



Gerry and Jerry Ferris

Gerry's best friend was getting married to Jerry's brother. Both Jerry and Gerry were part of the wedding party and met at the wedding for the very first time. Jerry was instantly attracted to this lovely bridesmaid, Gerry. After the wedding reception, Jerry and Gerry went out together ... their first date! And Jerry announced at that time that he planned to marry Gerry. Talk about a match meant to be, despite the

confusion presented by having almost identical names.

Gerry was in college in Albany and Jerry was in the Navy in Chicago and both went back to their respective "homes" following the wedding. Two weeks later, Jerry surprised Gerry, showing up at her doorstep for a second date! Her response being "You should have called first." Jerry immediately offered to run down the street to a pay phone booth to place a call. Although they were living apart most of the time, 18 months later they got married on New Year's Eve, 1966. Now 54 years later they know each other so much better and are still best friends and deeply in love.

After graduating from high school, Jerry headed to college in Mitchell, South Dakota to play football and shoot pheasants! After four years, his football scholarship ended but he had not yet earned a degree, so off he went to the Navy. His Navy tour ended June 1967, six months after the Ferrises were married... and finally they would be together for nearly the first time! Gerry had her degree and Jerry wanted to complete his, so they headed to South Dakota so he could finish college.

Gerry was what would have been considered a progressive easterner, raised in the city. She fell in love with this small western town of Mitchell, South Dakota with its wooden sidewalks. Gerry had been raised a Catholic and was surprised that the Catholic Church in Mitchell was still conducting services in Latin.

This was a small town with many underprivileged children. Gerry got a job teaching in the elementary school and loved making a difference in the children's lives. She enthusiastically reports "The kids continually made my day... they knew hardship and helped me understand what that was like."

After getting his degree, Jerry worked as a field rep in the insurance industry for a few years, but then Gerry and Jerry headed back east to Saratoga Springs, NY. And there they learned, often out of necessity, the benefit of hard work and ingenuity.

Jerry eventually started his own insurance company and later a real estate company. They started a family and were blessed with two daughters, Stephanie and Colleen. Gerry was a "stay at home mom" though still working diligently, but now out of the home. Before long she was watching her own young children while also babysitting others. And for ten years the Ferrises had an antique/furniture refinishing business they ran out of their home. A warm, wonderful family home it was where over the years all the kids in the area loved to gather.

The Ferrises were never afraid of hard work and setting goals, knowing this is what would make life more rewarding and perhaps easier in the end.

After the girls were older, the Ferrises moved to a lakefront home on Lake Desolation in Middle Grove, New York, 12 miles from the family home in Saratoga Springs where the girls grew up.



One of the most fascinating parts of the Ferrises life is Jerry's dedication to swimming. Jerry found that after giving up the physical workouts of college football and then the Navy, plus adding a few bad habits, his weight had gotten out of control and it was time to correct that.

"I looked at myself and knew I was in trouble."

Goal time! He knew he needed exercise and as a kid he loved to swim. At his birthday party in 1982 he went swimming in Lake George NY and later told Gerry he was going "to swim Lake George next summer." When she said he just had, he replied he was going to swim the 41-mile length of the lake. After that, he established more goals – eventually deciding to swim the English Channel.

Where was Gerry during these pursuits? She was right by Jerry's side... the cheerleader and a very dedicated "pursuit planner," a critical function for sure. Gerry was so involved that she often had the feeling she was swimming all those miles right alongside Jerry.

This was no occasional hobby...so much training but Jerry's determination led him to become an elite world class distance swimmer.

Lake George – 41 miles, Sacandaga Reservoir – 29 miles, Manhattan Swim – 28.5 miles, Oneida Lake – 29 miles, 7 of the Finger Lakes – and this is just a few of the training swims. All in preparation for the grand prize – the English Channel – an unbelievable experience.

[Click here](#) for details of some of Jerry's swimming exploits including a news article and a vintage video.

Later Jerry undertook yet another outdoor adventure. He had an insurance customer who was instrumental in designing the snowmobile trails throughout the state of Vermont – a major attraction there. Through Jerry's connections this man helped the state of New York develop a track and, of course, Jerry had to volunteer to try it out – an 1800 mile course that took Jerry 2 weeks to navigate, alone, in the icy cold New York February weather... missing both Valentine's Day and Gerry's birthday.

What an adventure that turned out to be – with Jerry breaking through the ice on a lake with his snowmobile – submerged in the ice to his hips in the middle of nowhere. He heard a barking dog and followed the sound. That led him to a house where a couple was willing to interrupt their Valentine's Day dinner to help get the sled out of the lake, provide a warm place to spend the night and fix him a hot lasagna dinner. Jerry remains thankful to that barking dog.

The Ferrises' love of water brought them to the Keys several decades ago.... warm water this time. Jerry started scuba diving and soon learned to love what is beneath the surface after spending his swimming events on the surface. He still goes out several times a week. Jerry has been diving with Key Dives at Bud 'n Mary's through five different owners. On the dive boat, they call him O.J. – Old Jerry.

Now Gerry has more time for friends and books. But perhaps her very favorite pastime is college basketball. She is an absolute fanatic, even studying the inter dynamics of the teams, along with the background of the players from most all the major college programs, the scores, rankings and more. While she follows numerous teams, her favorite is Duke. The occasions she holds dear and will always treasure – being able to attend the Final Four twice, especially the time Duke won it all.

One weekend they decided to attend the Matecumbe United Methodist Church. They loved the experience and Pastor Bob. They are now members and cannot get over the friendly, warm environment they experience being a part of our church family. Gerry will tell you she loves the spirituality they found at MUMC... a deep sense of aliveness and interconnectedness.

And we are all so happy to have such a special couple as a part of our church. We all look forward to getting to know them even better upon their return from Middle Grove, New York.

