



Jerry Lee Turner

October 30, 1947 - January 25, 2021

Jerry L. Turner, 73, passed away Monday, January 25, 2021 at Mercy Hospital in Joplin. He was born October 30, 1947 in Alba, MO to Albert Ross and Peggy (McDonald) Turner. Jerry's life was full and blessed. He graduated from Carthage High School Class of 1965 and was a member of First Baptist Church.

Jerry served in the United States Air Force (USAF) from 1965 to 1973. He was an aircraft ordinance technician with the 555th Tactical Fighter Squadron, supporting the McDonnell Douglas F-4C Phantom II at Udorn Royal Thai Air Force Base in North Eastern Thailand. He returned stateside and went to USAF computer school where he was later assigned to the Cheyenne Mountain Complex, which is located at Colorado Springs, CO. This was the center that controls the NORAD Defense System for all of North America. Jerry helped in building, troubleshooting, and maintaining the systems within the complex from generators to computers – no laptops 😊 at a time when computers did not truly exist until this team built them.

He was the Chief Pilot for Leggett & Platt in Carthage for many years. During his tenure, he was instrumental in the department transitioning from turbo-prop aircraft to turbine jet aircraft. Jerry was well known in the flight community as having a wide variety of experience, having flown aircraft ranging from the Douglas DC 3 to a Pitts Special. Many will be surprised that

he was a rated helicopter pilot. As flight instructor, he taught powered flight as well as sailplanes.

Jerry worked for Wyandotte Precision Products (machine shop in Joplin). He provided reverse engineering and digital design for parts to be fabricated. Working in conjunction with Oklahoma State University (OSU), he worked on several projects to aid the U.S. Government to develop technical data packages and samples for systems no longer supported. These projects ranged from aircraft electronic control switches, heavy duty truck wheel bearings and even titanium parts that go into an USAF F-15 Fighter Aircraft engine compartment.

Jerry had a wide variety of interests: electronics, computer aided design (CAD) guitar playing, target shooting, skeet shooting, collecting firearms, motorcycle riding, woodworking and, best of all, building 3-D puzzles out of wood and metal that were “just difficult” to solve. His greatest joy was spending time with his children and grandchildren.

Jerry was united in marriage with his one true love, Donna J. Stanley, on October 2, 1965 in Denver, CO. She preceded him in death on November 8, 2018. In 1975, Jerry and Donna began their service with Mission Aviation Fellowship, serving in Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica. During their tour in Central America, it was a time of civil war and unrest. Jerry was instrumental in uncovering violent crimes by flying investigators into remote areas, achieved by making river sandbars a makeshift landing strip – one attempt/first attempt. Jerry was once asked what it is like landing in the remote strips “Well, the best way I can describe it is tonight, when you get home, park your car in your garage at 70 MPH.” In 1982, they moved to the Miami/Ft. Lauderdale Area to provide air service to Haiti. In 1986, they moved to the Carthage Area, where he continued his love of flying and teaching others.

Jerry is survived by three daughters, Gayla Gelven (Paul) of Sperry, OK, Lisa Irwin (Kelly) of Malvern, AR, and Stacy Lee (Barry) of Burlington, KS; five grandchildren, Stefan Gelven of Stillwater, OK, Marie Gelven of Denver, CO, Kalynn Lee, Bryce Lee and Blake Lee of Burlington, KS; one brother, Ross Turner (Sarah) of Grove, OK; six nephews, Jeremy, Spencer, Jason, Jared, niece Jamie, Josh and Zac.

A memorial graveside service will be held at 10:00 a.m. Friday, May 28, 2021 at Park Cemetery in Carthage, followed by full military honors.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Mission Aviation Fellowship (M.A.F.) or Wounded Warriors Project in care of Ulmer Funeral Home.

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

Arrangements are under the direction of Ulmer Funeral Home.

Cemetery Details

Park Cemetery

801 South Baker
Carthage, MO

Previous Events

Memorial Graveside Service

MAY 28. 10:00 AM (CT)

Park Cemetery
801 South Baker
Carthage, MO

Tribute Wall



“ *My condolences to Jerry Turner's family and loved ones. He had an extraordinary love and knowledge of aviation history, and we came into contact because of his fascination with my great uncle Etienne Dormoy's "bathtub" design plane. -- John Savage (jms8@lehigh.edu)*

John Savage - May 11, 2021 at 06:17 PM

JW

“ *Jerry was a very smart guy that was always ready to help advise you on a problem! I was married to his sister Jewel for 42 years until her passing. We always wanted Jerry to write their life story down for all to enjoy! So sorry to his girls and family. Jeff and Karen Wilkinson*

Jeff Wilkinson - March 11, 2021 at 07:58 PM

PB

“ *Jerry made a difference wherever he was and whatever he was doing..and he didn't know a stranger. He was so talented, I could ask him any aviation question and if he didn't know the answer immediately he'd find out. He will be missed by many, he was such a great guy.*

Pam Barlet - February 02, 2021 at 09:52 PM

JK

“ Jerry was a good friend for over 20 years. When I first moved to the neighborhood, he was the first to welcome me. I will miss our talks and his sense of humor, as he always had one or two stories of his many experiences. As true neighbors are, we helped each other out when it was needed. I am grateful that he thought enough of me to give me one of his 3-D wood puzzles. I did manage to get it apart one time, but he had to help with getting it back together again. I will always remember him.

Janet Kamen - February 02, 2021 at 09:48 AM

BB

“ Jerry was the instrument of me hearing my wife say yes to my proposal. I was serving in Ahuas Honduras and I had a radio call from the aircraft in Costa Rica. Linda was on board and when Jerry handed her the microphone I was thrilled to hear "the answer is yes!"

Barry Borrer - January 31, 2021 at 04:50 PM

MS

I am happy for the time I spent with Jerry in May 2020. We went for ice cream on hi Red cycle, he drove me to Tulsa Ok and also visited his daughter Gayla, my niece. Much fun. He is very special to me. RIP Jerry. Much love. Aunt Mary Jane.

Mary Jane Stewart - February 01, 2021 at 06:35 PM



“ Condolences for the family. Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

John and Darlene Sherrel and family

M Darlene Sherrel - January 30, 2021 at 12:35 PM

JA

“ Jerry & Donna served with MAF Latin America team during bad times in Central America. They were always flexible, really to move where could best serve and help with MAF airplane and radio communication. They accepted begin new pilot program in San Jose, Costa Rica, arriving shortly before our family left for USA. Jerry's MO smile and soft voice made many friends and impacted lives for Christ. • Well done - good and faithful servant • Jack & Jeannette Walker

jack - January 29, 2021 at 11:10 PM

JH

“ So sorry to hear of Jerry's passing. I had the privilege of giving him his field flight checkout in Honduras. - Joe Hopkins

Joe Hopkins - January 29, 2021 at 07:02 PM

DM

“ I am saddened to hear of Jerry's passing. I had the pleasure of serving in MAF with him and Donna in Honduras. Our two children spent much time playing together with his girls. I'm sure he is happy to join Donna in their Heavenly Mansion. I send my prayers and condolences out to his family.

Duane Marlow - January 29, 2021 at 06:05 PM

RH

“ We well remember Jerry and Donna from MAF Candidacy in 1975 and Orientation the next year, as well as some overlap in Honduras. Sorry to lose you both.

Roy Haglund - January 29, 2021 at 05:45 PM

AJ

“ *My deepest sympathy to all of you. Your dad was a great man and had interesting experiences to share. You are in my thoughts and prayers. May you feel God's peace and love surrounding you and bringing you comfort.*

Love, Alice Johns

Alice Johns - January 28, 2021 at 11:29 PM

SH

“ *To the Turner family, my thoughts are with you all. I always enjoyed Jerry during his tenure with Leggett. Godspeed to your landing in your new home.*

Sidney Hiatt - January 28, 2021 at 06:09 PM