



Gene Reeder

October 12, 1946 - February 21, 2018

By Sherrilyn Kenyon

“I am too young, too smart, and too good-looking to die.”

L. Gene (Pinball) Reeder was 71 years, 4 months, 1 week, and 1 day old on the morning of his passing. He lived a full life but he was not done yet. He still had a strong will to live. Unfortunately his heart was not as strong as he was. He passed away at 1:45am on Wednesday, February 21st, 2018 at Tampa General Hospital. Gene fought hard his last three months of life; always optimistic about coming home. On March 9th, 2018 his ashes came home.

Gene was born the second child to Ralph E. and Lillian E. (Smith) Reeder on October 12th, 1946 in Newton, Iowa. Throughout the following couple decades he lived in multiple other towns and cities throughout Iowa, Ohio, and California. After he was honorably discharged from the Navy, he got right to pursuing Gloria Jean Lang. They had never met in person but they had written each other over a few years while Gene served with the Navy. They finally met in Ohio at her father's house, with her younger sisters in tow snickering at Gloria's initial reaction to Gene. She didn't like his goatee but once he shaved: there was wedding bliss to come for "He Gene" and "She Jean." They married on July 29th, 72. They lived shortly in Batavia, Ohio before moving to Iowa and settling down in Marshalltown where they raised their family. They were married for 29 years before Gloria lost her battle with renal failure in May of 2003. Gene always thought he was going to pass before Gloria, miraculously he outlived her by 15 years. His family is full of gratitude to have had those extra years with him.

Gene had a difficult upbringing that taught him how to prepare for the security of his family and how to rebound when life became unnecessarily ugly. He irrefutably provided for his family and helped when anyone needed it. He did not take enough pride over his accomplishments and devotion to them. All of the adolescent traumas and health conditions he survived created a strong man at a very early age. Gene enlisted in the Navy for the Vietnam War. He did not talk about his days there very often. When he did,

he talked about the people he missed, the food he devoured off base, how beautiful the landscape was, and some of the gnarly storms they encountered. Gene worked his way up the ladder consistently receiving gleaming reviews from authorities about his determination for his team to succeed. He was awarded many honors, including a purple heart. Petty Officer Reeder tackled Vietnam like he tackled his upbringing; get through it and thrive. He did just that. He took his responsibilities seriously and came back an even stronger man, a hero.

Gene and Gloria wed, moved to Iowa, and started their family. Gene supported his family working at Fisher's Controls with his "work family." He loved those men and women. He retired in 2004 with 35 years devotion and a new lease on life. He was extremely excited about retirement. Rest assured, he lived it up. He was constantly taking road trips to different locations across the United States. He traveled with his sister creating memories at beautiful shore lines, he made regular trips to California to see Crystal, and Colorado to see Jessica, Gavin, and Donovan. He took motorcycle rides to Chicago with his nephew. He loved the open road on his Harley. He went on hundreds of fishing trips with his friends, his children, and his grandsons. He even drove to South Carolina to be at one of the best vantage points to see the 2017 solar eclipse. He went wherever he wanted to go, usually not with much notice, and thus, he enjoyed his retirement years immensely. He mentioned many times over the years how he wished that his wife could have been alive to enjoy these new adventures with him. There was always a moment of pause that he would take at the scenic destinations and think of her. He missed her and it was very apparent when he had those solace moments in serene locations. He only had a handful of states left to explore to complete his bucket-list of visiting every state. He might have physically been moving slower but he had no intention of slowing down.

He cared deeply for his myriad of friends from Charlie's Bar and shared unimaginable laughter with them. Gene surely got carpal tunnel from playing the Pinball machine endlessly and he did it merrily among his friends. His family used to joke that Charlie's was his second home. At Charlie's the comradery was a second home. They held dart tournaments, fish fry days, games of pool and constant friendship. Charlie's was Gene's "Cheers." Besides pinball, hunting, and fishing with these folks; Gene also satiated his competitive side by playing golf, bowling, darts, skeet, pool, Euchre, and more with them. He took those "food days" very seriously. One of his skills was food and when he could show off, he did.

The foods this man enjoyed over the course of 71 years were exotic and extensive. He could recall tastes or smells from decades passed with descriptions to make your mouth melt. He was adept at recreating recipes that had you hating the original recipe that you

once loved so much. Thankfully he kept detailed notes about his recipes and tweaking options. A favorite pastime for him and Crystal were to guess the ingredients to different spice mixes that Jessica was always spoiling him with. His palate was impressive, to watch him in the kitchen was a welcomed show, and to enjoy one of his dishes was divine. He put his heart into whatever he was smoking, cooking, sauteeing, grilling, steaming, frying, charring, canning, marinating, baking, slicing, dicing, or stirring. He was a cheese connoisseur and a "Maytag-devoted" blue cheese junkie. Oh and his wine pairing capabilities with the myriad of cheeses... pure art. His foodie side was indicative of his zest for life!

He was adventurous!!! The places he went, the foods he ate, the dare devil stunts he'd pull... there wasn't much he wouldn't try. His adventurous spirit was contagious, as was Gloria's. Their daughters were blessed to be given wings at such early ages, with their parents' excitement to breathe bravery into their adventurous spirits as well. They instilled a passion to experience new things, to not be afraid of the unusual or exotic, and to have an open mind towards self expression, diversity, and strength. Because of them, their children's lives were filled with amazing experiences that showed them there is life outside of your birthplace bursting to show you a good time: you just have to be brave enough to show up.

Gene was brave enough to show up and to be his own one-of-a-kind. He knew who he was; he had his own opinions, he was unfailingly loyal, and he rarely varied from his "routines." Those traits were what made him so special. He could be counted on without expectation of reciprocation: he was dependable and he was giving. Most of the time he carried himself as stoic and resigned, however, he was a very passionate and caring individual. Especially towards his family and those he let in his circle. "His" ethics were unwavering even when that ornery Reeder side peaked. He was honorable and humble. He was modest and quiet. He was an intolerably loud and fierce. He was passionate and proud. So many spectrums of uniqueness that made up one genuine soul.

That genuine soul fought so hard his last three months. Various times throughout his hospital stay the medical staff would comment, "We did not think you were going to make it through the night Gene! How are you even sitting up right now?" or "Gene, you have shocked us yet again, you look great!" or "If that is what HE wants, then we will continue searching for more options". He has always been a DNR (do not resuscitate) but after the first stroke on 11/21/17 he had a change of heart. He then became hell-bent that he was coming home and he was going to be independent again. Everyone believed him because each time his daughters were saying "Goodbye" he would miraculously recover and make huge bounds towards coming home again until the next setback would happen.

First stroke - hemorrhaging in right rear and lower lobe.

TPA shot - back to fully moving his left side within a couple hours with moderate to severe memory loss.

Sepsis.

Heart attack.

Elevated Co2 - intubated to fix Co2 poisoning.

Coma for over a week - his pacemaker doing all of the work, seizures started for the first time in his life, a second stroke in the right front lobe, two back to back bronchoscopies, and slight loss of mobility on the left side again.

Rehab center for two weeks, constant paranoia and hallucinations, Vietnam recall continuously. The evening before going home.... he has another heart attack.

Dr's advise they are not able to do any new stents and pushed for rehab facility to strengthen heart muscles and experiment with oral medication options.

Pneumonia.

Six week long battle with a bladder infection.

Put in a neck catheter that leaked internally and turned him into one massive bruise from behind his ears to below his rib cage.

Wright's rehab for just over a week before..... another heart attack.

Sepsis AGAIN

Pneumonia AGAIN

They put in the five stents that they wouldn't before.

Insert heart catheter for an extended period of monitoring.

Wright's rehab for a week..... blood pressure dropping incredibly low and the nurse calls 911.

Numerous heart attacks, each time his body being shocked by his defibrillator, sometimes for periods of minutes that would pass with repetitive shocks.

Sporadic seizures, a third stroke in the right front lobe again.

Constant paranoia and hallucinations.

Frequent Vietnam flashbacks and screaming orders.

Genuine belief he had been kidnapped.

Life flight from Largo Medical to Tampa General to see about a surgery to implant a mechanical heart.

Unable to eat or drink.

Constant paranoia and hallucinations.

Genuine belief he and Crystal were being held hostage, him begging for her to find a way to save herself and take evidence to the FBI.

The big heart attack.

Decision to have his defibrillator turned off.

He held on for almost 48 hours waiting for Jessica 's flight.

He passed peacefully while sleeping with Jessica on the couch next to him.

His only complaint was that he was either starving hungry or he was "...sick of the over-cooked chicken for every God Damn meal!" That list is just the major factors. That is not even touching on the excruciating hematoma on his left hand that he worked physical therapy with for two and a half months. That's not including the hundreds of blood draws, needle sticks, Foley changes, and surprise emergencies. That's not touching a lick of the incessant periods of time he was set as NPO (nothing by mouth) for testing or surgery or swallow studies he had to do after each stroke. Being hungry or mad at the dry chicken was his only complaints. He would be laying there swollen, bruised, catheters, monitors, IV's, bed ridden, and miserable but he NEVER complained. His determination and attitude proved him a warrior even if he didn't go home how he wanted.

There were literally hundreds of people who cared for him over that three months and in that three months those people all took amazing care of him and his girls. The care teams of Largo Medical Heart and Stroke Center, Northside Hospital, Wright's Rehabilitation Center, and Tampa General Hospital were endlessly supportive and attentive to this medical miracle and strong-willed man. There are not enough ways to say "Thank You" in the English language to remotely express the gratitude the Reeder family has for those at Largo Medical though. Largo Medical was able to give him more quality time with his family and a chance for them to say goodbye. THAT was priceless for them. The amazing medical staff of Largo Medical became comforting faces and friends to his daughters during many rough days, sleepless nights, and terrifying moments. To each of you that encountered Gene; Crystal and Jessica extend endless love, gratitude, and respect for your excellent care of their father, as if he was your own.

Gene was a regular supporter of his grandson's academics and sport teams in the St. Vrain School District of Colorado. The family believes Gene would prefer any donations (in lieu of flowers) to be sent to his grandsons' choice of a deserving department or role model from Mead Middle or High school. Donovan has nominated his phenomenal music teacher Ms. Megan Rubin to use as she sees fit for her music class at Mead Middle School and Gavin nominated the Mead High Athletic Department with Coach Jason Klatt to use the donations at his discretion for the MHS football team. Gene made a special trip to Colorado just to watch Gavin play in the last game of his high school football career in October 2017. He beamed with pride standing on the football field with his oldest grandson towering over him in his #56 uniform. He will be missed at the grandsons' graduations but there is no doubt he would have been there; honoring their

accomplishment and the men they are shaping to be.

Raise a BudLite bottle or cast a reel in honor of a phenomenal man, a hero!

He is already dearly missed by those he left behind: Jessica Reeder Ayala (daughter) of Longmont, CO, Crystal Ann Reeder (daughter) of Largo, FL, Gavin Reeder (grandson) of Longmont, CO, Donovan Ayala (grandson) of Longmont CO, Kathleen Reeder (sister) of Clearwater, FL, plus aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews, and friends across the states.

Donations:

Megan Rubin (Music)

C/O Mead Middle

620 Welker Ave

Mead, CO 80542

Jason Klatt (FB Coach)

C/O Mead High

12750 Co. Rd. 7

Longmont, CO 80504

Questions or condolences:

Jessica Reeder Ayala 515-447-7733

Crystal Reeder 714-465-2200

Events

FEB **Military Honors** 03:00PM - 03:30PM

27

Bay Pines National Cemetery

10000 Bay Pines Blvd. N., Bay Pines, FL, US, 33744

Comments



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gene Reeder.



July 06, 2018 at 03:02 AM