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Gene Edward Hollifield

May 8, 1939 - April 26, 2026

Gene Edward Hollifield, 86, passed away Sunday, April 26, 2026 at his home in Marion, NC.

Gene was born on May 8, 1939 to the late Mae Taylor Hollifield and Delmar Tom Hollifield. In addition to his parents, Gene was preceded in death by his sister, Wanda Hollifield Creson.

Gene grew up in Marion, NC and graduated from Marion High School and Gardner Webb University.

He proudly served in the US Army Reserve for thirty years. Baseball was a passion of Gene's and while being a member of Kiwanis, he coached the Kiwanis baseball teams for twenty years. He also coached West McDowell Junior High baseball for five undefeated seasons. Gene coached baseball at East McDowell Junior High for three seasons.

Gene is survived by his wife, Charlene Cadle Hollifield; his daughter, Debbie Ayers and her husband, Jim, of Huntersville, NC; grandson, Zack and his wife, Margaret; great-grandchildren, Max and Asa of Cornelius, NC; granddaughter, Maddie of Charlotte, NC; daughter, Sherry Bryan and her husband Fred of Salisbury, NC; granddaughter, Bess Pomaizl and her husband, Brayden of Charlotte, NC; grandson

granddaughter, Bess Pomajzl and her husband, Brayden of Charlotte, NC; grandson, Luke of Salisbury, NC; son, Eric Hollifield and his wife, Jennifer of Atlanta, GA; grandson, Nick of West Palm Beach, FL; granddaughter, Lauren of Atlanta, GA; step-children, Scott Sisk and his wife, Katherine of Elizabethtown, KY; grandchildren, Robert of Hawaii; Chaz of Huntington, WV; Anna of Huntsville, AL; and Jenni Frye and her husband, Ryan of Newton, NC; and grandchildren, Connor of Hickory, NC; Cailin and Morgan of Newton, NC. Gene leaves behind many special friends who loved him dearly.

A celebration of Life will be held at 1pm, Saturday, May 2, 2026 at St. John's Episcopal Church, 339 S. Main Street, Marion, NC with the Rev. Dr. Erin Kirby, Rev. Dn. Kerry Davis, and the Rev. Laura P. Myhr officiating. Interment will follow at the church columbarium. The family will receive friends in the parish hall following the service.

Donations in Gene's memory may be made to St. John's Episcopal Church, 339 S. Main Street, Marion, NC 28752 or to Hospice of the Carolina Foothills, 374 Hudlow Road, Forest City, NC 28043.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall



—Dana Owenby Bolick



Dear Debbie, Sincere condolences to you and your family in the loss of your father. Take care. Margot Withrow McDowell High School Class of 1981

—Margot Withrow

An Open Letter to Coach Gene “Geno” Hollifield Dear Coach, On behalf of what I believe to be hundreds of young men—well over 250 players whose lives you touched over two decades—I want to say thank you. In the mid-1980s, if you were under 18 and wanted to play summer baseball, there was only one place you hoped to land: the Marion Kiwanis Club team—the orange and black. I joined at just 13 years old, more batboy than player at first, but from day one I knew I was part of something special. Practices were filled with some of the best players McDowell County would ever see—but what stood out even more was the culture you created. Big personalities, deep respect for the game, and an undeniable love for baseball—that was a Gene Hollifield team. Over five years of playing for you, I can hardly remember losing more than a handful of games. But wins and losses were never the most important thing. What mattered most was who you were off

were never the most important thing. What mattered most was who you were on the field—a mentor, a steady voice, and someone who always had time for a young man who needed direction or just a little encouragement. For many of us, attending a Major League Baseball game was something we never imagined. But you made it happen. Year after year, you found a way—raising money, organizing volunteers, and taking a group of teenage boys to Atlanta to see the Braves.

Those trips meant more than you probably ever knew. For many of us, they were once-in-a-lifetime experiences that only happened because of you. And then there was East Court Market. It wasn't just a store—it was a gathering place. On any given day, current and former players would stop in—seeking advice, sharing stories, or just hoping to catch a little bit of that "Geno magic." You always made time. I still smile thinking about you in the coaching box at third base, full of energy, calling out, "Let's go—get in the square circle!" I'm not sure any of us fully understood what it meant, but we all knew it mattered because it came from you. Thank you, Coach—not just for teaching us how to play baseball, but for showing us how to carry ourselves in life. You made us better players, but more importantly, you made us better men. You will be deeply missed, but never forgotten.

—Player



Gene, you will be greatly missed. Deepest Sympathy for your family.

—Kelly Baker



Mr. Hollifield, You heard I wanted to start hunting and knew I didn't have any camouflage. You didn't mention the trouble I'd been in, you just said, "Come on with me," and invited me into your home. We hadn't known each other long, but you pulled down boxes and crates and fit me just right in your Army fatigues. "You're all set now," you said, and I wore those hunting clothes all through high school and long after.

What lasted wasn't the gear, it was how you made me feel, valued, seen, like my story mattered. You gave me confidence when I needed it most, believing I was a good kid who'd be just fine. You didn't have to say it; I just felt it. And for the record–and this is very important–I'll always

know the right way to slice a tomato, Mr. Hollifield, thin, paper-thin, so it's just right. God love ya, sir. Thank you for the memories and for sharing time. Jacob Hedman

–Jacob Hedman



Gene was a good baseball coach, but more importantly a good man and a good influence for the young men that played for him. Some of the most fun years of baseball for our boys and for us was when he coached them at West. We are so sorry for your loss. You are in our thoughts and prayers!

–Gary and Donna Grindstaff



Sending our deepest Sympathy. Thinking of you Eric and your family during this difficult time. We are sending you comfort, strength and love. May the memories you shared bring you peace in the days ahead. Michael and Karen Stabile

–Michael and Karen Stabile



"As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us; as we remember them." Praying for the family in your time of grief.

–Jeff Peltz



“To be absent from the body is to be present with lord” My sincere condolences during this difficult time.

–Juerod Roberts

Another great coach leaving us.

–jerry reynolds



Sorry for your loss Glory to God

–Steven Hopkinson

Gene was truly "one-of-a-kind" and we will be missing him. He was a wonderful "quasi-grandfather" for our side of the family. His personality was the prototype of a really good baseball coach...stern, yet compassionate. He touched the lives of many young ball players in McDowell County. Watching MLB on TV, I can easily see him coaching in the dugout...chewing a cigar. - - - He's walking a ball-field now....headed to the outfield and into the corn. We will all miss him.

–Ansel & Amy Clark

Charlene, So sorry to hear of Gene's death. You and the family will be in my prayers.

–Gale Galloway