



## Gerald G. Cox

March 21, 1937 - September 7, 2018

It's been said that if you want to know a man, just look at his hands.

Jerry Cox's hands were big, strong, calloused and chapped from work, but soft as a hound's eyes when wrapped around you. And wrap you they did when you needed it. Born March 21, 1937, in Evansville, Jerry was 81 when he died Friday, Sept. 7, 2018, at Solarbron the Terraces after months of declining health and a sudden downturn the day before.

In his healthier years, before his children set out for lives of their own, they were his reason for rough hands and searing headaches from doing trigonometry all day as one of the Tri-State's most highly sought-after tool and die designers. He worked first at Darden Industries in Newburgh, In. and then at Master Tool & Die in Evansville when Darden closed.

His work was actually more like engineering. But he despised lies, and because he never had the chance to pursue his schooling past Bosse High's industrial arts program at North High, he would politely correct anyone who called him an engineer. He had a sense of humor about it, though, and for years hung a "degree" above his desk saying he had graduated from the "School of Hard Knocks."

His was not an easy childhood, but a happy one growing up in school at Lodge Elementary with loving parents Vernon and Marie, who raised their children, Charles, Bill and Jerry to be true, work hard and live with honor. Charles died years ago, and Jerry's golfing partner, Bill, died this past March.

Though he never was an engineer, it was with an engineer's precision that he showed his love in crafting his homes for efficiency and fun, designing and building his own window shutters, a wet bar with a train on top hauling a "shot" to patrons and making rise his own garage from a mound of dirt on a hilltop he flattened by hand. He loved watching three generations of his kids peel out on go-carts he designed with real steering wheels, luxury seats and engines which didn't exactly come from lawnmowers. Like Jerry, his go-carts had horsepower.

And oh, how he could make a two-by-four behave under his hands. When his daughters, Karen and Susan, wanted a place to hang their Barbies' clothes, he crafted an enormous wardrobe for them, complete with sliding doors and a steel pattern "die" for making tiny,

wire hangers.

He passed his mathematical, precision-like mind to his son, Derek Cox of Jeffersonville, In. Jerry met his best friend, Bob Patten, through Derek and Derek's friend, Bob's son, Scott Patten. The boys were in Scouts together. Many a weekend through scouting, Jerry and Bob taught dozens of boys how to grow into good men.

They also golfed every Saturday morning, earning those deep, golfers' tans, illuminating Jerry's huge, hazel eyes. He loved golf so much that when he returned from a beach trip once, a friend asked if he got to swim in the ocean.

"Oh," he quipped with a wink and a smile. "You mean that water trap on Number Nine?"

The families also vacationed together, where Jerry's expert photography froze moments neither family would forget. Some people understand the mechanics, but can't "see" a photo. Others can see an image, but can't capture it. Jerry did both, often snapping only one frame, the mark of a professional, assured in the knowledge that that one frame was all he needed.

A favorite shot both families adore is two of their children from behind. They insisted on enduring Disneyland in July wearing shorts and their brand new cowboy boots.

Jerry started his photography days by turning a basement closet into a darkroom, where he also made bullets for his other hobby, collecting and shooting guns. He loved the simple, honest values of the Old West and its movies, even if they were half-romanticized fiction.

Later, he moved to shooting color slides back in the days of dropping film at the old Weinbach store, waiting a week for it to be shipped off, developed and returned.

Something magical ensued in that week of anticipation, unlike today's instant selfies.

Jerry's Sunday ritual was church, then Kuester's Hardware for that week's project, and finally to Weinbach Shop, where he sat in silence, sipping black coffee with his youngest daughter. Then it was upstairs to pick up film on his way out.

One Sunday, he was trying to teach his daughter to handle money, so he let the clerk give her the change for the film. On the way out, she noticed it was too much change. He said nothing -- just turned around in the doorway, returned the change and silently taught his child a lesson about honesty.

After picking up film, he'd go home, file each color slide -- exact date and time on the outside of the photo cartridges -- and on Saturdays, pop popcorn, gather the troops and show the photos on a huge screen in the basement, a cool respite on sweltering, Ohio River Valley evenings.

He made Midwestern winters fun too. In 1978, when the Ohio at Dress Plaza nearly froze solid and school was closed almost three weeks, Jerry crafted a sled long enough to seat six kids. How he did it no one remembers, because the power was out the whole time.

Shortly after that winter, Darden Industries closed, Jerry began working at Master Tool & Die on Willow Road and married Nancy Jo (Sander) Cotton, a teacher at West Terrace

Elementary. Jerry's wood- and iron-working skills soon went to work in her third-grade classroom. When she taught the conquering of the American West, Jerry built a true-to-scale Conestoga covered wagon, complete with wood-covered, steel wheels forged by his own hand. For their church, he built a "Noah's Arc," which is used to this day.

Jerry was an answer to prayer for Nancy, who loved his sincerity and loyalty. In the words of longtime friend Sam Blankenship, the two "loved deeply."

In what seemed like only a few years, Jerry soon presided over a big family -- daughters Karen Cox and Susan Cox Dryman of Evansville; his son Derek and his wife, Peggy of Jeffersonville, In.; stepdaughter Sara Shane and her late husband, Mike, and stepson Sam Cotton and his wife, Debbie. His five grandchildren are Kristie Cox of Jeffersonville, Ind.; Jason Cox of Honolulu, Hawaii; Whitney Prye, Clinton Deig and Hunter Shane of Evansville and J.C. Cotton of Columbus, In. He also had three great-grandchildren and a niece, Bill's daughter Marie Cox of Colorado.

Jerry and Nancy were generous with that large brood and even with those not related. Many years, they picked one of Nancy's students in need, found the student's home, made sure no one was there, piled presents on their porch and quietly drove away. Their gifting was often anonymous. They liked it that way.

After they retired, they moved to the 18th hole at Quail's Crossing in Boonville, In. He and Nancy had formed their own social club called The Four Seasons, which planned trips four times annually and has grown to welcome new generations in the past 30 years. Jerry loved traveling, golfing, planning events at their church and staying active. But when their health began to suffer two years ago, they downsized and moved back to the west side. Jerry survived two bouts with cancer and when his health declined, he missed going to church.

A man of few words, he never pushed religion on anyone, instead choosing to live by quiet example. He was so proud of the day he was baptized as an adult, uncommon in the Methodist faith at that time. His daughter Karen took the last photo of him is of him. He was sleeping, his hands folded near his face, as if in prayer.

Friday, with family at his bedside, those once-calloused hands had softened and laid peacefully atop his blankets as he drew his last, labored breath.

A celebration of life service will be at 4 p.m, Tuesday, Sept. 11, 2018, at Pierre Funeral Home. The Rev. Jerry Daniels will officiate.

A private burial will be at a later date at Memorial Park Cemetery. Visitation will be from 2 p.m. until 4 p.m. Tuesday at Pierre Funeral Home, 2601 W. Franklin Street, Evansville.

Memorials may be made to the church he loved and attended as a child, the Salvation Army. Its opportunities for giving are listed online at <https://salvationarmynorth.org/ways-to-give/>

Condolences may be made online at [www.pierrefuneralhome.com](http://www.pierrefuneralhome.com).



# Events

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**SEP** **Visitation** 02:00PM - 04:00PM

**11**

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Pierre Funeral Home

2601 West Franklin Street, Evansville, IN, US

**SEP** **Funeral** 04:00PM

**11**

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Pierre Funeral Home

2601 West Franklin Street, Evansville, IN, US, 47712

# Comments

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“ A tribute video has been added.



**Pierre Funeral Home** - September 10, 2018 at 04:47 PM

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“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Gerald G. Cox.



September 11, 2018 at 10:59 AM

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“ Susan, thank you for sharing such wonderful memories of your father. I'm sorry for your loss of a life well-lived. Larry Pope

**Larry Pope** - September 11, 2018 at 10:22 AM



“ Thank you Larry. He was such a good man.

**Susan Cox Dryman** - October 30, 2018 at 06:48 PM

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“ 87 files added to the album LifeTributes



**Pierre Funeral Home** - September 10, 2018 at 03:33 PM

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“ Dear Nancy and family,  
Please accept our deepest sympathy in the loss of a wonderful person. Our thoughts and prayers go out to you in your sorrow.

Bill and Faye (Cecil) Wortman

William and Faye (Cecil) Wortman - September 10, 2018 at 11:02 AM

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“ Memorial To Gerald G. Cox

Jerry Cox was a dear friend of mine for more than 35 years. We met when Jerry and Nancy were married. My wife, Shirley, and Nancy were elementary teachers and best friends at West Terrace Elementary School on Evansville's west side. Shirley and I attended many Reitz High School football games together with the Coxes, sometimes arriving early in order to get a seat. At Central High School we would arrive so early that the setting sun would get in our eyes.

Jerry and I shared technical interests. Jerry was an outstanding artisan and craftsman and was generous in using his skills to help others. My Dad gave me an old shotgun that was in terrible condition. Jerry spent unknown hours reconditioning the shotgun so the Blankenship heirloom could be displayed. Jerry built us a little scaled ladder for our Christmas tree, and he furnished it with two little ascending elves. Jerry did not do things halfway.

Our 5-week trip to Alaska in Jerry's van was our most remarkable adventure. We planned our trip from Evansville to Alaska and return. We plotted our course including putting the van on a ferry. Shirley and I wondered how we would fare with Jerry's smoking in the closed van? Not to worry. Jerry gave up smoking cold turkey before we left! Sam became ill on the trip and spent a few days in a hospital in Banff, Canada. We urged the Coxes to travel on without us, but they refused.

Gerald G. Cox was one of the finest men it has been my privilege to know. Shirley and I will miss him, but we have been blessed to know him.

To Nancy, the family and friends, please accept our heartfelt sympathy. With you we feel your loss and celebrate the life of a wonderful man!.

May God bless you.

Sam and Shirley Blankenship

Sam Blankenship - September 09, 2018 at 09:23 PM



“ What a beautiful memorial to our dad! Thank you so much.

Karen J Cox - September 10, 2018 at 09:34 PM



“ Thank you so much, Sam and Shirley for sharing your memories. All of you shared such a special friendship. It was so good to see you at the funeral home today.. Mom took the beautiful flower arrangement that you sent home with her.. I was so proud of my mom, rolls reversed. She picked herself up with the encouragement of Kay and Steve and showed herself as the wonderful woman that I know. She greeted her friends and family by name and was very gracious to all. That's the mom that raised me.i love her so and miss those days when she was such the socialite.

**Mike Sara** - September 11, 2018 at 09:22 PM



“ Sam, I couldn't have said it better. You are not just a NASA alum, but also a writer. Thank you for these wonderful words. Keep in touch.

**Susan Dryman** - September 11, 2018 at 10:12 PM