



Where Are They Now?

Checking In With Jerry Monday, A Coinbiz Veteran With a Heart & Story as Big as Texas

There's a Dallas-bred, Texas native named Jerry Monday who's well known to many industry long timers...and for lots of different reasons. Retired now, let's just say that during his 40-odd years in coin-op he'd been around the amusement industry's horn and back...and left a ton of memories in his wake.

Jerry's worked on all three levels of the trade in the Southwest, been all over the country and even the world helping folks design and outfit new game centers. He also was one of the very first to recognize that the salvation for many after the "video slide" of the early '80s came in the form of the redemption game.

Some veterans still remember this flamboyant Texan, and occasionally reminisce about him when they gather at association meetings and other social affairs. Few could entertain you with better stories about the business as it was "back in the day" than this guy (who once got the Gottlieb pinball line for one of his enterprises "by default" after the factory's regular dealer got drunk and cussed out a member of the Gottlieb family).

Jerry's been a route operator (Century Games out of Tulsa was his "starting line"

in 1960) and an arcade owner (he once had a game room at the famous Knott's Berry Farm amusement park in California). He's either owned or worked for distributorships (like Southgate and SunBelt in Texas, Betson West, Circle International and his own Century Vending dealership in California) and a selection of manufacturers (like Nintendo, Leisure Sports and his very own Century game brand).

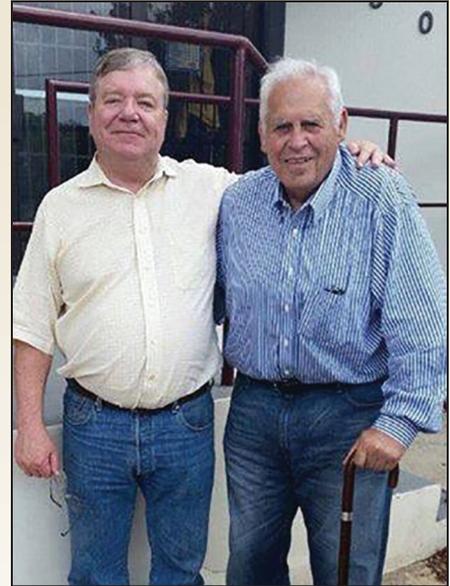
Jerry's even been a traveling coin-op consultant, taking him to such markets as Mexico, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and even Vietnam. But as often happens, what began in Dallas brought him all the way back there when he retired around 2001 after selling his last distributorship there to Betson...and then kicking back.

Showbiz Man

Jerry Monday was born two days after Christmas in 1934 (he celebrated his 83rd birthday during last year's holidays). After schooling, he served four years in the Navy (two of which were spent on the destroyer

USS Ganard). After discharge, he joined the Associated Booking Corp. specializing in booking rock 'n' roll and country music bands into colleges.

"We represented a lot of acts back then," Jerry recalled in a recent interview, "like Sam Cooke, the Osmond Brothers, Louis Armstrong, B.J. Thomas, and even Sam the Sham and Trini Lopez, if you remember them. Our roster also included a man who became a very close friend, Conway Twitty.

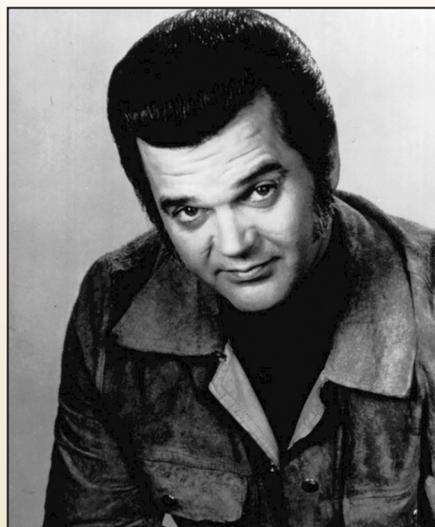


Our man Jerry Monday today (right) with his closest friend Johnny Gatens (Amusement Distributors, San Antonio). They originally met in 1974 when John worked as a bookkeeper for the old Sutherland Distributing Co. in Oklahoma City. He served as best man at Jerry's wedding to Sue. "I cannot think of a finer gentleman in this industry," said Jerry of his friend.

"Conway's real name was Harold Jenkins," Jerry continued. "He got his first name from his hometown of Conway, Arkansas, and started out as a rock singer before going country," he advised. "He loved baseball, and hamburgers with a slice on pineapple on them.

During a time when he lived in Oklahoma City, he opened a fast food place called Twitty Burgers.

"Conway had a used military prop plane that was so slow we once flew out to Las Vegas and it looked like the automobile traffic on I-40 below was moving faster than we were," Jerry continued. "One night, Conway was up on the stage at the Aladdin Hotel when he stopped singing and told the audience to 'say hello to the man who wrote my big hit



Country recording star Conway Twitty was a good friend of Jerry's and the two even friend and even entered some business ventures together back in the day.



Jerry and Sue Monday at their Century Distributing office in Gardena, Calif. where they were among the first to recommend redemption machines to customers after the video game business had softened up. One year, they were Skee-Ball's biggest distributors.



Century made some games of their own in the early 90's, one of which was featured on the June 1994 cover of *RePlay*. That's Jerry and Sue with their salesman Mike Robinson touting the *Paint 'N Puzzle* "paint by the numbers" touchscreen game.

Hello, Darlin'. He pointed down at me and the spotlight followed. Some ladies thought I really had written that song and asked for my autograph. Conway loved to play jokes on people.”

The Twitty/Monday friendship ultimately blossomed into a business deal with an Oklahoma operator by the name of Dale Cuzalino selling mobile homes. The business ultimately went south, but Jerry says Twitty paid him every penny he'd lost on his investment. The next Monday investment brought him to Tulsa and the opening of a string of nightclubs that included Mr. Magoo's, The Playgirl and the Scotch Mist.

In 1960, it also brought him into the coin machine business when he decided to expand the pins, jukeboxes and pool tables he got for his clubs into a service for fellow club and bar owners around town. Before long, the enterprising Mr. Monday had himself a route which he called Century Amusement. He ran that route for nearly a decade before selling out and returning to Dallas.

In 1962, he married a beautiful lady named Diana Jean. In due time, they had a baby son whom they named Jerry, Jr. Tragically, when the boy was only six years old, Diana Jean was killed in a drunk driving accident, and “big” Jerry became a single parent.

Making & Selling Coin Machines

“Around 1969, I partnered up with a former Dallas banker named Marty

Glazerman to build coin-operated foosball tables,” Jerry advised. “The company was called Leisure Sports and we named our first table the *Lil Hustler*. This earned us a cease and desist order from Nissan Motors which made a pickup truck by that name,” he revealed.

“Anyway, we took an exhibit booth at that year's MOA Show. It was my first of many and was held in the dead of winter at Chicago's Conrad Hilton Hotel. After dealing with the Teamsters to get our booth going, we ended up without a single sale until a buyer from Montgomery Ward gave us an order for a hundred home tables on the last day of the show. Four years later, Wards closed and so did Leisure Sports.”

Next stop on Jerry's coin-op circuit was at a small video cocktail table maker in the San Francisco Bay Area called Stella Games. The factory was owned by a man named David Price, who in future days would work for Jerry during the time he spent with Betson West. Jerry remembers that his first Stella video game sale was made to Oakland, Calif., route operator (and the first importer of NSM jukeboxes from Germany) Henry Leyser.

“Stella Games closed in a year and we were paid off in bad checks,” says Jerry today. “My son and I had made the move out there and now, I was a single parent out of a job. But, I'd been making some sales calls down in Los Angeles to guys like Dean McMurdie at Circle International and Bob

Portale at his place on Pico Boulevard. Tom Portale offered me a job as a salesman in L.A. When Bob Portale passed away, I learned that Bert Betti from Betson Enterprises in Jersey had been an owner all along.

So, guess what happened then?" Jerry laughed. "I was moved back up to the Bay Area to manage what was now Betson West Distributing on Howard Street. In 1982, I hired a lady named Sue Gaynor to help me manage the place. A couple of years later, we got married, and stayed married for a very busy 17 years. My best man was my good friend then and now, Johnny Gatens from San Antonio."

Back to SoCal

"After that, I put in a year or two working for Ron Judy and Al Stone at Nintendo, and then Sue and I relocated back down to Southern California where I managed the Pico Boulevard distributorship Circle International after the death of its founder Dean McMurdie."

The next move proved to be Jerry and Sue's most important when they founded Century Distributing in the L.A. suburb of Gardena. Over the next decade, they built their product roster from zero to well over a dozen frontline brands of cranes and prize games from Bay Tek, Benchmark and Bob's Space Racers



Century also made a crane-like reaction game called *Round the Bend* shown here at the Gardena office by Jerry, salesman Mike Robinson (left) and technician Paul Horning.

to Seidel and Smart. "In our first year, we were Skee-Ball's biggest customer," he proudly noted.

The redemption revolution was on and their arcade expertise put them a bit more in front of the curve

than some other distributors. They also branched into manufacturing with a "paint by the numbers" video touchscreen game called *Paint 'N Puzzles*, a crane-like piece called *Round the Bend* and even a photo

booth. In addition, their Spirit Design arcade consulting division was flowering under Sue's direction. (They divorced around this time and Sue now lives and works as a designer in Sacramento; Jerry says they're still friends.)

In 1996, Jerry buttoned up Gardena and moved to San Antonio to work at SouthGate Distributors on the invitation of its owner and bosom buddy Johnny Gatens. A year later, Jerry moved from San Antonio back to Dallas to run SunBelt Distributors, eventually buying that

business and renaming it his now-traditional Century Distributing. In 2001, he ended up selling that place to Betson. And then, our busy boy finally "put down his tools!"

Retirement

So, what's it like to kick back after all of this? (Readers are cautioned to separate the facts from the blarney.) "I have tried golf, but after a year, I still couldn't get the ball through the windmill into the 18th hole," he grinned when asked. How about tennis? "Not much better luck. Just ask that 16-year-old instructor with the white shorts. Besides, I have had two hip replacements, two stents and a suicide clause in my insurance policy that doesn't allow exercise."

Television? "I almost got addicted to *General Hospital* and *As the World Turns*. A surprise interven-



Jerry's arcade design business has taken him to numerous exotic markets, from China to Saudi Arabia to Viet Nam. Here's he's making a wish at the more familiar Fountain of Trevi in Rome.



Jerry proudly hugs granddaughter Kiley at her wedding. He's also close to Sue's daughter Shantelle whom he helped raise after he married her mom. "We speak or text every week, mostly about politics," he says.



Jerry with grandson Craig Kiley and great grandchildren today. In retirement, he still travels a bit and is active in two investment groups that meet on a quarterly basis. But mainly, he just enjoys life in his home town of Dallas.

tion from a case of Bud Lite shared with some friends at a Cowboys game at Hooters cured that habit. I'm enjoying life in Dallas and keeping in as best a shape as I can. I think back on all those tons of tiny meatballs I ate at those Bally, Nintendo and Sega hospitality parties they had back in the glory days."

What does Jerry also remember from video boom times besides meatballs? "I remember way back in 1982 when some guy named Al Stone stopped by Betson's in San Francisco when I ran that office to tell me he and a friend named Ron Judy were importing a video game from a Japanese company called Nintendo.

"I asked the big boss Peter Betti if we could buy some. He saw the potential, and ordered a small container. The rest is history. Betson ended up selling thousands of *Donkey Kongs*. I also remember getting a *Pac-Man* cocktail table shipped from Betson's Jersey office out to me on the Coast. I sold the machine to a Reno operator who in turn sold it to an operator in Jersey. That



The guy at the desk signing autograph for Jerry Monday is the NFL's all-time leading rusher Emmitt Smith who played most of his career for the Dallas Cowboys, Jerry's hometown team.

thing had more miles on it than the guy who went around the world in 80 days, and everyone made a profit on the deal. Different times," he said.

"I've done a good bit of traveling since I sold my place to Betson, consulting but also just for fun like a recent cruise I took. But recently, another guy who designs entertainment centers called to offer me a consulting job in Dubai. I'd worked on one FEC with this guy's firm many years ago selling games. I ended up turning him

down because I wouldn't know what games to recommend today. But it felt good to get the offer, even if I couldn't take it," he admitted.

The Highlight

Jerry's been involved in numerous deals, but we asked which one was the highlight. "I once bought a large entertainment center in Knoxville, Tenn., from the bank that had taken it over," he began. "I sold the entire contents to a Russian gent named Grenady Furman. Over three-day's time, five other Russians

packed up ten containers of games, soft play parts and rides, and off they went.

"At the time, I had my personal account at a small Bank of America branch. On the day the Russians wired seven figures into that account, I got a call from the bank's vice president to come and see him. That's when I learned they had an 'upstairs' for important customers where free coffee and bagels were available and no waiting in the teller line. I learned how folks with money lived. But after I transferred the

Marcus Webb: A Big Monday Fan



Marcus Webb

The first time I met Jerry Monday, it was instantly clear that he had a marvelous, country-style sense of humor (think author Dan Jenkins or standup comic Jeff Foxworthy). Like a lot of good old boys from Texas, Jerry has often hidden his considerable business smarts behind a down-home, unpretentious manner.

The more people have gotten to know Jerry Monday, the more they realized he's basically a teddy bear with a gentle soul and

a gift for friendship. He loves people. He also loves fun, five-star restaurants, great music, great movies, and an adventure now and then.

When *RePlay* started running a monthly column by Jerry many years ago, we discovered he had that rare humorist's writing talent. He took great pleasure in saying politically incorrect things about the industry (and when it came to industry big shots, he loved pulling the lion's tail).

In 1997, when I was still working at *RePlay*, I visited

Jerry in San Antonio and had the good fortune — or maybe the misfortune — to share one of his more memorable adventures. That was the weekend Princess Diana died in a car crash, and I nearly drowned during what was supposed to be a calm, peaceful, river rafting trip with Jerry.

The highlight of the story came when we hit a patch of unseasonable white water

and I was bounced over the side. As I disappeared below the surface for the third time, Jerry (as he

later admitted) was thinking: "If Marcus drowns, what will I tell Eddie!?"

Happily, he never had to make that phone call, and we have been laughing about that unplanned swim for 20 years.

from Marcus Webb
former *RePlay* Editor

Russian's money over to another bank, no more bagels."

Good People

Jerry says he's met many fine people in the course of his long and busy career. Besides Johnny Gatens, there's Linda Fernandez of the Fun Factory chain. "I did 21 IAAPA shows and every one of Linda's famous parties," he noted. "Sue and I were at her first one and were there for her at another time when her husband Kane was laid to rest.

"Of course, Bill Cravens, Kenny Anderson and Al Kress are on top of my list of industry greats. And then there's Marcus Webb, a close friend of mine during the time he was *RePlay's* Editor and since. He even ran a number of my very own 'think' pieces in the magazine. I've been lucky to know and do business with a lot more nice folks like them.

"I also witnessed many acts of kindness over the years. Like the Fernandez family providing scholarship money to their Hawaiian employees. Or when one of my own employees at Betson died and the company paid his wife three-month's salary.

"Then I remember when Maynard Ostrow, the arcade operator at Circus Circus in Las Vegas, shipped me hundreds of stuffed animals for a Dallas charity for abused kids that I was sup-

porting. These and others were all good people.

"I met a lot of folks and made a lot of friends over the years. I hope some of those who spent a fun-filled night together with me will remember me

fondly, especially now that I've mellowed," he laughs. "Any possible embarrassment I may have caused them was strictly unintentional," he laughs.



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