



## Larry James Michael

August 7, 1948 - May 27, 2024

Larry Michael was born August 7, 1948, to Jack and Annette Hall Michael in Omaha, Nebraska. He was one of 3 boys and a sister who all shared August birthdays. He joked that his dad worked for the railroad, and he must have been home at Thanksgiving each year. He was educated in the Omaha Public Schools and graduated from Omaha Technical High School. Larry always spoke fondly about his days spent at the Boy's and Girl's Club of Omaha. He and his brother, Gary, were the first to be registered at the Club at its inception. He loved sports and excelled at many including diving and trampoline.

Larry spoke fondly of his Uncle Jessie and working for him throughout the years. He spoke about his time in Louisiana each summer with his cousins. He joked that his "country" cousins got a thrill out of seeing what they could do to their "city" cousins. He continued the relationship with same cousins who are now referred to as the "California" cousins. His grandmother Hall kept those city boys in line and created lasting memories for him and his brothers. Larry also worked as a "jitney" driver where he earned money shuttling people around Omaha. (He was an early Lyft/Uber driver :) )

Upon graduation, Larry enlisted in the United States Army. He always told the story that he went in at 5' 3" and came out of basic at 6' 0"! He served one tour in Vietnam where he learned to cook and follow orders ☐ He never liked

snakes and mice following his tour and carried that dislike into his later years. He also disliked fireworks and never wanted to be around firework displays.

Following his return from Vietnam, he was honorably discharged from the Army. He enrolled at the University of Omaha (UNO) using the GI Bill. He received his degree in Sociology in 1975. He tried out for the football team in the spring of 1971 and became an integral member of the defensive unit. His teammates remember him fondly and recall that he was a good friend and great defensive end. He served as co-captain of the team in 1975 where he was elected by his teammates. Larry is remembered by his teammates as someone who gave 100% on the field which he carried throughout his life. His infectious smile and positive attitude are mentioned by many of his former teammates, and you can see it still in many of his photos. He was also a member of the fraternity of Sigma Phi Epsilon at UNO.

Larry held different positions in and around Omaha including one as a prison guard. The position he was most proud of was as a baker for his military buddy, Louie Rotella. He joined the Reserves and met Louie during the monthly obligations to the Reserve Army. Louie was the son of the CEO of the company, and they hired Larry to work as a baker. Larry would speak of his time at the bakery and of making bread. He continued to maintain a relationship with Louie Rotella, making time to stop in and visit with him each Thanksgiving.

Larry relocated to Denver, CO at the suggestion of a friend. He held several positions in Denver, including manager at Subway and Church's Chicken, bail bondsperson, bouncer and in food service at Visa/MasterCard. These early positions honed his skills as an excellent cook. Larry also played semi-professional tackle football when he arrived in Denver. It eventually led to his officiating career once his playing days were over.

Larry continued his love of country by continuing his service in the Army Reserves. He retired from the Reserves in the early nineties. His time in the Reserves included as a cook, tank instructor and drill sergeant. He was very proud of his service and full-service retirement. He completed many courses and received praise for the excellent work he provided for the Army. He traveled to many places during his time in the Reserves including Panama. He had many stories of flying in helicopters and men he served with in the Reserves.

He became a father to Amber Mozet and Holly Funches in the early 1980's. These girls were his pride and joy. In the late eighties/early nineties Larry began officiating. He officiated all kinds of sports and levels of play. The girls have stories of watching Larry officiating football games in all types of weather and stopping at Subway to get sandwiches that always included "salad" (aka lettuce, pickles, and olives) despite asking their dad not to put that on their sandwiches.

Larry divorced and found a new partner and soon thereafter, his third daughter, Candra Michael, was born. The birth of Candra was a significant life event for Larry. He was excited to take his girls to Omaha to visit extended family every November.

Around this time, he was awarded a Denver city contract for supplying officials for the Denver Recreation Centers. He worked closely with the staff at the Recreation centers including his good friend, Dave Rodriguez.

Larry and Teresa met in 1995 via a blind date set up by Mike Massell. Mike had known Teresa in Cincinnati and had officiated with Larry in Denver. He knew both were interested in sports and set them both up for a date at Senor Ric's. Larry was very nervous and managed to spill salsa on his shirt during

their date, which did not impress Teresa. Larry continued to pursue Teresa with his well-known tenacity and charm and kept asking her out. He won her over with his smile. Larry decided to ask Teresa to marry him, however his plans to meet the plane and set up his fake arrest by a cop friend was foiled by a delayed flight. He could not keep a secret and ended up asking her to marry as soon as Teresa arrived at the car.

Larry and Teresa were married in Las Vegas, Nevada at Treasure Island on January 19, 1997. Of course, they were there to work a flag football tournament. The vows were witnessed by Larry's long-time friend and fellow official, Leonard Brooks. No one else knew of their marrying and they returned to Denver the next day to spread the news of their marriage.

Larry became involved with USFTL (United States Flag and Touch League) out of Cleveland. He regularly began traveling to Orlando, FL to officiate their big tournament of the year attended by teams from across the country. He even talked Teresa and others from Denver to join him in officiating for the 3-day weekend. He had many stories and experiences during his time as an official including traveling to other cities. He was inducted into the USFTL Hall of Fame in 2007 after a decade of service to the organization as an official. He met and developed long lasting friendships with many of the Cleveland and Atlanta officials.

Larry was heavily involved in the flag football leagues of Denver. He was an integral part of the crews who officiated the "Gambler" league and Premier league. He was always fair but was known for not putting up with any crap from players or fans. He worked tirelessly to make sure these games were officiated fairly. He got cussed out each week, but the players knew that if they had Larry for a game, it is going to be called a certain way and don't mess with the big guy.

Larry and Teresa's life involved many games. Larry was working at Subway as a manager followed by a night of officiating. This continued through early life as a married couple. In 1999, Denver Public Schools (DPS) began middle school sports. Larry got in on the inception and became an official for them and the right hand official for John Andrews. He continued working for DPS until the Spring 2023. At the time of his last game for DPS, Larry had officiated their league for 25 years. He made many friends and touched the lives of countless youth. He was always seeking ways he could make a difference in the youth lived by securing them equipment and clothing.

In 2002, came the birth of his 4th daughter, Elizabeth (Izzy). It was a scary birth, as it was an emergency C-section where she was born without a heart rate or was not breathing. Larry was a rock during this time and was absolutely convinced that she was going to be ok. He told the story of how she grabbed his finger when they were transporting her to the NICU, and he knew then that she was a fighter. His faith and rock-solid certainty helped Teresa through this very difficult and scary time.

Larry continued officiating and working at Subway for the next 17 years. He was a great "sandwich artist" but a bit of an olive Grinch. (You had to ask for more than the standard 2). He took pride in his bread and ensured that it was always fresh. Larry retired from Subway in 2019.

He drove his family to Omaha each Thanksgiving. There are many stories of these trips and visits to our Omaha family. Larry would make sure to try to visit his friend Louie Rotella and stop at the Omaha grocery store to get back rib tips. He made time to spend with his nephews and nieces. The trips always included him helping in the kitchen with his sister to prepare the Thanksgiving meal.

Larry turned 75 in August 2023 and his family was able to pull off a surprise

birthday bash. Old friends and family (both in town and out of town) were able to celebrate this momentous occasion with him. He was forever grateful to those who attended and those who sent cards or called.

Larry officiated his last games in the Fall 2023. It was the second year of high school girl's flag football. His body began to betray him, despite his mind still working and his continued desire to get out there and blow his whistle. Even as late as one week preceding his death, Larry was asking doctors if he could officiate again. It was a central part of him, and he never stopped missing the game. He will be forever remembered as a man who never gave up and loved the game. We will miss him and that beautiful smile but will take solace in knowing that he gave his all.

# Tribute Wall

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“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Tom Zimmerman - June 11, 2024 at 05:44 PM

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*1974 UNO Co-Captains-L/R: Tom Zimmerman, Mike Giancaspro, Coach Danenhauer, The Big Guy and Frank Golwitzer. We all loved Larry very much just like a brother and he loved us right back during our time together at UNO. Larry was such a great leader on and off his playing fields up to the day we were informed he was now refereeing in his new home in heaven. My prayers are with all of Larry's family and those precious little grandbabies that I know melted his heart. God bless you all.*

Tom Zimmerman - June 11, 2024 at 05:52 PM

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“ *Our Condolences to the family, Larry was a true friend to my family members after he got out of Military. We were like brothers. He was well Respected in the sports Officials circles will miss you big Guy, R.I.H. The Cunningham's Families !*

Sonny & Roger - June 10, 2024 at 02:42 PM