



Jennifer Lynn Stephens

NOV 2, 1972 - APR 3, 2020



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Jeni Stephens of Memphis, TN left us to be with the Lord on Friday, April 3rd, 2020. She was a graduate of Harding Academy Memphis, completing her undergraduate degree at Lambuth University and her M.B.A. in Non-Profit Management at Vanderbilt University, later securing her Mechanical Contractors license in Memphis, TN.

Jeni loved singing, dancing (not the best-but she tried), theater (with her favorite role as the female lead in the Lambuth production of I Do I Do), public speaking, fund-raising, emceeing & judging events, mentoring young women, spending time with her loving Chihuahuas (Olive, Laudi and Forrest) and fishing with her family.

Jeni was crowned Miss Lambuth in 1995, Miss Memphis in 1996 and Miss Tennessee in 1996 where she represented the great state of TN in the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, NJ. More importantly, as Miss Tennessee, Jeni was the Governor's Official Spokesperson for a Safe and Drug-Free Tennessee (representing the D.A.R.E. program) and the Spokesperson for the Department of Children's Services in Nashville, TN. Jeni received the Phi Mu (Fraternity for Women) National Outstanding Alumni Community Service award in 1998, was a Memphis "Top 40 under 40" in 2004, and was selected as the "Volunteer of the Year" for the Miss Tennessee Scholarship Pageant in 2010.

Jeni served on many Boards in Memphis for many years including Playhouse on the Square, where she started her acting career on their stages and where she was currently a teacher to up and coming performers. Jeni served the not-for-profit world throughout her career working for organizations such as Memphis Bio works, Memphis Museums, and most recently as the Director of Philanthropy for Shelby Residential & Vocational Services (S.R.V.S.).

Jeni was a very kind soul and loved by many. She lived by the motto "kindness is not an act - it is a lifestyle" which she unselfishly demonstrated throughout her life. "Gracefully gritty" and "down-to earth" in her life with family and friends, she was a tireless, constant champion to the under-



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loved and under-served. She loaned her strength and compassion when others were down. She was a loyal friend to the down-trodden, and her smile could warm any heart.

She is now in heaven bringing her special brand of sass and class - wearing the best crown of all - freedom in Christ. A great loss for the entire Memphis community, the State of Tennessee, in which she represented so well for so many years, as well as the Miss America Organization and all the young women she mentored. For us her family and friends - we remember Jeni with the sense of humor she exuded and loved.

Since there are no funeral services currently open to the public, we will be planning a Celebration of Life service for Jeni during the summer of 2020. In lieu of food or flowers at this time, we kindly request that you redirect your financial kindness to one of Jeni's favorite charities listed below:

<https://www.srvs.org/donate>

<https://gracehouseofmemphis.org/donate/>

Going forward, Jeni would want us all to champion and support our local community mental health organizations; and she would want you to please ask for help if you or someone you know is struggling with depression, alcoholism or thoughts of contemplating suicide.

We love you and will miss you. Rest well, Jeni.



Tribute Wall

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TN

Tony Nelson posted:

Tony Nelson a very good friend of mine has been laid down for rest, love you Jeni

May 12 at 12:29 PM

JW

Jordan Marshall Wonsmos posted:

To Her Family,I was blessed to know Jeni many years ago while performing in The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe at Circuit Playhouse. We were in it 2 years consecutively and the second year, she played my older sister, "Susan." I remember Jeni had the voice of an angel. She was so beautiful, on the inside and out and I looked up to her and viewed her as a role model. I knew she was special and would "make it," and it was no surprise to me that she did! I vividly remember watching her compete in Miss America and cheering for her so proudly. I am deeply saddened to learn of Jeni's passing. She was a shining star to me and many others and I will always remember her kindness and light.I pray for comfort and peace to all those left behind. And I pray that she is resting well.Much Love,Jordan Marshall Wonsmos"Lucy" from Lion, Witch all those years ago ❤️

April 10 at 5:12 PM

BL

Brenda Little lit a candle in honor of Jennifer .

Jeni was a beautiful and really sweet child...I will always remember her sitting as close as possible to her Grandmother (Grace Stephens) until she realized we were family and she could come with my kids to play. A very sweet person inside and out. May God wrap his arms around you and hold you close..Never will be forgotten. Cousins..Brenda,David,David Jr. and Briana



April 10 at 6:27 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Jennifer by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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