



Howard "Dinker" Preston Jones

December 1, 1947 - December 24, 2025

Howard Preston Jones ("Dinker"), 78, of Matthews, NC, and formerly of Rutherford College, NC, peacefully entered into rest on Wednesday, December 24, 2025, holding the hand of his beautiful wife and surrounded by his daughter, son, son-in-law, and daughter-in-law-all of whom he fiercely loved and protected. He was born on December 1, 1947, in Lenoir, NC, the son of the late Floreine Pendergrass Jones.

In addition to his mother, he was preceded in death by his father, Buford Jones; his aunt and uncle, Penny and Fred McMillan; nephews, Eli Santos and Russell Blackwell; in-laws, Edward and Billie Santos; brother-in-law, Harry "Diddle" Blackwell; and his beloved dogs, Bosco, Sparky Duke, Trixie, and Beau Beau.

Dinker was loved by many and will be remembered for his larger-than-life personality. An avid golfer, he was known for prematurely announcing upcoming miracle shots that rarely came to fruition, and for proudly claiming multiple holes-in-one throughout his life-when everyone knew he only had one. He loved his family with passionate dedication and was deeply involved in his children's lives, especially through coaching youth basketball, where he became legendary as a terror to every referee he encountered. A devoted husband and father, he lived by and instilled the values of appreciating what you have, working hard, and enjoying the small things in life. His contagious

laugh will forever remain in the hearts and minds of those who loved him.

Basketball played a significant role in Dinker's life. He was a standout player at West Rowan High School before attending Wingate Junior College (now Wingate University). He and his teammates were inducted into the Wingate University Hall of Fame as members of the team that defeated the #1 nationally ranked Gardner-Webb College, led by Artis Gilmore, in 1967. He later continued his collegiate career at Belmont Abbey College, where he was named the team's Most Valuable Player in 1969. It was at Belmont Abbey on Vail Street in Charlotte, NC, that he met his wife, Brenda, following their first date at the Open Kitchen in Uptown Charlotte.

Dinker was most proud of his children and grandchildren. He positively impacted countless lives through his volunteer work as a youth coach, leadership roles at both of his children's schools, advocacy for deaf awareness, involvement in multiple service clubs, and through his 25-plus-year career as Vice President of Personnel at Valdese General Hospital. A devoted dog lover, he never met a dog that didn't earn a scratch on the head and could never pass one without asking if it was his buddy.

He leaves a legacy to be cherished by those who survive him: his wife of 54 years, Brenda Jones of Matthews, NC, formerly of Rutherford College, NC; daughter, Mary Catherine "Katie" Jones Burns and husband, Rondall Burns of Icard, NC; son, Ryan Jones and wife, Tracy of Charlotte, NC; and his beloved grandchildren, Lincoln Burns and Cameron "Cammie" Jones.

He is also survived by cousins, Jeff McMillan and wife, Deloris of Conway, SC; Pat McMillan and wife, Gail of Lewisville, NC, and Freda Truesdale of Panama City, FL; sisters-in-law, Debbie Simpson and husband, Richard of San Diego, CA; Donna Blackwell of Surf City, NC; Ginny Santos and husband, Matt of Surf City, NC; Elizabeth "Bizzy" Gross and husband, Scott of Hendersonville,

NC; brother-in-law, Lt. Col. Michael Santos and wife, Karen of Kure Beach, NC; and a host of nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

A celebration of Dinker's life will be held by the family on February 7, 2026, at Cavin-Cook Funeral Home, 494 E. Plaza Drive, Mooresville, NC. Visitation will begin at 10:00 a.m., with the service following at 11:00 a.m. An American Sign Language interpreter will be provided.

The family extends heartfelt appreciation to the hospice nurses of Harris Hospice, the physicians and staff at Novant Medical Center - Main, and to family and friends for their unwavering compassion and support. Your kindness will never be forgotten.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Lake Norman Humane Society or your local animal shelter.

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home and Crematory, Mooresville, is serving the Jones family. Condolences may be sent to the family at www.cavin-cook.com.

Cemetery Details

Cavin-Cook FH & Crematory

494 E. Plaza Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Previous Events

Receiving Friends

FEB 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Funeral Home
494 E. Plaza Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Celebration of Life

FEB 7. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Cavin-Cook Chapel
494 E. Plaza Drive
Mooresville, NC 28115

Tribute Wall

L&

“ Linda &. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Howard "Dinker" Preston Jones.

Linda &. - February 06 at 04:31 PM



“ Dinker was my first brother in law and everyone following (and there were 6) had to meet the standard set by him. He was a force of nature with a big heart and always a jokester. His joking and storytelling was legendary and always made you smile. His nature was kind and gentle and I think that was why animals loved him so much because they sensed that in his heart. He has been in my presence for my entire lifetime and I will miss him for the rest of my life. Love you Dink ❤️

Mike Santos - January 05 at 01:00 PM

RJ

He was one of your biggest fans. He was so happy that your relationship was able to continue to grow, particularly recently. He has tremendous respect for you and so do !!

Ryan Jones - January 05 at 07:44 PM



Love that Uncle Mike. Like Ryan said he was huge fan of you and love you tremendously.

Katie Burns - January 06 at 05:54 PM

GM

“ I was Dinker's neighbor when they lived in Rutherford College. Dinker really loved his animals and often had one on his lap while mowing grass. I remember one in particular a male named Sparky. In spite of Dinkers efforts Sparky would disappear for days at a time, it is believed, with some certainty' that Sparky has left a lasting legacy throughout town.

Gary McClure

Gary McClure - January 05 at 07:45 AM

RJ

He found sparky in the middle of a torrential downpour outside of his office at the hospital. One of the most clear memories I have is watching him carry this dog in from the rain in his dress shirt and work clothes. He said he had made friends with him over the last week and just brought him home. Sparky was a wandering soul, but his home base was with dad. We actually had two dogs from two seperate litters from Sparky. Trixie and Dixie. Trixie lived to be 20 and they were inseparable. We were lucky to have such great neighbors. Thanks for letting us use your backyard for homerun derby all the time!

Ryan Jones - January 05 at 08:50 PM