

Gerald (Jerry) Kendall Smith

Gerald (Jerry) Kendall Smith, our beloved father, passed away on the morning of October 3, 2025. He leaves behind three children—Gerald Francis, Kendall Elizabeth, and John Christopher—and seven wonderful grandchildren. He is now reunited with his beloved wife and our mother, Jane Elizabeth Smith.

Jerry was extraordinary—blessed with a keen intellect, a sharp and well-honed sense of humor, and a humble spirit. He is perhaps best known for his immeasurable contributions to the development of bankruptcy law, where he tirelessly promoted excellence, integrity, and professionalism. Yet to those who knew him best, Jerry was so much more: a devoted husband and father, an avid outdoorsman, and a true friend whose circle spanned all walks of life.

Born in Manhattan, Kansas, on November 6, 1936, Jerry grew up hunting quail and pheasant, golfing, and fishing. His father passed away when Jerry was just 14, but the local community recognized his promise and helped support him through college. He graduated from Kansas State University in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science degree, then attended New York University School of Law as a Root-Tilden Scholar. At NYU, he served as Articles and Survey Editor of the *Law Review* before earning his Juris Doctorate in 1961.

Though offered opportunities in New York, Jerry followed the call of the West, settling in Phoenix, Arizona, to join Lewis, Roca, Scoville, Beauchamp & Linton. He began his career in commercial litigation, suretyship, and construction law, but his path soon turned toward bankruptcy law. In 1971, he was appointed Deputy Director of the Commission on the Bankruptcy Laws of the United States, charged with modernizing the Bankruptcy Act of 1898. Alongside Professor Frank Kennedy, Jerry co-authored the comprehensive report that ultimately shaped the 1978 Bankruptcy Reform Act. In the years leading to the Act's passage, he served as a trusted consultant to Congress as a member of the National Bankruptcy Conference.

Jerry's influence continued for decades. In 1993, the Chief Justice of the United States appointed him to the Advisory Committee on the Rules of Bankruptcy of the Judicial Conference of the United States, where he served until 1999. He was a founding member and director of the American Bankruptcy Institute and played a central role in forming the American College of Bankruptcy, later receiving its prestigious Distinguished Service Award in 2000. His leadership extended internationally through the Transnational Insolvency Project, and he served on the Board of Directors of the Ninth Judicial Circuit Historical Society beginning in 1988. As an adjunct professor at both the University of Arizona and Arizona State University, he mentored future generations of lawyers.

Jerry wrote extensively on bankruptcy, ethics, and professionalism. He contributed to and advised the *Norton Bankruptcy Law Institute*-publications for more than three decades, and co-edited *Valentine & Friends Revisited*, a collection of sports articles on deep sea fishing in the Gulf of Mexico—an endeavor that reflected his love of friendship and adventure.

Jerry's list of legal accomplishments cannot be fully captured here. Perhaps his own words best summarize his philosophy: *"The law is a profession, and lawyers must be civil to one another and those they oppose... more simply, treat others with respect."*

Beyond his professional legacy, Jerry and Jane built a remarkable life together. They constructed a farmhouse, developed a 30-acre vineyard, flew their small plane to Alaska and back, traveled the world, and gathered an extraordinary circle of friends. Most importantly, they shared these gifts generously with their children and grandchildren.

Jerry will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him. Dad, may you have tight lines and tailwinds.

Arrangements for Jerry's Celebration of Life are still pending. You can reach out to John Smith at jsmith@rllaz.com for any updates.