

Jeri Jill Jespersen-Gibson
October 4, 1974 - October 22, 2024.



Anyone who knows Jeri, knows she might have liked to have things planned out in advance as much as possible. In true Jeri Jill fashion, she started writing her obituary before she went to meet her Lord and Savior. Here are her words...

I was born to Virginia "Ginger" and Alvin "Lynn" Jespersen in the afternoon hours of October 4, 1974. I had one big sister, Traci, whom I adored and claimed as my best friend. Almost three years later, my youngest sister (and next best friend) Jena came along. As adults, we were all able to connect with our sister Robin.

She rounded out the sisterhood perfectly.

My early childhood was spent chasing chickens, puppies, packing around kittens and baby sister Jena. A bit later, I spent it atop a horse riding across pastures with my dad, in the kitchen learning how to bake and cook from my mom, or (mostly) playing outside exploring nature for hours and hours with my best friends.

The rigors of school were not difficult for me. I excelled in academics, high school sports (including track, basketball, volleyball, swimming, and cheerleading). I was also in speech and debate and had a deep love for choir and band. I received a full scholarship for music to Arizona State University. I was very active in 4-H and won "Cowgirl of the Year" in 1986 riding my horse, Leo.

I met the love of my life in March of 1997 while on a spring break trip to Las Vegas, Nevada. We became friends before we dated seriously, which was so fun! We eventually married on March 27, 1999, in our backyard in Vegas with 10-15 of our closest friends and family.

Here is where the family takes over the story...

Jeri and Ernest Leroy Gibson lived in Las Vegas from 1998 until 2001. While there, Ernest was active in the Air Force and Jeri worked as a 911 Dispatcher (receiving her certification) and they gave birth to their first son, Noah Ernest Gibson on June 30, 2000. In late 2000, the military transferred Ernest to Colorado Springs, Colorado so they packed up baby Noah and moved. Jeri worked as a 911 Dispatcher in Colorado Springs (where Jeri received another certification). They gained their second son, Gabriel James Gibson on September 2, 2002. They remained in Colorado Springs until Ernest retired from the Air Force in September of 2003. Once Ernest retired, they moved to Custer, South Dakota where they both worked for the STAR Academy. During that time, Jeri counseled many troubled juveniles, (both male and female). They worked and lived in Custer until May of 2005 when they moved to Gillette, for the first time. In Gillette, Jeri worked for Home Depot and was a fantastic kitchen designer – she received a certification for Kitchen Design while living in Las Vegas. Jeri also worked for the Volunteers of America (VOA), where she counseled and impacted the lives of several women whom she kept in touch with for years. During this time, Jeri earned her Bachelors of Science Degree in Computer Information Systems Management through Colorado Christian University.

Their youngest son, Adam Josiah Gibson was born January 26, 2007. Later that year, the Gibson family moved to what we call the Crago Place, near Windcreek, outside of Moorcroft. While living in Moorcroft from 2007 to 2012, Jeri worked as a para-professional for Weston County and Crook County. She also got her Master of Education Degree from the University of Phoenix in 2010 and began teaching in the Moorcroft School System as a second-grade teacher. The family of five moved back to Gillette in 2012 and Jeri began teaching at the Children's Center, where she worked for five years. During these years, Jeri Jill was also working on getting her Wyoming Teachers Certification. During the summer of 2013, Jeri and Ernest hosted a young child, Justin, during the Summer of Hope Orphan visit to Gillette and later were able to adopt Justin Matthew Gibson (born May 9, 2002) in November of 2014. Justin became the perfect final addition to the Gibson Family. Jeri loved watching Justin learn American ways and shared his joy in things we take for granted, like running water and Pepsi soda.

Jeri started working in 2017 at Rawhide Elementary School. While there she held several teaching positions, junior kindergarten and sixth-grade were her favorites. Also, while there, she earned her second Master's Degree in Special Education through the University of Wyoming. In 2022 Jeri began working at Stocktrail Elementary as a fifth and sixth grade Math and English teacher. She worked there until health issues forced her to retire from a career she loved after a total of 16 years of teaching within the Wyoming Educational System. This was a difficult decision for Jeri to make, as she considered educating children to be one of her true callings. She had an ability to connect almost instantly with kids and genuinely loved them all and kids could tell because, THEY LOVED HER! She was able to explain things to kids in a way that they could understand, which can be tricky with math.

Throughout her teaching career, Jeri worked diligently on keeping current on teaching procedures and was constantly finding ways to impart ideas and concepts to her students. She was that "cool" teacher that had classroom pets of a tarantula and a bearded dragon. To the (sometimes) delight of her students, she would get them out of their cages for show and tell. She had a salt-water fish tank in the family home that she designed. She loved to watch the fish and would tell anyone who asked what species they were and what they ate. Jeri had this same determination in being the absolute best BOY MOM EVER! She loved "her guys" with a fierce intensity. She could laugh with them when they made fart sounds, and was always willing to hunt a frog, or a worm, or put a bug in a jar. We have laughed a lot about the salamanders she found in Adam's pants pockets... after washing and drying them!! She was always enormously invested in their daily lives and events and never missed anything that her kids were involved in, from school events, music events, to sporting events. She was the loudest, proudest cheerleader for not only her boys, but her nieces, nephews and great littles. Family was all important to Jeri and she was known to go far and wide to attend family events. She had a unique knack for keeping track of people and events and could tell you all about the family connections and which cousin just had a baby.

Jeri was a gifted writer, and loved sharing the funny moments her boys had, as well as special moments with family. When Jeri was first diagnosed with cancer in 2019, she began sharing her experiences with her cancer treatment on social media. Jeri was able to impart complicated medical jargon in an easy to understand and sometimes humorous way. She did not shy away from sharing the wide range of raw emotions during this journey and as a result, impacted the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, of people through her "cancer years". We as a family told her she should write a book of all the miracles that she experienced in her life, beginning with the major head injury she suffered after being stepped on by a horse shortly after her fifth birthday, completing three college degrees while a working mom, inspiring hundreds of women, men, and children with her insights and writings, her battle victory over ovarian cancer in 2019, and her magnificent fight against the return of this menace in 2023, up until her ascension into heaven.

Jeri had a green thumb, and created a beautiful yard, vegetable garden, and flower beds around their family home in Gillette. She had plans of planting more lilac trees and plants that would bring in her beloved butterflies. She joked about not being a very good cook but she really did have a way around a kitchen and created some special family meals and desserts. She loved opening her home to nearly all family events and would sit and chat with every person who visited. Her nieces, nephews and great littles called her "Aunt Shorty" with great affection, while the older generation of relatives called her "Jer-Bear". Jeri was an incredible musician and singer. She could play several instruments including the clarinet and the piano and passed her love of music to her boys. There was a time when she and her girl gang had a "band" in Upton, and they weren't horrible.

Jeri was a wonderful friend and collected new people both young and old to love everywhere she went. She was incredibly generous and looked for opportunities to (quietly) bless people. Her genuine love for people was apparent when she spoke to you... you held her whole attention and she really wanted to hear your stories. Jeri Jill developed a deep faith in Jesus Christ at a very young age and nourished that faith to the day of her passing. In the last year of her life, Jeri quietly tried to ease the rest of us into the knowledge that she would be traveling to heaven long before we were ready for her to go. She wrote frequently about what her faith meant to her, and how she hoped people would develop their own faith. Jeri wrote a Facebook post in which she sums up her hopes and dreams for her life with her own incredible words:

"9/5/2024 Surgery Day: I had my regular 3:00 a.m. wake up but was able to go back to sleep for a few. Anxiety got the best of me and here we are again. Today is surgery day. Admittedly, I have a real and sincere fear of being unable to breathe. This surgery makes that fear rage. I know I NEED it to be able to breathe and I know it's also a risk because they are cutting away at the mechanisms that cause me to be able to breathe. It's likely one of the riskier surgeries I have had to date. That's what we do when we are trying to save lives, but man! It's not a comfortable place to rest in. I am not saying I know how a soldier reporting to battle feels, but this might be as close as I ever come to it. One of the things I did last night to stave the fears is to read your messages on previous posts. Thank you for your kindness, your prayers and for speaking life into my situation. I write to teach and for my own therapy. I also receive a lot of support that helps in more ways than I can ever adequately describe. This morning, I am flooded with thoughts and memories of all the happy and wonderful things my kids have done and are doing. I'm so proud of each one of them! I remember Christmas mornings, silly fun at the park, playing on the trampoline in our backyard, watching each one get through high school and taking steps to achieve their life goals. My kids are amazing people. I wish the hurt they feel and the fear they feel on days like this did not have to be. God, please protect their hearts and guard their minds so that they could know you forever.

I remember my first dates with my husband and dreams I had of a lifetime of happiness. We have had some struggles, but by and large, I think we hit the jackpot! We have shared a lifetime of beautiful memories and love. He is a precious man, so strong and so steadfast.

Our memories are many – sharing childbirth and adoption, 27 years of holidays and daily life, and 25 years of marriage. I have the most amazing husband, and I know he loves and cares for me deeply. How blessed am I?

And the extended family I have is incredible! My mom and my sisters are my very best friends in the world. When hell rains down, they come running, strapped up and ready to fight with me. I always know I have their support. I have a loving father, stepfather and stepmom that all stand in the gap for me and for my family. I treasure you so very much and love you even more! You guys are so important. I just couldn't walk through this without each of you. So, today, I ask you to pray for these precious people and for all who have an emotional investment in my care – dear friends and family, I love you lots. Please pray for the skilled hands and keen minds of my medical team. Pray for their hearts and minds to be rock solid today and on their A game. I am to report at 9:10 with an 11:10 am surgery time. It should take a few hours from the time I go under, until I am awake again. The actual surgery is likely around 60-90 minutes. Ernest will check in with close family and they can update this message as necessary.

My faith is a big part of me (it's okay if it's not for you – it doesn't change our relationship). Today, I find comfort in some of my favorite Bible scriptures. I wanted to end this message with one I am hanging onto this morning. I believe God is in this situation and his mercies are abundant and never ending. My hope rests in God. Sometimes, I get frustrated because I don't understand his plan, but he walks beside me through it all and keeps me safe. When my day comes to stand and meet him, I will know that forever more, cancer will be gone. I have hope and belief that complete healing happens in this lifetime, but I know it will happen, regardless. Lots of love to you this morning! I wish you the best day!

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. The Lord is my portion," says my soul, therefore I will hope in him." Lamentations 3:22-24 ESV

Left to rejoice her life, but mourn her passing are her husband Ernest and their four sons, Noah, Gabe, Justin, and Adam Gibson, step-children Raisah Gibson and Anthony Gibson. Parents, Ginger (Steve) Jordan and Lynn (Shery) Jespersen; sisters, Traci (Luke) Mitchell, Robin (Kelly) Shultz, and Jena (Troy) Giest; bonus brothers - Wayne, Hanson, and Dillon Jordan; parents-in-law, Maurice and Ernestine Gibson; brother-in-laws Maurice Gibson Jr, Eric Gibson and wife Maria Malave-Gibson, Gregory Gibson, Troy Gibson-Liggons and sister, Theresa Gibson, and their families as well as many aunts, uncles, cousins and dear friends.

Waiting for her arrival in heaven are Gramma Mary, Grandpa Bill and Doug Barton, Grandpa Herb and Grandma Doris Jespersen, Uncle Earl Jespersen, dear friend Sonya Duvall and warrior friend Ryan Zorn.

Jeri will be forever missed.