



Russell Gary

July 31, 1959 - March 10, 2019

Obituary of Russell Craig Gary

Our brother, Russell Craig Gary, was born July 31, 1959 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and passed away on Sunday, March 10, 2019 at the modest age of 59. This event (heart attack) was a total surprise to us as well as to many friends and relatives who had been in conversations with him over the past several days and weeks.

Russell was the youngest among six (6) Gary children from the marriage of Printice and Wilma Gary. Russell is survived by four of his siblings; Printice (Jr.) and Cynthia Gary, Alberta (Gary) and Victor Hicks, Hedy Gray, and Kenneth Gary, all of Dallas, Texas. (Janice Gary is deceased). Russell was “uncle” to many nieces and nephews across the country from Boston and New York, to Texas and Southern California.

Russell is the father of three (3) children; Russell Craig Gary, Jr. (33), and his wife, Mimi, who reside in New Orleans and have one daughter, Margaux, age 2 and are expecting the birth of a son in April 2019. Russell Jr. is in the U.S. Military currently serving his country in the Middle East; Latrisha Lynn Gary (31), who resides in New Orleans; and Quinton, (10) who resides in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In addition to being an outgoing, “people” person, Russell loved competitive games and sports. Russell was a gifted athlete excelling in numerous sports but earned most of his honors during his distinguished career in the sport of football. Starting as a High School Prep at Minneapolis Central, Gary earned All City and All State honors as he led his team to the 1976 City Championship.

He was awarded a scholarship to the University of Nebraska in 1977 and was a three year starter at Safety 1978 - 1980. Together with his high school teammate, Rodney Lewis, they anchored the Nebraska Black Shirts defense which achieved number one status in the country during the 1979 football season and Russ achieved All Big 8 status as a Safety.

Russell was drafted first pick, second round by the New Orleans Saints in 1981 as a Defensive Back and played with the Saints for the next six years. His career as a professional was highlighted by his selection as a first team All Pro in the NFL in 1983. After two additional years with the Philadelphia Eagles Russell retired from active participation in the game in 1989.

Russell was always extremely proud to be a part of Nebraska’s “Big Red” family and his legacy in the sport of football received ultimate recognition in September 2013 when he was voted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame!

Russell’s passion for the game continued in his post-pro football career starting with several high school coaching positions, and later joining Mark Mauer, former Nebraska teammate and high school competitor, with a coaching assignment at New Mexico State University.

For the past 15 years, Russell has been on the coaching staff of Concordia University in St. Paul, Minnesota and has held a teaching position in the Columbia Heights School District. Russell’s coaching and teaching philosophy

was, in his own words "... I enjoy coaching and teaching the fundamentals... when you are working with kids in high school, or younger, you are catching good athletes who are raw; that's when you can instill the fundamentals in them." His approach to teaching and coaching has resulted in helping build the life skills and character among many, many talented young men and women across the state of Minnesota.

As you all know, our brother, Russell, portrayed that certain physical "macho man" image from time-to-time due to his football prowess. He once confided in us that his nightmare scenario was having to confront Earl Campbell beyond the line of scrimmage in the open field, one-on-one!. However, at 6 feet and 195 pounds, in addition to his athletic abilities, Russell's intelligence was a big key to his success, and when discussing game strategies he was quick to point out ... "Football is a mental game. A high percentage of the game is mental."

Russell had a great sense of humor and a loving and caring spirit. He was particularly interested in helping youth from under-served communities. Yes, our brother had many, many positive characteristics, and while we will truly miss his presence here on earth, we trust that his spirit is now safely with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Printice, Hedy, Kenneth, & Alberta

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR **29**. 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (CT)

Estes Funeral Chapel
2201 Plymouth Ave N
Minneapolis, MN 55411
(612) 521-6744
<https://estesfuneralchapel.com>

Visitation

MAR **30**. 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Calvary Baptist Church
2608 Blaisdell Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55408
info@calvarychurchmpls.org
<http://www.calvarychurchmpls.org>

Funeral Service

MAR **30**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Calvary Baptist Church
2608 Blaisdell Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55408
info@calvarychurchmpls.org
<http://www.calvarychurchmpls.org>

Tribute Wall



“ A long time ago when we met we called you Craig, football was your first love and the dogs were your second, my heart is heavy when friends good souls go home, rest in peace friend, you made a difference in a lot of peoples lives, it has been an honor to have known you and your family.

Camille

Camille Lewis - May 17, 2019 at 07:30 PM

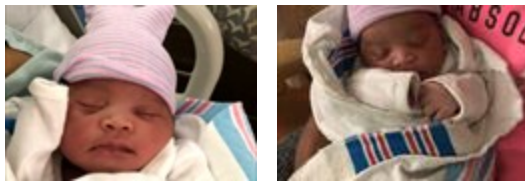
KG

Long time ago remembered Russell for his athletic prowess but also for the freindship with his sister Alberta. What made me think of you both at this moment I can't explain. But while we are still on this earth I would like to thank you for the elementary school days at Lyndale. God bless you family. Sincerely Kelly Goranson. The kid who lived in the funeral home at 31 st and Lyndale Ave in MPLS.

kelly Goranson - April 26, 2025 at 08:12 PM

HG

“ 2 files added to the album Photos of Russel Gary Family and Friends



H. Gary - April 03, 2019 at 09:36 AM

JM

“ Thanks Russell, I could count on you first to be friendly then funny and caring with your visits to the local Y where I was also a member. You will be missed. I will look over at the next bike and tip my head to you. You will still be there.

joe musich - March 31, 2019 at 08:21 PM

PS

“ This is the day that "LORD" has made ! Today we laid our Brother, Friend, Teammate to Rest. No more Pain, Sorrow, Hurt, Disappointment, just PEACE AND BLESSINGS ! We Definitely hope to be where you are someday in HEAVEN with our White Robe and Angel Wings Rejoicing with our HEAVENLY FATHER. Russ you will be missed by all, you are in the GREATEST LEAGUE NOW HEAVEN with all the Great Ones. Mr. Rodney Lewis and Mr. Ricky Simmons you both are Strong 💪 Men keep fighting that fight down here making people better. Until we meet again "GOD BE WITH YOU. Peace and Blessings Always Paul Smith Huskers Nation Forever ! 🙏😭👏🙌👍

paul Smith - March 31, 2019 at 01:08 AM

CS

“ *First and foremost, I hope Coach Gary knew how much he meant to me. If it was not for him and his guidance throughout my career at Concordia, i very well could have left and my life would have been very different. Everyone has people in their lives that they don't always speak to or check up on, but they are also the people that gave them life-altering advice, mentorship, and laughs. That was Coach Gary.*

He kept it real with everyone, and that didn't mean he always told you what you wanted to hear.

He made you laugh, even if it was at the expense of yourself sometimes. I will never forget some of the jokes he told that literally had me crying on road trips.

Going all the way back to my recruiting visit when i was 18 years old, he told my parents on my visit that he would take care of me, and he always did.

I love you Coach Gary and you will never ever be forgotten and I hope you know how much we all loved and RESPECTED you.

Cordell Smith - March 29, 2019 at 09:02 PM

AM

“ *Our Prayers and Condolences goes out to the Gary Family. Russell was a major part of our daughter's life (they were BEST friends) and he will be missed. May God continue to bless each of you during this difficult time. We remember when Russell would always love to stop by for a quick bite of Mr. McDonald's meals or talk and play with the children at the daycare. It was always a pleasure to get a visit from Russell. He will be greatly missed.*

*Mr. Lewin & Mrs. Andrea McDonald
Palm Bay, Florida.*

Andrea McDonald - March 29, 2019 at 06:06 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Russell Gary.*



March 29, 2019 at 11:25 AM

J1

“ We went to high school with Russell and always admired his leadership and great athletic ability. We watched his career from afar, proud of his achievements of this great CHS Puoneer.

The blessings came in the last 10 years when we got to know Russell better when we'd be at the YMCA. Always a friendly smile and a hug, catching up on the latest Central Alumni and football happenings. I used to enjoy telling him he was a "big deal" in high school, because he was. He would always modestly laugh and say, "no, no, not me!"

Russell never complained, always projecting a positive outlook. He was an inspiration in his dedication to his family, the young people he coached, and his fitness. No matter how he felt, he came to the to Y rain, snow or shine to be active and spread good cheer.

He was like the Mayor of the Blaisdell YMCA- he knew everyone, and everyone knew him. It won't be the same without him.



Jenny and Fred Bryan, CHS class of 1979 - March 28, 2019 at 06:24 PM

J1

our condolences to the Russell Gary Family.

Jenny and Fred Bryan, CHS class of 1979 - March 28, 2019 at 06:30 PM

AM

“ Andy Means purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Russell Gary.



Andy Means - March 27, 2019 at 01:40 PM

LM

“ Lester M. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Russell Gary.



Lester M. - March 26, 2019 at 08:23 PM

LM

“ RIP my friend and, ex New Orleans Saints teammate. To the Gary family I send my deepest sympathy during this difficult time. May God grant you the peace and comfort during this time of mourning. Russell meant so much to so many, words can't express. He is my son Mitchell's godfather. We arrived in New Orleans in 1981 as daftee's of the Saints, and Russell became my friend instanly. He was a great friend to have if you were trying make a pro football team. Russell helped me through many rough days at training camp encouraging me to push and work hard in practice. He loved his music and concerts, when Prince and the Time would be preforming in New Orleans he would get back stage passes for us. We had so much fun during those days. I really will miss Russell he was one of a kind. Until we meet again my friend RIP!

Mr. Lester M. Mickens

Lester Mickens - March 26, 2019 at 07:56 PM

RL

“ Rodney Lewis purchased the *Beautiful in Blue* for the family of Russell Gary.



Rodney Lewis - March 26, 2019 at 10:35 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Russell Gary.



March 25, 2019 at 02:00 PM

RG

“ Coach Gary was a huge influence in my and many of my Washburn teammates lives. I have been fortunate enough to remain in contact with him for more than 20 years post high school. I was with him watching football about 2 months before his passing. I will cherish this memory and all of my memories. Coach Gary had a huge influence as a coach and mentor in my life and he will be greatly missed. Rest Easy Coach! I love and miss you.

"Gloves" Galindo

Ryan Galindo - March 24, 2019 at 05:16 PM

RJ

“ Russ and I share a generational lifetime relationship through elder family members. Process of many talents that have already been mentioned, and I'll add one more then I think everyone who knows him will agree with.... " Russ was a comedian". A portion of his personality had a lot of comedy. I have a collection of his phrases woven in me over the years.
" Russ was loved by many and will be greatly missed R.I.H. Rob Johnson "



Robert Johnson - March 22, 2019 at 05:43 PM

LL

“ Russell was an outstanding person as well as a fabulous athlete. I was very lucky to have known him and had the pleasure of coaching him at Central High School in the early seventies. Coach Larry Lamparske.

Larry Lamparske - March 22, 2019 at 03:20 PM

LB

“ Time and distance may have separated us, but Russell was always part of the family. We knew him for his engaging smile, quick wit and kind heart. It was not easy making your way into the "inner circle" of Sunny Brooks, but he did! Having him and Rodney over for dinner was always a treat. Russell fit right into our family. Mom adored him and always cheered for the Huskers to win. The kids loved him too! We are so Blessed to have had him in our lives. Our sincere condolences go out to the Gary family. We pray for the peace only our Father in Heaven can give. The Brooks Family.

Linda Brooks - March 22, 2019 at 12:49 PM

EM

“ To Alberta and The Gary Family, I am deeply saddened by the passing of Russell, he was such a humble and sweet person. I will always treasure the memories we shared in NOLA! My deepest condolences to you and your family. I will continue to keep everyone in my prayers. RIP Russell! Elise Oubre-Martin

Elise Martin - March 21, 2019 at 10:26 PM

EM

“ "Hey Russ - My Brother from another Mother." It was very heartbreaking to hear of your passing especially because I had conversations with you a couple weeks prior to your departure. Your passing has left a void of a lifelong friendship which is hard to replace. It's been over 40 years. I will never forget our many talks, the many meals at our home and how you enjoyed my Dad's cooking. I know what my sister meant to you. We were shocked by the news but one thing I do want you to know, is that you don't have to worry about my sister - Winsome because I will make sure that she is alright. Needless to say, she is devastated but "Rest In Heaven" my Brother, I got her.

Our Love & Prayers goes out to the Gary Family.

~ Evette McDonald

Evette McDonald - March 21, 2019 at 05:55 PM

DW

“ My heart continues to hurt with the loss my college teammate and friend — Russell Gary. I’m inundated with hard-warming memories of his many feats and extraordinary selflessness. People often ask the question as to whether leaders are born or made? In my opinion, Russell came to us endowed with “innate” qualities to lead and serve. Over his lifetime, he helped myself and many other “first generation” university athletes acclimate to college life and maximize talent. Russell was the first person to whisper in my ear, “Keep working; you’re a future NFL player.” He also let me borrow his robust album collection for my campus radio show. He also intentionally represented his alma mater, Minneapolis Central High School, by ensuring that we attended his classmate’s concerts when performing in Omaha, who happened to be “Prince and the Time.” How special is that?!

More importantly, “he” was a special person and an elite ball player, despite his diminutive size! Russell’s family should take comfort in that he is “legend” among his friends and former teammates. He will be missed. God bless and rest his soul.

Dr. Jamie Williams

Dr. Jamie Williams - March 21, 2019 at 04:59 PM

WT

“ William (Billy) Taylor

Coming from someone who had great admiration for you!

*Thank you Russell Gary,
Very humbled to have the privilege of your leadership, but more important, your friendship! You can rest now! God bless.*

William (Billy) Taylor - March 21, 2019 at 08:43 AM

WB

“ I remember Russell from the Summer Youth Sports Program in the summer of 1972. He was one of the kids that we picked up on the bus and took to Macalester College to play football and basketball. I got a big kick when I learned he made it to the NFL. Condolences from the Bowman family to the Gary family.

Wayne Extendobal Bowman - March 20, 2019 at 12:13 PM

GH

“ One of the first people I've met when I moved to MN, a great down to earth man who shared many nights of talking smack and laughing. Heart of Gold and one of the last REAL ONES. My heart goes out to his family and every soul he's touched. The Saint is marching, the Eagle is Flying. God Speed Nebraska from your friend, Tennessee

George Hall - March 19, 2019 at 05:23 PM

KW

“ Our condolences to the Gary family for your loss. Jennifer and I have you in our thoughts and prayers.

I consider myself privileged to have known Russell. Just being in his presence required you to step up your game..... He always gave 100 percent and expected nothing less from others. Great memories...!

Thank you for being a friend and brother.

Kevin C. and Jennifer Whitlock

Kevin C Whitlock - March 19, 2019 at 04:40 PM

PW

“ lots of memories of Russell at UN-L. he really was a good guy, as well as a standout football player. my condolences to family and friends. God's peace and comfort to you all.

patricia west - March 19, 2019 at 01:41 PM

PK

“ Russ! Mom and Dad said they'll see you again! Kevin said "That was my Brother!" Karen said "She loves you!" I'm Jacked! I meant to call you last week! God Bless you! We love you and miss you!

Percy Keith - March 19, 2019 at 01:40 PM

AC

“ A great guy who always took the time to help our alumni club! Loved hearing the stories while we knocked back a juice box or two. You will be greatly missed by your fellow alumni.

Adrian Contreras - March 18, 2019 at 10:11 PM

FF

“ From Jarvis Redwine and Family purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Russell Gary.



From Jarvis Redwine and Family - March 18, 2019 at 10:46 AM

JB

“ We balled, ran track and kicked it, R.I.Heaven my brother Russell, you will be truly missed.
Jerry Byrd

Jerry Byrd - March 17, 2019 at 02:05 PM

AG

“ To my boy Russ...
Life and destiny can steal my best friend away from me but nothing can take away the precious memories; Park Avenue days, MLK football, Joey's post game parties and Central high school. Good friends are hard to find, harder to leave and impossible to forget!

*God bless you Bro... thanks for being you!
Farewell my friend.*

Andra Griffin (AKA) Big Money

Andra Griffin - March 16, 2019 at 07:09 PM

HG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Holland Gary - March 16, 2019 at 05:55 PM

EA

“ *Russell, you will Always BE IN MY HEART I will Always have Our MEMORIES with CHRIS,KIM,ERIC you was ARE THE BEST ❤️ R.I.H.*

Elizabeth Anderson - March 15, 2019 at 06:46 PM

RJ

“ 1 file added to the album *Photos of Russel Gary Family and Friends*



Robert Johnson - March 15, 2019 at 03:31 PM

RU

“ *Margaux & Latrisha Gary*



Russell - March 15, 2019 at 02:54 PM

RU

“ *Russell Jr, Mimi & Margaux Gary*



Russell - March 15, 2019 at 02:53 PM

RU

“ *Russell Craig Gary Jr*



Russell - March 15, 2019 at 02:50 PM

PR

“ *1 file added to the album Photos of Russel Gary Family and Friends*



Printice - March 15, 2019 at 12:34 PM

PR

“ *1 file added to the album Photos of Russel Gary Family and Friends*



Printice - March 15, 2019 at 12:26 PM

PR

“ 1 file added to the album Photos of Russel Gary Family and Friends



Printice - March 15, 2019 at 12:16 PM

KJ

“ I knew of Russell's greatness as an athlete but, but what I remember the most is his kind and caring nature. .When I ran track in 10th grade for Mps Washburn he took me under his wing and he didn't care what school I went to. He just wanted to pass on the knowledge that was given to him...He was mature beyond his years...He was already a man at 17.. I will never forget his kindness...My deepest sympathies to his family and anyone he touched, everyone knew he was his friend. .Praying for you all God bless....Kyle Johnson Thank you for sharing Russell with us...

Kyle Johnson - March 15, 2019 at 02:30 AM