

Jerry Kimmel

Success does not define a person. However, success seemed to follow Jerry Kimmel wherever he went. From the CEO chair to the saddle, Jerry's hard work, perseverance, and welcoming demeanor allowed for an adventure that lasted a lifetime.

Jerry Kimmel passed away Friday, April 3, 2020, at the age of 82.

Gerald Kimmel was born June 23, 1937, to Gerald and Edna Kimmel in Marshall, Michigan. He was a loving sibling to his younger brother, Jim, and his half-brother, Rick. He was an avid sports player and the class president at Marshall High School, graduating with the class of 1955. He married his wife, Carmen, on March 29, 1958. Together they have two daughters, Christine and Amy, and one son, Gregory.

In Marshall, Jerry began his business, Kevco Inc. with his partner and longtime friend Bill Everett in 1964. Over three decades, Jerry, Bill, and hundreds of their employees expanded the business across the country and moved its headquarters to Fort Worth, Texas. In becoming one of the nation's leading distributors of plumbing and building materials to the manufactured housing and recreational vehicle industries, Jerry and Kevco were awarded Entrepreneur of the Year for the Southwest region from the *Dallas Business Journal* in 1995. Jerry's success continued when he took the company public in the 1990s. At one point he had more than 30 branches across the country and 16 manufacturing plants. Jerry thrived in the corporate world, but after decades of hard work, dedication, and passion, he retired and settled down with his wife on a 225-acre ranch in Granbury, Texas.

Even in retirement, Jerry found success. What began as a harmless hobby turned into Jerry's second calling. Carmen had always been a horse enthusiast and their daughters also enjoyed horses. Not long after his retirement years began, Jerry immersed himself into the horse world of western pleasure, with much thanks to friend and horseman Cleve Wells. Jerry started from scratch and was proud to admit that he was learning new things every day, even into his seventies. He brought this positive attitude into the arena and treated his time as a horseman less as a business than as a sense of pure enjoyment. He once stated, "I retired totally from business. For me, horses are just fun." Anyone who ever saw Jerry in the saddle could easily witness the man's love for horses. After making his mark in the western pleasure pen, Jerry poured his heart, soul, and wallet into the reining world.

What started with one reining horse, Indy Star Dun It, soon turned Jerry and Kimmel Reining Horses into a household name. Jerry's biggest dream for reining was to have full stands and engaged fans. Jerry's home base, J Bar C Ranch, worked in tandem with McQuay Stables in Tioga, Texas, to produce some of the world's top reining horses. Jerry's own granddaughter, Lindsey Raymond, oversaw much of the breeding and fitting operations in Granbury. Kimmel Reining Horses is still in operation thanks to Jerry's eldest daughter, Chris, who relocated the business and its horses to her ranch in Weatherford,

Texas, in 2018. Gone but not forgotten, Jerry left an indelible mark on the horse world. In 2014, Jerry was awarded the NRHA Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Award.

One of the most remarkable things about Jerry was his inability to know a stranger. That smile and those big, blue eyes welcomed anyone in. Whether it be at the grocery store, a horse show, or Trinity Terrace—where he and Carmen moved in 2018—Jerry locked eyes with and waved to everyone that passed by. He lived by the motto: “keep your friends and make new ones every day.” He radiated warmth and a good laugh. He seemed to always have a lighthearted joke in his back pocket. Jerry leaves behind his wife Carmen, his three children, Christine and David Pearce, Amy and David Mueller, and Gregory and Jennifer Kimmel, 10 grandchildren, six great-grandchildren, and his beloved dog, Charlie. He will be greatly missed.

The family requests that in lieu of flowers, gifts in Jerry's memory be made to the NRHyA—Youth Unrestricted fund of the Reining Horse Foundation to benefit youth reiners. Donations can be made online at www.reiningfoundation.com or mailed to RHF, 3021 W Reno Ave, Oklahoma City, OK, 73107

With permission: Written by Courtney Kimmel and Meredith Kimmel