think he thought of himself that way. He was humble man. To love nature the way he did, to have been so successful in the work world, and to radiate his warmth was his special gift to all of us.

He will be greatly missed by all of us who knew him. His bravery in the face of illness, his ability to love those who loved him, his generosity of spirit, and kindness will continue to be his legacy. What a lovely man and how luck we were to have him in our lives. The world is a lesser place because of his absence. God speed, Jerry Blackburn. We will miss you and you will always be very special to us.

Sue Lasky - May 18 at 09:58 PM

BD

Beverly Dunnavant

Just wanted to say a few words about our sweet Jerry. He was my dad's nephew and the apple of dad's eye. I remember him coming around when we were teens. Always thought he was so handsome. He had a twinkle in his eye when he smiled. and he smiled a lot. Dad always did most of the talking so we never had much chance to talk. That was fine with us because dad loved Jerry and was in awe of his determination to excel at everything. He was a driven man and had the intelligence to go with it . When Charlene came into his life it was a major difference in him. We could all tell that he had found his soul mate. Charlene was a wonderful partner and the best thing to happen to him. He adored her as much as she did him. He told mom she was his greatest accomplishment in many years. I can t thank her enough for her dedication to him. She stood by him thru thick and thin when he was so sick and needed to be cared for. Charlene ; thank you for all you have done to help our Jerry survive so many trials. You truly are the angel he said you were.

Lastly I just want everyone to know that I will surely miss my Christmas card from Jerry and Charlene with all the news of the previous year The new grand baby brought much joy and laughter to Jerry. He loved that baby and adored every moment he got to spend with him Jerry I will always love you like a big brother/friend . You are at peace with our GOD now .I pray God holds Charlene close with his mighty arms and brings her comfort in the very sad days to come. Love and Prayers for all. GOD SPEED

Beverly Dunnavant - May 18 at 11:05 PM

BD

Please share this post publicly

Beverly Dunnavant - May 18 at 11:14 PM

JB

“ Jerry was my brother and I knew him to be a highly principled man of great compassion and generosity, incredible industry and ingenuity, and a wonderful sense of humor. He faced many challenges throughout his life, some that were unavoidable and others that he took on because his moral compass compelled him to do so. Whether it was a terminally ill parent or a needy sibling, Jerry was always ready to go above and beyond to help. He faced every challenge calmly, applying his excellent analytical skills to find the best approach. He demonstrated both a deep Faith in the Almighty and tremendous courage in confronting the serious health challenges that plagued him over the past years. Fortunately he was blessed with an exceptionally devoted, kind and capable partner, Charlene, who saw him through that final chapter. I know there is rejoicing in Heaven that he is there. My husband and I deeply sympathize with Charlene, and are forever grateful for all that she meant to him.

Janice Blackburn - May 18 at 07:53 PM

JB

“ 1 file added to the album



Janice Blackburn - May 18 at 07:24 PM

JB

“ 1 file added to the album Happy times



Janice Blackburn - May 18 at 07:17 PM

VW

Jerry visited us up here in Canada with Charlene in the early 2000's. He struck us as a kind friendly soul with a great sense of humour. When we pranked he and Charlene with the help of our neighbor (a Sargent with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) regarding a supposed illegal bottle of Whiskey he had smuggled into the country he said '... well I found it odd these fellas worked in their dress uniforms...'. Polite and respectful That was Jerry. We all laughed. I spoke with him over the phone numerous times and he always expressed his appreciation for his visit to canada and how he wanted us to come down and have hospitality returned in kind. We are saddened by his departure but know he now rests, his work done.

Victor Marchiel, Kim Ward - May 19 at 12:46 AM

JO

“ Nothing we can say about Jerry would do him justice. He was one of a kind and we will miss him deeply. The world needs more like him. One of our most cherished memories is when Jerry and Charlene had us over for dinner and we had a fun time doing a jigsaw puzzle. Jerry was very generous. He dropped a couple of loads of gravel in our driveway and absolutely refused to accept payment. When we saw him walking toward us we knew we were in for a funny story or an interesting and intelligent take on some current event or other subject. Sometimes, we would see him through our kitchen window, in the distance, moving amongst his beloved trees. He was one of the finest men we ever knew. Rest in Peace Jerry. Joel and Gwen.

Joel - May 18 at 04:00 PM

SG

“ Sharon Golden lit a candle in memory of Jerry Donald Blackburn



Sharon Golden - May 18 at 03:45 PM