



*Our Friend*  
*Jerry Smith*

2009 Tribute

*These are simply a sample of those Jerry touched.  
Many treasure the experiences they shared with Jerry through table tennis.*

*Jerry was a kindred spirit. He and I shared a love of table tennis and a passion to share it with as many people as possible.*

*Jerry was a “rock” in our club, FITT. He came early many times to repair tables or help set them up before others came. I came late one day and I was sure he told me he was coming. So I asked another player, “Where Jerry? I thought he was coming.” They pointed to the storage room where we keep the tables. There was Jerry rearranging the plywood and boxes that another group had left in disarray. He selflessly gave up his playing time, so we would be able to get our tables back at the end of the evening. It was so Jerry!*



*I can still hear his voice greeting a new person who had popped in the gym. “Hi, I’m Jerry Smith. ‘Glad you came!’” as he extended his hand. Many of our members remember Jerry as the first player who they played with at the club. He was so good with them, making sure they had fun. He could keep the rally going, always careful not to hit it too hard or too spinney. He not only got them playing, he engaged them in friendly conversation. Jerry understood how to build a club.*

*Even though Jerry was very busy with family, church, and work, he made time to be our club’s Vice-President. For example, he was our co-director for the first Alaskan international table tennis tournament, the Alaska-Yukon Challenge held in January 2008. Jerry made arrangement (including thawing out a truck and picking up his son, Doug) to transfer two tables from Wood Center after work on a Friday and get them returned by Monday morning 7:00 am at -20 below. It was all done on time and without any damage. Jerry knew how to get things done!*

*As a player he delighted in the challenge to improve his game. He naturally had an awesome backhand! The forehand challenged him. I remember the night he had an “A haw moment!” He had been working on a plane the last couple of days and was using a tool that simulated the backhand motion. He had done that motion thousands of times and he realized that was why the backhand was so natural for him. We laughed and tried to think of another tool that would simulate*

*the forehand motion. He continued to improve his forehand. By the time the 2009 Alaska-Yukon Challenge rolled around, Jerry was a balanced player both forehand and backhand.*

*One of Jerry's table tennis dreams was to compete in the USATT Nationals. I was delighted when he told me; he and Janet had plane reservations and were going to Las Vegas in December 2008. We talked over the registration form, which he had intensely studied. In addition to the several single events, we planned to partner up in the opening <2400 Doubles. It turned out that was the best finish for the both of us, as we made it to the Quarter Finals. I was really proud of Jerry's progress through out the four day tournament (I got to coach some of his matches.). Steadily he improved his game: being patient, reading the spin, and selecting his shots. What really stands out about Jerry was not the points or games won, but his **outstanding sportsmanship**. He was a joy to play table tennis with, whether you were on the same side of the table or on the other side of the net.*



*Jerry was so fun to have at Nationals. He not only delighted in his events, but came to other FITT members matches to cheer us all on. Jane, Jamo, and I benefited from Jerry and Janet's encouragement and cheering.*

*Two summers ago I was on crutches for a couple of weeks. Right away Jerry called to see if there was anything I needed. He specifically asked about my dogs. Did they need walking? He could drop by. He not only called once but a couple of time. He was so thoughtful. My life has been so blessed to have known Jerry. I miss his laughter and warm smile.*

*Jerry made a positive difference in our community, state, and everywhere he went. I miss him.*

*-Diann Darnall*

When I lived in Fairbanks for a year as an AmeriCorps\*VISTA, Jerry helped make Alaska feel like home. His warm smile, enthusiastic table tennis play, and caring attitude made it seem like I had an uncle in the land of the midnight sun. When I flew the airline Jerry worked for, he arranged to get me a special "crossing the Arctic Circle" certificate. He was always finding ways to bless others.

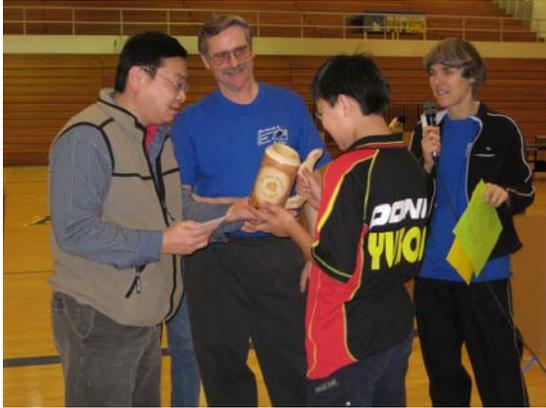


When I was moving back to Chicago, and I was selling my 1986 Mazda that needed more than a few repairs, Jerry offered to buy it from me at a generous price to fix it up for his daughter. I was so blessed by Jerry's kind-heartedness and love for Jesus. I will always think fondly of Jerry and be thankful I had the opportunity to know such a man. -Shannon O'Neill



I had met Jerry several years ago when I came up to Fairbanks to play table tennis with club members at the Patty Bldg or the Wood Center. Jerry's attitude was always friendly and everyone could tell that he really loved the sport and really cared about all the people that he met and played with over the years. I always enjoyed playing with him in both singles and doubles because of that attitude. He will be missed and my thoughts and prayers will be with his family and close friends in this time of loss.

Sincerely, Bob Janes, Juneau AK



We are still in shock from the news of sudden loss of our Alaska table tennis friend Jerry! My husband Jim and our sons met Jerry in 2008 Jan.'s Alaska-Yukon Challenge tournament in Fairbanks. They had a lot of comments on how friendly and helpful Jerry was to the Yukon players. I met him this Jan's Yukon- Alaska Challenge tournament. He was very passionate towards table tennis playing. I found he was very

friendly, youthful, kind, humble and easy going. When he made a good shot during our competition, he would have a heartfelt grin on his face, but followed by the word in almost of shyness tone: "I am sorry".

We surely enjoyed playing with Jerry and other Alaska friends through these Alaska-Yukon and Yukon- Alaska Challenge tournaments. Jerry was one of the key players who contribute more positive attitude and valuable friendship towards our tournaments. We were so proud that he played so well and had such success at our last tournament in Yukon. We still could see his happy face when he received his trophies for BOTH champions in single and double events this year.

He will be deeply missed by our family!

Sincerely, Xiu-Mei Zhang, Jim Zheng, David Zheng, Alex Zheng

Thank you for telling us about Jerry. It is hard to believe he died. It's so sudden. I only met him for 3 days, but Jerry struck me as a very kind man, a "gentleman". He was really patient with me, playing TT. He showed me some new techniques to try, and went over and over them with me. We had a bunch of new kids at our club this afternoon. And, one old man who used to play a long time ago. So, I played with 4 or 5 of them, and thought about Jerry. I think they enjoyed themselves. Please pass my sympathy on to Jerry's family.

Best wishes, Wendy Boothroyd –  
Whitehorse, Canada



*Passing of Jerry Smith from Fairbanks last week has affected the Alaskan Table Tennis Community. **Personally Jerry touched my life and was influential in the table tennis community in Fairbanks and the whole state.** When I traveled on two occasions to Fairbanks I was picked up by Jerry Smith at the airport and was honored to stay at his home with his wife and family in their guest room.*

*Jerry was an airplane mechanic supervisor. He was often on call and I*



*remember on two occasions him running out to check on status of work at his shop the evening and morning of tournaments. Jerry and I were paired up in a blind draw doubles the first time I met him. He was a great player. We took first place together against some strong doubles teams.*

*He was a great ambassador to the game. Always smiling and giving it his best effort. I am finishing up my photo & video tribute to him and will contact my fellow TT*

*players in Fairbanks and his family to decide on the proper distribution way so we all can view this. I hope to post this on You Tube or Face book. I will let you know. Karl Augestad, Anchorage Alaska*

*Sorry to hear of this tragic loss. As a sponsor of the Alaska-Yukon Challenge, might I suggest we think about a memorial-type award, honoring Jerry's memory. I'm thinking something that would go to players who, like Jerry, may be novices or come-backers in the sport. I'm sure Jerry would have wanted that.*



*I still can't believe it! Jerry was the first guy I met when I brought the food in for our tournament this year, and he was so nice to offer to carry stuff in. He seemed the picture of health!*

*Joyce C. Bachli  
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Very sorry to hear about Jerry's passing, I enjoyed him at the Yukon - Alaska Challenge. He obviously enjoyed playing table tennis and was very humble when talking about his ability. His success in the event was a great thrill for him and his delight was infectious. Jerry was one of those people who played for the love of the game. We will miss him at the next event. On behalf of the Yukon, I would like to suggest that we name the Novice Trophy after Jerry in future; it would be a fine tribute to Jerry and the game.

Condolences to his family from Table Tennis Yukon. -Dave Stockdale Whitehorse, Yukon



Jerry was a kind, compassionate, and centered person who is and will be missed.

As to kindness, Jerry agreed to let me play in a ping pong tournament last year even though I was late. Also, he was always there to help others and me improve our games. Jerry was so compassionate that he would actually feel badly even when

I would miss a point when playing a match against him. Yet at the same time he would compete hard to win. Jerry's faith is what centered him and you could tell that through his faith he was at peace living in this world. I miss Jerry. All of us will and should miss Jerry because this world was a better place with him in it. -Albert Parrish

Karl and I were driving on I-70 eastbound between Indianapolis, Indiana and Columbus, Ohio when Karl received email regarding Jerry's passing, on his I-Phone.

We spoke about how Jerry was always positive about life and any situation was not a challenge for Jerry, he'd figure a way to get things done. Alaska table tennis will always miss Jerry. I recommend Jerry's induction into the "Alaskan Table Tennis Hall-of-Fame" at the earliest possible opportunity. Table Tennis friends stay friends forever and are never forgotten.



-Andy Hutzel Eagle River, Alaska

Jerry and I were partners at the Alaska-Yukon Challenge 2009 in Whitehorse. We



were representing Alaska together with Diann and Bill. We had a very good time playing, some good conversations during our road trip, and as you know we won the team-tournament in our division. The things I will always remember about Jerry are his friendliness and openness.

He was an "Icebreaker" to new people in the club! I remember practicing with Jerry just recently and we stopped our play and Jerry went to greet two of my friends that just showed up the first time to table tennis. He was focused on making new people feel comfortable and welcome in the club. That must be why I ended up playing my very first game in Alaska with Jerry. I showed up 2 years ago and didn't know anybody and the first person I talked to and played was Jerry, the "Icebreaker". I will, as all of us will, miss him and his "wait a minute" during games when he was trying to figure out the score and where we messed up counting points. Markus Mager

When I first met Jerry I was struck at how friendly and accepting he was. I felt welcomed and like I could enjoy the game of table tennis because of his



acceptance and willingness to teach and suggest improvements. Even to a person as inept at table tennis as I was when I first joined FITT, he was encouraging and supportive. I owe much of any skill I may possess now to Jerry. As I got to know him better, I could see he was just an overall good person, man who put others over himself, even when it may have detracted from his

enjoyment or action. He would spend a lot of time helping me to improve my game by feeding me buckets of balls. He always had some helpful comment or suggestion. He would even tell me what spin he was using and how to counteract it when we were on opposite sides in a match!

His innate goodness and intense love of the sport of table tennis transcended all barriers. He was willing to take the time to teach anyone what he knew about table tennis if they were willing to learn. In the seemingly short time I knew him, compared to others, I retained many fond memories. Most memorable were the competitive doubles matches which would sometimes go on for long amounts of time. I remember one where it was me and him (team USA) against two German members of FITT. And guess what! Team USA won! I was so proud, he was humble as always. He was such a fun guy. He loved the sport so much he would play all the way up until closing time and even past, much to our encouragement! (And to our benefit!)

But as much as he did love the game, he responsibly did not let it detract from his duties as a loving and admirable family man. You could tell that he truly loved his family and table tennis in a perfect balance. I will always remember the fun I had with him in the sport of table tennis and will always be grateful to have gained his friendship. Here's to you Jerry! I know you are having too much fun at the eternal table tennis tournament in the sky!

Percy Bullchild,

In the short time I knew Jerry Smith; he made a big impression on my life. First, I am grateful to his parents for raising a man who I could point to and tell my son, "That's a man you could look up to. He respects and cares for his wife, family, and parents. He is a Christian and goes to church. He is responsible and works late to get the job done before coming to table tennis. He is unselfish and accepting and helpful to all the people who come to play at the club. He patiently teaches others the game." This is the biggest compliment I could give Jerry-that I would want my son to notice these qualities and have the same.

It wasn't so much the table tennis that I appreciated about Jerry; it was what he brought to the club. I was very happy to see his parents and wife there. There was a friend from church also. When it came time to pack up the tables, Jerry would actually run in seeing it got done. His hands were calloused-he'd barely comment about working late on an airplane or fixing his daughter's car. He loved table tennis, but it was clear he loved his family and faith.

I owe what I know about table tennis to Jerry-his patience with my lack of skill was so great-he never made me feel stupid or like I was infringing on his fun. We were blessed to have the gift of Jerry's life and it was an honor to know such a good person, even if only for a little while.



Mary Tony

What really strikes me about Jerry is that he was such a likeable person. Jerry was always cheerful. I really looked forward to seeing him and I liked playing with him. He kept surprising me as he continued to get better at the sport. Even more than Ping Pong, Jerry struck me as a pretty nice person. Not enough stress is placed on people who are happy; they make others happy. His character really impressed me. -Eric Carvalho



Jane and I knew Jerry Smith for only a few years. But, I think we knew him well, because it didn't take long to figure Jerry out.



When you spent time with Jerry, it was all about you, never about him. He always focused on other's needs, not his. There can't be many people who carry it as far as Jerry did, but, we (selfishly) wish there were more.

We don't mean to suggest that Jerry wasn't competitive in ping pong. He studied it, and he played hard. He did like to win. But, if he made a great shot, or did win a match, he would often quietly go, "Wow," with a downward inflection, like he was surprised it happened at all. With Jerry, you never felt like you lost, only that he won.

When Jane and I went to the Nationals, Janet and Jerry were there, along with Diann. If Jerry wasn't playing, he would be off supporting one of our matches. Jerry rented a car and chauffeured us around like that was his job (except that most guys who do that for a living don't get as much help from the passengers.) And, while Jerry did not have to take it off his back, he did bring along an extra club shirt, which he lent me, Jamo.

So, Jane and I miss Jerry, as we are sure Janet and the rest of his family and friends must. At least it can be said that Jerry was good to everybody, lived life well, and served as an inspiration to others. -Jamo and Jane Parrish

Jane's Note to Janet: I feel so grateful that Jamo and I were able to "pal around" with you and Jerry at the LV Nationals. We got to know you and Jerry outside of playing ping pong. We had a lot of laughs over dinner, and it just felt comfortable walking around town with the two of you. I never would have gone to the auto show had it not been for Jerry – I didn't know he had such a love of cars. It was great. Maybe the best was walking the indoor mall looking in children's shop for the perfect "bomber" jacket for your grandson. Jerry was so proud of him. I'll cherish these memories fondly. Love, Jane

