



Remembering



Gerald "Jerry" Donley, Jr.

Swepsonville Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. — North Carolina

Classification: Career

Rank: Deputy Chief

Date of Death: August 8, 2007

Age: 45

Jerry was voted in for full membership on March 12, 1979, as a volunteer and eventually became a full-time paid firefighter at Swepsonville Fire Department. The go-to man and highly respected at the department, firefighters came to him for advice, both fire related and personal. He was known for speaking his mind. That's just the way he was. Either you liked him or you didn't, but most did. He knew his stuff when it came to a fire scene, and firefighters trusted to the fullest that he would not get them hurt.

He worked part-time at Newton's Fire & Safety for several years, traveling to fire departments across North and South Carolina doing repairs, upgrades, and yearly testing on Air Packs. He left Newton's to start a poultry operation with his son. He enjoyed this work and was able to be with his family more often.

Fitness was a big deal to him, and he worked out in the gym every day. A charter member of the Red Knights Firefighters Motorcycle Club, any day he was not working and it was warm enough, he was out riding.

He enjoyed downtime at home, watching NASCAR, the Atlanta Braves, or the UNC Tarheels. He loved to be outside, and there was "always something to do" out there. He tried his hand at riding and showing horses,

his way of connecting with our daughter. He liked to have a party, spending time with our friends and coworkers outside of work. Being the life of the party was always his goal, and he usually accomplished it.

He put up a big "Mr. Tough Guy" front, but underneath it all was a generous man with a heart of gold. He rarely let anyone other than me see that side. He loved his family, especially the grandkids, both under a year old when he died. He was my best friend, my whole world, and my biggest fan. He kept me going and made me believe in myself again. We could talk for hours, tell the same stories over and over, but it never got old.

Jerry is survived by his wife, Traci; children, Christina and Justin Sr.; grandchildren, Justin Jr. and Lydia; parents, Gerald Sr. & Sylvia; sister, Debbie Kerley (Leon); brother, Russell (Lisa); nieces and nephews; members of the Swepsonville Fire Department; and a multitude of friends and coworkers.

On August 7, 2007, he was on shift at Swepsonville, and I visited him before I had to go to work. He ran an EMT call late that night. After returning to the station, he went to sleep and never woke up. His cause of death was ischemic heart disease.

