



Jerry Dee Plunkett

February 13, 1928 - June 10, 2025

Jerry Dee Plunkett died on June 10, 2025, of natural causes at the Life Care Center of Waynesville, MO at the age of 97.

Jerry was born on February 13, 1928 in Latour, MO to the late Charley A. Plunkett and Ethel (Rockey) Plunkett. He was raised in Clinton, MO with his brothers, the late Charles Plunkett and the late Dale Plunkett. He graduated from Clinton high School. After graduation, Jerry enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was honorably discharged in 1948.

Jerry then attended the Missouri University of Science and Technology (fka Missouri School of Mines) where he graduated with a Master of Science degree in Ceramic Engineering. He subsequently attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he completed a PhD in Metallurgy.

Jerry married the late Virginia R.L. Wilson in 1954. They enjoyed 51 years together prior to Virginia's death in 2005. As academics, they enjoyed the company of their many friends in Denver, where they made their home, as well as the rest of the world. They were avid travelers and particularly cherished their many trips to England and Japan.

A very accomplished academic and inventor, Jerry was a professor at the University of Denver and retired as Vice Chancellor – Research and

Technology Director, Strategic Projects Director. Upon his retirement, Jerry enjoyed the opportunity to pursue his wide variety of interests and businesses. He held seven patents, primarily in specialty material products and their manufacturing processes.

During his service in the Air Corps, Jerry became expert at aerial photography and mapping. He spent many months mapping Siberia while flying in a B-29 above the altitude that Russian defenses could reach. In the 1960s, Jerry assisted Coors Brewing Company to develop microfiltration technology that was used during that period. In the mid-1980s, he became President of Montana Economic Revitalization and Development Institute in Butte, Montana. This organization helped to revitalize cities struggling with economic decline as mining resources diminished.

Awards and accolades Jerry won include the Poise Grand Design Award in 1997 for his work in constructing the all -fiber composite bridge on a two-mile road west of Russell, KS. Prior winners included Boeing, General Motors, and Ford. In 1973 Jerry was appointed by the U.S. Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-UT) as his personal energy adviser. His major activity was to settle a dispute between the Dept. Energy Research and Development and the former Head of NASA concerning the development of coal fired magneto-hydrodynamic technology. In 1972, Jerry provided testimony to Senator Scoop Jackson's (D-WA) energy committee on the need for additional research and development in renewal energy.

Jerry leaves behind two nieces: Gaye Plunkett (Peter Barker) of Chicago, IL and Joye Walker of Iowa City, IA. Others include grand-nieces Natasha (Joe) Sofen and son Colin of Waukee, IA and Erica (Frank) Goodoff and son Anthony of Houston.

The family would like to thank Jutta Presnell, Jerry's personal assistant, for

her kindness, patience and many efforts to keep him comfortable during his final years.

A Celebration of Life service will be held at 9:00 a.m. Thursday, October 30, 2025 in the Memorial Chapels and Crematory of Waynesville / St. Robert.

Graveside services with military honors will be held at 10:00 a.m. Thursday, October 30, 2025 in the Missouri Veterans Cemetery of Waynesville, MO. Arrangements are under the care and direction of Memorial Chapels and Crematory of Waynesville / St. Robert.

Cemetery Details

Missouri Veterans Cemetery - Fort Leonard Wood

25350 Hwy H
Waynesville, MO 65583

Previous Events

Celebration of Life Service

OCT **30**. 9:00 AM.

Memorial Chapels And Crematory Of Waynesville / St. Robert

Graveside Service

OCT **30**. 10:00 AM.

Missouri Veterans Cemetery Of Waynesville

Tribute Wall

TW

“ So a a few years ago on Josephine street in Denver. Myself and my team.

Removed all the asbestos in those houses so they could be scraped and rebuilt on the property and on the property, knowing it was pretty much right across the street from Du denver University the new owner is building a 17 story.

Building for the college kids all the houses was full of all of Jerry Dee Plunkett's belongings all of his work all of his whole life was in that those houses. I got to know Jerry through all his belongings. He was a brilliant mind.

I have a lot. Of pictures of Jerry him shaking hands with presidents. Your social securitrecord is ID driver'devices I have stocks and bonds of his of his companiestock shares. And even found some belonging to mayor mayor lamb, when he was a mayor of Deborah.

Ty Widiger - July 27, 2025 at 11:00 PM

PF

“ I met Jerry when both of us served on the Chamber of Commerce in Economic Business Development in St. Robert, Missouri. Jerry always stood out in a crowd with his friendly demeanor and intellect. People easily gravitated to Jerry because he was very engaging and intelligent. We quickly became friends and time spent with him was never dull. Our conversations were typically about current affairs in politics, history, solar energy, his many patents, his life in Denver, Montana, international travel and history. We spent many years dining with friends and my family, and I always enjoyed myself. He was a very dear friend of mine for many years and someone I will always remember. Jerry greatly contributed to our society and helped many individuals become successful as well, never taking credit for his generous contributions. He also spoke very lovingly and proudly of his two nieces, Gaye and Joye. I will always remember my time spent with Jerry for he was truly one of a kind. Rest in peace, my friend.

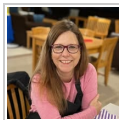
Paula Farris - June 29, 2025 at 06:32 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Pictures of Jerry D. Plunkett



Jutta Presnell - June 27, 2025 at 02:48 PM



Jerry and Virginia of course

Jutta Presnell - July 01, 2025 at 04:54 PM

“ Jerry was a brilliant man with a remarkable gift of being able to anticipate technological problems and to visualize ways to solve those problems. A case in point was the 5-million-dollar Lunar Project which was awarded to DU/DRI by NASA in response to a research proposal on which Jerry was the PI. In the mid-1960s he had put together a well thought out coordinated plan involving researchers from the Metallurgy, Physics and Chemistry Departments, as well as the corresponding divisions of DRI. The overall problem addressed in the proposed work was to determine the nature of the lunar surface prior to the arrival there of NASA astronauts (ultimately in July 1969). One of the concerns in the 1960s was: would the surface support the lunar lander or would the “lunar dust” be too deep for any meaningful activity.

When I first arrived at DU in the fall of 1966 as a new Assistant Prof., I had a joint appointment in the Metallurgy Department and the Metallurgy Division of DRI. I was immediately put on the Lunar Project and one of my first tasks was to investigate the nature of crack surfaces in ceramics in ultra-high vacuum, to ascertain if cracks in lunar rocks would re-heal when thermal stresses were relieved. It turned out that they would not because of the irregularity of the fracture surfaces. Jerry was always very interested in what we were doing as well as what all the other researchers were doing on the project. He of course was the idea man and could see the broad implications of all the results as well as having a clear understanding of NASA priorities.

Over the years I have had several opportunities to interact with Jerry and to share in his amazingly creative approach to a host of fascinating problems. I grew to love the guy and to appreciate his friendship and his amazing ideas. I wish to extend my sincerest condolences to his family. He was a man in a million.

*Sincerely
Paul Predecki*

Paul Predecki - June 25, 2025 at 06:26 PM

JP

“ 1 file added to the album *Pictures of Jerry D. Plunkett*



Jutta Presnell - June 19, 2025 at 03:07 PM