

# The Man Behind the Mission




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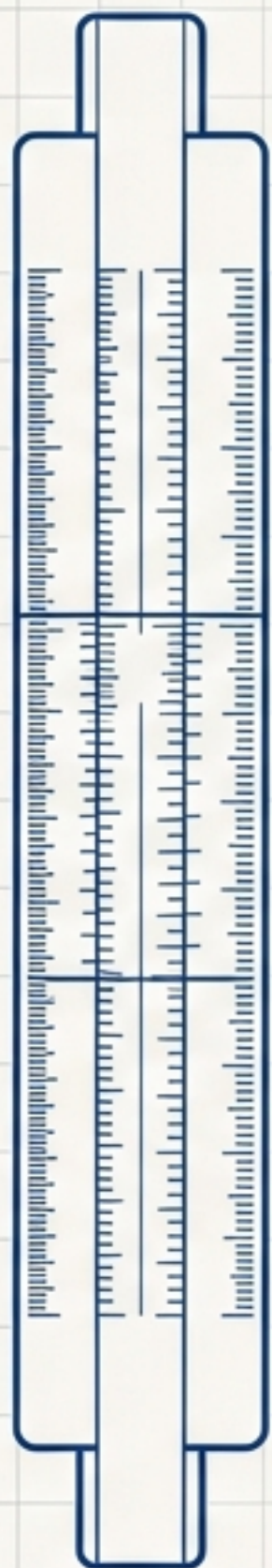
“Any job worth doing  
is worth doing right.”

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— *Grandpa Jerry, quoting the mantra his parents instilled in him.*







# The Engineer's Precision Was a Way of Life

Jerry's son Michael noted that his father, the engineer who helped send men to the moon with a slide rule and graph paper, applied that same rigor to everything. This included planning his own memorial service.

- **Meticulous Preparation:** Every detail of his service was handled in advance.
- **Punctuality Stipulated:** His final wishes literally included that the service begin on time.
- **Efficiency Valued:** He frowned upon inefficiencies, whether they were "unnecessary steps or too many words."

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> "He prepared for this moment today with the same rigor. Preparedness, precision, timeliness... they weren't just habits for him; they were a lifestyle."  
— *Michael Bostic, Son*



# He Was a Builder and a Doer



**The Go-Kart:** He built his children a go-kart from scratch, powered by a lawn edger engine.



**The Backyard Fort:** He constructed a fort complete with hand-painted signs: "Mike's Mansion" and "Christie's Castle."



**The Pinewood Derby Car:** The engineering behind the derby car he helped build was so sophisticated, his son wasn't sure he was "even allowed to touch it."



**A Helping Hand:** Later in life, he enthusiastically helped his family build decks, roof a house, and construct a retaining wall.





# Curator of the Family Soundtrack

Beyond the engineer was a man with impeccable taste. He was, in his son's words, "kind of cool."

## The Style

Ban-Lon shirts, cigars, Mustangs, Corvettes, and a Goldwinged Bricklin.

## The Movie

His favorite film wasn't *The Right Stuff*—which he forbade his son from watching due to "technical inaccuracies"—but *The Blues Brothers*, which he enjoyed hundreds of times.

## The Music

"Long before mixtapes or Spotify playlists, dad was curating the soundtrack of our lives." The turntable and reel-to-reel spun:

- Motown Legends
- The Mamas and the Papas
- The Righteous Brothers
- Creedence Clearwater Revival
- Willie, Waylon, and the Boys

## A Granddaughter's Additions

He also introduced his granddaughter to the music of Willie Nelson and ABBA, a testament to his eclectic taste.





# The Connector's Theory

Jerry genuinely delighted in the wonder of connection. He had a theory that there were only 187 people in the world, with everyone else playing anonymous background roles. He would beam “like he just solved some cosmic equation” when he uncovered improbable links between strangers.

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Before his son Michael left for college, Jerry gave him the name of a NASA co-worker's niece. Michael later met her by chance; she went on to marry his roommate and become one of his best friends.

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“But dad wasn't really surprised by this because, after all, there are only 187 people in the world... And for the record, yes, dad knew Kevin Bacon too.”

— Michael Bostic, Son



# A Life of Improbable Intersections

From his humble roots in small-town Mississippi, Jerry's life put him in the path of historic icons. He loved telling these stories not to name-drop, but out of a genuine delight in connection.



## A Key Choice

As a teenager working at a movie theater, he had to choose a local performer to sing before the show. His options were:

An up-and-coming, pelvis-swinging rockabilly singer from nearby Tupelo named Elvis Presley.

A deep-voiced, alcohol-soaked country singer named Johnny Cash.

## He went with The Man in Black.



He also crossed paths with Presidents, movie stars, Charles Lindbergh, and Neil Armstrong.



# Applying the Mantra to His Most Important Job

While his professional accomplishments are documented in history books, Jerry brought the same commitment to excellence to his family. His granddaughter noted that he treated his role as “Grandpa Jerry” with the same gravity and importance as his job as Flight Dynamics Officer.



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“He made us feel like his job as Grandpa Jerry was just as important as his job of flight dynamics officer. He was 100% in.” — Jerry’s Granddaughter

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# The Grandpa Playbook

Being "100% in" meant being present, engaged, and treating his grandchildren as fellow explorers and playmates.

## A Non-Exhaustive List of His Grandpa Duties:



Attended every single dance recital.



Played marathon games of Rummy Cube and Bocelli (and didn't let them win).



Pulled them endlessly behind the Sea-Doo on skis and inner tubes.



Came over every Christmas Eve to put out cookies for Santa.



Served as a guest teacher in his granddaughter's science class every year.



Taught his granddaughter how to drive, and later taught her about grace when she totaled the car a month later.



Moved her in and out of her first college dorm room.



Danced with her at her wedding.



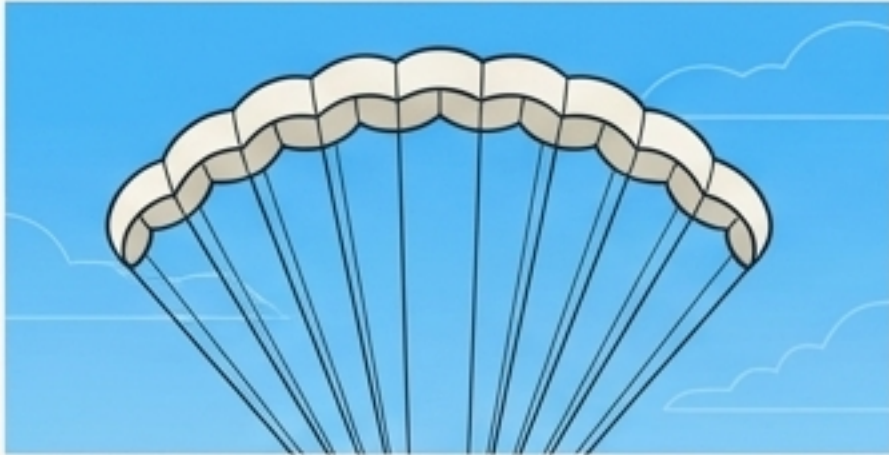
Cried on the phone when she told him his first great-grandbaby was on the way.



# Peak Grandpa Energy

His dedication came with a characteristic blend of adventure and precision.

## 1. The Adventurer



### Avenir Next

He jumped out of airplanes with his grandkids. His son described this as "either peak engineering confidence or peak grandpa energy. With dad, it was both."

## 2. The Grammarian



### Avenir Next

He never missed an opportunity to correct their grammar, ensuring they knew the important rules of life:

- The **ground** is outside; the **floor** is inside.
- You **can** always do something, but you must ask if you **may**.
- And most importantly: there is no such thing as a chicken fajita. A fajita is **always beef**.



# An Engineer's Approach to Faith

In 2011, Jerry delivered a sermon at St. Peter's called "Talking to and Listening to God." He described prayer as a form of communication more amazing than any smartphone.

## Jerry's Words on Prayer

“You can be in touch with God 24 hours a day...  
You never get a busy signal. You're never put on hold.”

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“We need to remember, however, that communication goes two ways.  
God's desire to speak to us is as great, if not greater than our  
desire to speak to him.”

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“My favorite time and place to listen to God is at night on my back porch  
looking out on the lake at the beauty and wonder of his creation.”

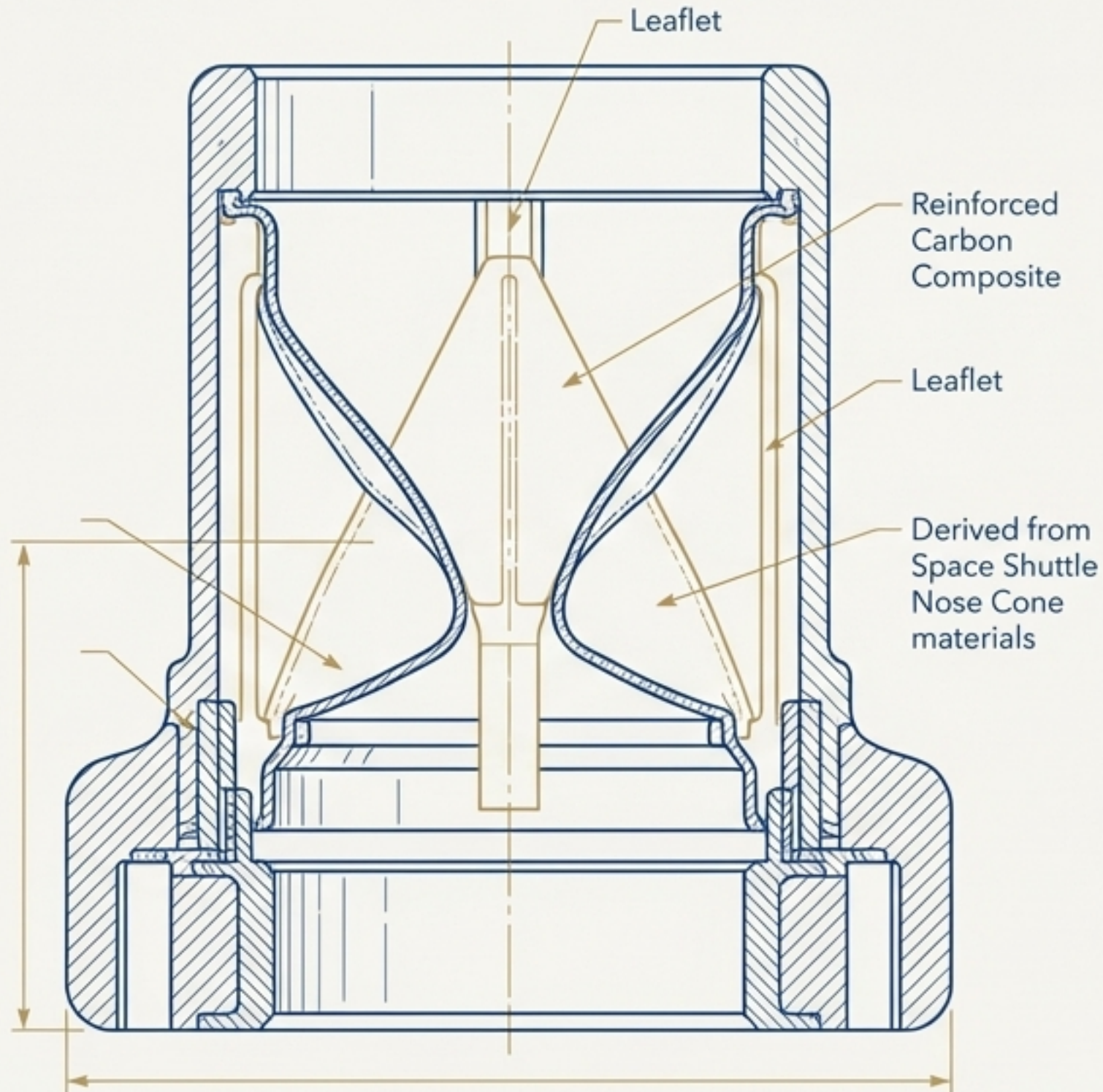


# Calculating Risk, Finding Peace

Facing heart surgery, Jerry the engineer went to work. Medical doctors, he noted, “usually don’t like engineers because they question everything.”

- **The Research:** He personally interviewed three different valve manufacturers and selected his own artificial valve, made of the same reinforced carbon used on the Space Shuttle’s nose cone.
- **The Calculation:** He calculated he had a 13% chance of dying. For a man who spent 50 years at NASA targeting “five nines” (99.999%) reliability, an 87% chance of survival was “terribly high.”
- **The Message:** After arranging his affairs, he tried to figure out what heaven would be like. Then, he received a comforting message from God: “Stop worrying about all of this... it will be explained to you once you are here.” He was led to 1 Corinthians 13:12.

“ Did I hear an actual voice? No. Did the Holy Spirit overcome me with those words? Yes... God did very clearly speak to me, and I was completely at ease about the surgery. ”





# Trusting the Plan Through the “Dark Glass”

God spoke to him again during his daughter Christy's adoption of two girls from Uganda. When a volcanic eruption in Iceland threatened their travel, a 'miracle' flight appeared. Jerry prayed, "Thank you God. You must really want this adoption to happen." He immediately heard back, "Yes I do, and it will happen."

## The Ordeal

The process did not go smoothly. Christy was stranded in Uganda for 22 weeks, dealing with court issues and nearby terrorist bombings.

Jerry prayed daily, even telling God, "I know you told me that it would happen... but next Tuesday would be a good time."



## The Lesson

During those months, he wondered why God was putting them through it all, but was again drawn to his favorite verse:

“For now we see through a glass darkly, but then we will see face to face.”  
— 1 Corinthians 13:12 ”

True to God's word, everything worked out.



# His Final Mission: Lifting Others Up

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Jerry's later life was fueled by his passion for mentoring and inspiring young people.

- **A Mother's Legacy:** He financed a generous scholarship at his alma mater to honor his mother, Lois, a dedicated teacher, supporting students pursuing education degrees.
- **Inspiring the Next Generation:** He relished meeting new space enthusiasts at conventions from Scottsdale to Scotland.
- **A Church's Youth:** Most meaningfully, he poured himself into the people at his church, building connections with his young prayer buddies and meeting with high school youth over coffee to listen, guide, and inspire.

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“This mentorship fueled him. His work here filled him with more joy than almost anything else. Maybe even the moon landing itself.”

– Michael Bostic, Son



# What Defines a Life

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## Quote 1: The Description

“ I realize that I will be remembered somewhat for what I did in America's space program and I'm very proud of that. Those are things which **describe** me. ”

## Quote 2: The Definition

“ However, it is my goal to be remembered for what I hope **defines** me. I want to be remembered for being a good husband, a good parent, a good grandparent, a good neighbor, a good member of the community, and a good member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church. ”



# Go Flight



And now that you've slipped the surly bonds of earth, I like to picture where I think you are:

Full throttle on a Sea-Doo, racing across a perfectly smooth, glass-like lake.  
The wind in your hair, a Motown song in your heart, the setting sun on your face.

And all of us treasuring the ripples of your incredible wake.

Godspeed.

— Michael Bostic, Son