



Gary Lee Smith

August 31, 1940 - November 4, 2022

Coach Gary Lee Smith, 82, of Omak, Washington passed away November 4, 2022. He was born in Wenatchee, WA to Frank and Florence Smith and was the oldest of 4 children.

He spent his childhood in Pateros and graduated from Pateros High School in 1958. He then played basketball at Wenatchee Valley College for 2 years on a Basketball scholarship before earning a degree in Physical Education from Eastern Washington University where he also played basketball for one year. After graduation in 1962 he married Dannis Folkes in Brewster, Washington, and together they had 3 daughters.

Coach Smith had a long career spanning over 34 years as a teacher, counselor, and coach. He first began coaching football, basketball, and track at Okanogan Junior High in 1962 where he also taught Social Studies, P.E., and Math. In 1964 Gary moved to Bridgeport where continued coaching and also earned a Counseling degree from Gonzaga. He then coached and taught in Castle Rock before moving to Omak in 1971. Gary was a High School Counselor and coach for 21 years in Omak. One of his most memorable coaching accomplishments was when his Omak High School football team won the WA State A football championship in 1979.

After a short-lived retirement from coaching (once a coach, always a coach),

Gary was once again on the court coaching basketball in Tonasket, then Okanogan, officially ending his coaching career (for real this time) in 2010. Unofficially he continued to provide individual coaching for his grandchildren and looked forward to attending their sporting events.

Throughout his career Gary received numerous coaching awards, including Caribou Trail League Coach of the Year 5 times, induction into the WA State Track and Field Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 1999, and the WA State Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2005. In addition, Gary was a recipient of the Washington State Coaches Association Career Milestone Award with 100 victories in Boys/Girls Basketball. He also coached several Summer AAU Programs and Elite Teams in the off-season and helped many athletes get to the next level.

When he wasn't coaching Gary's favorite activities included working out while listening to country music, fishing with friends, playing cribbage, and proving that he could fix anything with his "MacGyver" skills. These skills proved useful when he purchased a 20-acre apple orchard as a family project (though no family members ever recall having voted on that purchase). He referred to time spent working in the orchard as "family bonding time." When the family grew to include grandchildren there were many great memories of poolside barbeques, holiday gatherings, and Grandpa pulling a sleigh full of grandkids behind his 4-wheeler.

Gary was there for his family and his athletes, on and off the court or playing field. They could count on him to celebrate their accomplishments and guide them through life's challenges. He and his wife lived in Omak for over 50 years and celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in June of 2022.

Gary was preceded in death by his mother and father. He is survived by his wife, Dannis; daughters, Jani Nielsen (Russ), Cami Smith, and Tanya Range

(Jeff); grandchildren AJ, Caden, Alea, Ryan, and Emma; sister Kay Huffman, and brothers Doug Smith and Ron Smith (Jeannie).

The family would like to thank our dear friends and neighbors for their help and support, especially this past year. With sincere appreciation, thank you Judy and Bill Smith, Les and Toni Sutton, and Todd and Kristi Fagerness. The family is also grateful to the Staff at Omak Mid-Valley Hospital for the care and compassion they showed during his stay.

A celebration of life will be held for Gary at the Omak Performing Arts Center, 20 South Cedar Street, on Sunday, December 4, 2022, at 1:00 pm. River Valley Funeral of Okanogan is entrusted with the arrangements.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 4. 1:00 PM (PT)

Omak Performing Arts Center
20 South Cedar Street
Omak, 98841

Reception

DEC 4. 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Performing Arts Center Recreation Hall
20 South Cedar Street
Omak, 98841

Tribute Wall



“ *River Valley Funeral & Cremation created a Tribute Video in memory of Gary Lee Smith*



River Valley Funeral & Cremation - November 23, 2022 at 12:16 PM



“ *Gary Lee Smith*

October 23, 2023 at 01:06 AM



“ *I just read today of Gary's passing and I was moved to tears remembering the effects that Gary had on my life. I coached girls basketball with Gary in Tonasket and I have such fond memories of that time period. I still have his playbook and drills. Gary inspired me to be an administrator during one of our late night bus trips.*

I will never forget you Gary and all that you demanded. You made an impact on so many people!

God bless you and your family!

You were and always will be number one in my book!

Shawn Anderson

shawn Anderson - December 02, 2022 at 09:44 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Life Tributes*



River Valley Funeral & Cremation - November 28, 2022 at 12:50 PM



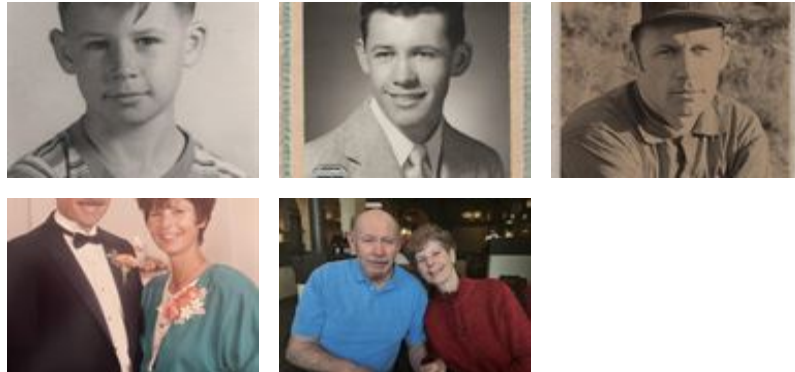
“ *Country Basket Blooms* was purchased for the family of Gary Lee Smith.



November 26, 2022 at 10:46 AM



“ 89 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



River Valley Funeral & Cremation - November 22, 2022 at 04:30 PM



“ 3 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



River Valley Funeral & Cremation - November 21, 2022 at 06:41 PM



“ 49 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



River Valley Funeral & Cremation - November 21, 2022 at 05:13 PM



“ Please count me as one of many who Coach Smith made a positive influence on. I can recall him standing in front of a junior high class I was in. He said, later in life you won't remember any English tests, but you'll always remember playing football. Today, I don't recall taking ANY tests, but ask me about any Omak-Okanogan games I played in.

Cary Harlow - November 11, 2022 at 03:13 PM

BO

“ So sorry to hear this news! Gary was such a fun guy and I loved Dannis throughout the years of working and teaching across the hall from her. Thinking of you Dannis and your three wonderful daughters. I know how you must feel as I lost Lionel two years ago and still miss him every day. It is hard seeing our loved one so sick. Gary is done with his illness and up coaching in Heaven again!!

Barbara Orr - November 11, 2022 at 02:09 PM

DC

“ Gary came to Omak High School in 1971 when I was in my second year of teaching and coaching track there. He has been a mentor and a friend ever since. A coach with the expectation of any team member to do their best is not always the most popular mentor. Anyone who had Gary as coach is more than likely proud Gary expected them to do their best and therefore through life lived their lives knowing what they had inside their heart and applied it to their lives. I have been with Gary many times when former students come up to him to say hi and and thankyou. There could be no finer tribute. Dennis Carlton

DENNIS CARLTON - November 11, 2022 at 01:16 PM