



Gerald Sidney Irish

June 7, 1950 - October 12, 2024

Gerald Sidney (Hendrickson) Irish – of Portnablagh, Co. Donegal, Ireland & Portland, Michigan (formerly of Grand Ledge) June 7, 1950 - October 12, 2024, passed away unexpectedly from an apparent cardiac arrest.

He is preceded in death by his infant daughter Ariana, father William Irish (when Jerry was only 2 years old), sister Gayle Ann Irish, mother & stepfather Daniel (Janette Briggs) Hendrickson, and sister Barbara Hendrickson.

Jerry is survived by his son Donovan Irish, long-time & loving partner: Deirdre McKnight, brother Tom (Janice) Barnes, sister Daniela (Steve) Hendrickson-Wingate, Aunt Margery Briggs & Uncle/Best Friend Michael Judd, Aunt Barbara Covert, Aunt Nancy Garner, and a very large extended family of nieces, nephews, cousins and great friends here and abroad.

Those who knew and loved “Jerald” (his unique way of spelling it) knew him as a non-traditionalist who expressed himself through his art, music, writing, and intellectual conversations and a personality that filled a room.

While growing up in Grand Ledge, he spent many hours down on the river trail, having a paper route, involvement with scouting, and many years of camping and traveling with family. He had many close friends throughout school. He was on the high school wrestling team until a tournament opponent

caused a serious injury. He took three years of Latin because he enjoyed Mrs. DePue and Latin Club. After learning to play the guitar, he became a member of a high school garage band. After graduating from Grand Ledge High School in 1968 he enlisted in the US Airforce and was stationed in San Antonio, Ogden, Utah and South Korea working as an Airman Communications Specialist.

After serving, he continued his education at Lansing Community College and Grand Valley State College focusing on English Literature and Fine Arts. He completed his bachelor's degree with major in Fine Arts and minor in Psychology from MSU. He was initiated into the honor society of Phi Kappa Phi. At MSU he met and married Lisa, having daughter Ariana, and son Donovan.

Approximately 20 years ago, he reconnected with Deirdre McKnight (former exchange student to Grand Ledge from Ireland) which led to sharing her life in Portnablagh, Ireland and with her children, Ashling, Tobin, Jerusha; grandchildren, family, playing music with Jimmy and other friends at Patsy Dan's pub, and walking their dog "Django" along the bay—just across the street.

While young, his Grandmother Ruth Briggs taught him to play the piano which led to his interest in music. Composing, recording, and performing music, as well as his art (especially watercolor) and writing poetry, short stories, and extensive journals were part of his expression of who he was.

Over the years, he worked several types of jobs to help support himself, his art, writing, and music. He started a career at Peckham, Inc. as an operations manager of contractual services between Peckham and State of MI helping place and supervise individuals with disabilities within worksites. For several years he then focused on working with the arts community including

representing artists for galleries and shows. During that time, he also recorded and co-wrote children's music. He composed music and performed as part of a theater production that provided employment for homeless individuals from the Cass corridor in Detroit. He also worked for a recording studio where he wrote, played, sang, and sold commercial jingles for businesses. He and his friend Edwin Simpson spent many years working together to promote Edwin's unique Southwest art. He worked several other types of jobs to earn money to keep pursuing his art and music. This included installing eavestroughs, cement work, external and interior painting, forklift, yard work, working with his friend Lew Barclay on many types of projects, substitute teaching, etc. He also was close friends with Michael & Georgi Trott and their sons Justin and Garrett and spent many memorable times working on projects with them in MI, North Carolina, and Portland, OR. With them he did his first skydiving. He also officiated Garrett's wedding to Carla on October 5, 2024 in Portland, OR.

Jerald divided his time between Ireland and Portland, Michigan (his second home) with Margery & Michael and their community. Whatever chore or need arose, Jerald was the person you could call on for support. He was a hard worker and was planning several projects at Margie's and Michael's, and also to more painting projects with Tim Burns.

He loved cheddar cheese popcorn, potato chips, Reese's peanut butter cups, anything chocolate, malts, and Deirdre's cooking. He enjoyed cooking and lent his personal style to everything he created. He loved to travel and experience new adventures and people he would meet. He loved writing, reading, painting, playing his guitar at pubs in Ireland and MI, and lively discussions. He loved family, friends, hanging out with Lew and Jenny on Friday afternoons. He loved his times in Ireland with Deirdre, Django, family, friends.

He thought he had a lot more time to live and love life.

A Celebration of Life Gathering and luncheon will be held on Sunday, October 27th at Noon, VFW/American Legion, 1324 E Bridge St., Portland, Michigan 48875. Floral delivery may be made to the VFW Post on Friday and Saturday from 3-7:00 PM and Sunday from 10:00 AM until the time of the service.

Because of his love of reading, memorial donations, in lieu of flowers, in his name may be made to:

USA Reads (which is part of the World Literacy Foundation). This is a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization.

Address: 712 H Street NE Suite 2013

Washington, D.C. 20002

<https://www.usareads.org/support-usa-reads/#donate>

Jerald would want you to think of him with fond memories and a smile...
and for those of you so inclined...

“sip a Guinness or Irish Whiskey in his memory”

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

OCT **27**. 12:00 PM (ET)

VFW Post 4090
1324 E. Bridge Street
Portland, MI 48875

Tribute Wall



“ *Lighting a candle for Deirdre and her family.....and all of Jerald's amazing family & friends in Michigan, Ohio, Oregon.....xo*



Lisa - October 30, 2024 at 08:24 PM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Lisa - October 28, 2024 at 01:01 PM

JR

“ The last time I heard my “Yankee” cousin’s voice, it was on the day before my brother, Gary, went to heaven. Jerry had called to speak with Gary one last time on 9/13/2018. As I write this, I call to mind some memories I will share from our past. As children close in ages, Jerry, Gary, Margie & I all had chicken pox at the same time in Grand Ledge in January 1955. I imagine Grandma Briggs, Aunt Janette & Uncle Dan, and my parents had quite a challenge in taking care of us. In the early 60s as teenagers, Gary & I stayed in Grand Ledge one summer. Gary & Jerry were inseparable, wearing their “bucket hats” while riding their bikes all over town, always on the go. Jerry’s sense of humor could make any gathering a fun event. When I was a freshman at LSU, and Jerry was in the Air Force in Ogden, Utah, he and his work buddy would often call me & my roommate while they were on the night shift. In February 1981, when we were in Grand Ledge for Grandma Briggs’ funeral, I remember my parents, Gary & I going down to the ice rink where Jerry very patiently & reassuringly, tried to teach me to ice skate, while I wobbled along. In 1982, as a young widow with my two sons, Scott (11) & Robert (8), we visited Grand Ledge and Jerry spent some time taking us on a tour of the famous “Ledges” on a trail hike along the Grand River. The boys were fascinated with all the historical rock formations. It was truly a memorable experience for them. In reading the obituary, I became aware of his many unknown accomplishments & the generosity he offered in helping those in need. I had always admired his creativity in his music, poetry & art, which were unmatched. Over the years, we grew apart, but I will always have a fond place in my heart for his kindness to me & my family. May God comfort all who knew him. I offer my heartfelt prayers & love to all families, relatives & friends,
Jacalyn Briggs Ramsey.

Jacalyn Briggs Ramsey - October 27, 2024 at 07:38 PM

DM

“ 4 files added to the album gerald irish tribute wall



Deirdre McKnight - October 27, 2024 at 08:59 AM

AS

“ I am writing on behalf of my mum, Deirdre, and our family as the news has all come as such a shock. Jerry was a character of the most flamboyant kind; he was life personified. He saw poetry and music in even the most mundane and could talk for hours on all that he loved. He came into our lives many years ago like a whirlwind of possibility. He brought light and fun into my mum's world, not just as her partner, but a best friend.

While many will remember him for his larger than life personality, we will remember the love he had to share. When my little one was very ill, it was he who sat through the night with her. It was quiet acts like this that made him so truly special.

Taken too soon, but he will live on in our lives and in the pubs of Portnablagh. As my sister mentioned, we will gather together at Christmas, like so many times before, to drink, sing and celebrate the very unique man that was Jerry Irish.

All our love, Deirdre, Ashling, Tobin and Jerusha

Ashling - October 27, 2024 at 08:49 AM

LI

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Lisa - October 26, 2024 at 04:45 PM

LI

“ Lighting a candle for Jerald and all of his loved ones, and sharing two beautiful photos



Lisa - October 26, 2024 at 04:44 PM

LI

“ Lisa lit a candle in memory of Gerald Irish



Lisa - October 25, 2024 at 10:29 PM

JE

“ *What a lovely storey about Jerry's life, I never knew he loved cheese popcorn, we could of bonded over this. The 27th is also me and my husbands 1 year wedding anniversary, a wedding that was made possible by Jerry's hard work to bring it all together and we will be forever grateful.*

You had a kind heart and the family in Ireland will all miss that. We will all be there at Christmas and will raise a pint of the blackstuff to you in patsys (or maybe mollys as you said theirs was the best).

I hope your soaring with the hawks.

Love you. Jerusha and Ed x

Jerusha - October 23, 2024 at 02:55 AM

DC

“ *So many memories*

Thank you Jerry for all of the love, beauty and music.

For playing guitar at Edwin's funeral "I Can't Find My Way Home" for at lease 20 minutes while I danced.

For playing guitar for my children to fall asleep

For writing the music for the beautiful blessing of the loom

Peace Truth Beauty ❤️

deborah Church - October 22, 2024 at 08:58 PM

LI

“ *To Jerald's friends & family who will gather in his honor Oct 27.....as Donovan will convey on my behalf: I pray that your strong bonds of love will bring you each peace & comfort now and in the weeks ahead. Love, prayers, and admiration always, Lisa*



Lisa - October 22, 2024 at 01:00 AM

TS

“ Very sorry to hear this. After graduation, Steve Wilton, Jerry and I took a trip to the Bahamas. We didn't have much money, didn't know what things would cost, no airline reservations, no hotel reservations and none of us owned a car that would get us out of the state, much less get us to Florida. Steve's sister let us borrow her car and off we went. One of the more memorable moments of the trip was when we were in Nassau where the cruise ships dock. Locals were diving off the ship for tips. Jerry decided he wanted to do that so we tried to get on the ship and were quickly told to get off. Undiscouraged, Jerry climbed one of the large ropes used to tie up the ship and got aboard. He managed to dive off the ship before the crew could get him. At one time I had a picture of this, but I was unable to find it. The last time I saw him was in the Fall of 68 when he was home on his first leave. He managed to talk me into enlisting, where I spent the next 8 years. I always knew our paths would probably not cross again, but it was nice knowing he was somewhere out there. My condolences to his family. Tom Smith

Tom Smith - October 21, 2024 at 05:05 PM

JE

What an amazing storey.

Jerusha - October 23, 2024 at 02:37 AM

LS

“ I am beyond heartbroken that you are gone. We just spoke in August when my mom passed away. I know you are in heaven now, singing, dancing and playing the guitar alongside my mom and Grand Poppy. Until we meet again ❤️

lizzy simpson - October 18, 2024 at 01:02 AM

LI

“ *Lisa lit a candle in memory of Gerald Irish*



Lisa - October 17, 2024 at 07:41 PM

LI

“ *This below note was sent to me by Rob Voigt of East Lansing; Gerald and he were close friends and created many amazing original pieces of music together--uplifting tunes for children & adults-- in the 1980s some of which they co-produced into a cassette.....sold for 100% benefit of The Louhelen Baha'i School in Davison, MI.....*

"....Gerald's loves and passions certainly ring true and are as I remember them, expressed in his unique and inimitable ways with certain fervor, his ebullient expression, and kaleidoscopic vitality. His wonderful and awesome contributions live on in both this world and the next.

All thanks for his life on this plane and the many memorable moments he embodied."

Lisa - October 17, 2024 at 01:36 AM

LI

“ This is sent by dear friends Melanie & David Smith of Holt whose son Zak was born with challenges in his ability to communicate in ways that others understood.....

"One of my sweetest memories of Gerald is the hours he spent playing guitar for an enthralled Zachary who dubbed him "Jerry scree" (I think the sound the strings made as they were plucked hence the scree part of his name.) Zak adored him and loved their time together."

Lisa - October 17, 2024 at 01:25 AM

LI

“ Lisa lit a candle in memory of Gerald Sidney Irish



Lisa - October 17, 2024 at 01:19 AM

LI

“ It's very easy to recall Gerald's many loving, generous, artistic and musical contributions made to my family, friends, and the mid-Michigan Baha'i community as well as his financial support via his talent donations to The Louhelen Baha'i School during the 1980s, including the new school built during that time.



His extreme friendliness, fun wit, creative mind, stamina, diverse talents, and so much more live on through all of us whose lives Gerald touched.

God bless his soul forever!

My warm and loving wishes to Deidre, her family, and all of Gerald's wonderful family in Ohio and mid-Michigan who blessed my life in countless ways,

Lisa

Lisa - October 17, 2024 at 01:18 AM