



## **Earnest Washington Gardner, Jr.**

January 2, 1940 - February 25, 2022

Earnest Washington Gardner Jr "aka Junior"

Junior Gardner passed away at age 82, on February 25, 2022 in the comfort of his deep-rooted home, surrounded with the loving care of his family. His sharp mind, entertaining stories, craftsmanship and good sense of humor will be forever missed. He was a loving husband, father, and grandfather who found joy in being a provider. Junior was always working hard, either at his job or in his amazing gardens that fed his family year-round.

Junior was a handsome man with beautiful blue eyes and great hair. Puzzles and games were always a fun challenge to him and complimented his love for history, geography, and mathematics. He also enjoyed hunting, fishing and spending time outdoors. He often wore a big smile, didn't have much to complain about, and was always content with what he had. Junior acquired a lot of fun facts and knowledge throughout his life. He could fix just about anything, without the luxury of "Google." He was very precise, meticulous, and creative about his work or projects. Antiques, especially antique tools and their history, was a fun interest he had. He also liked giving old items a second life, restoring them better than new.

Junior was born on January 2, 1940, in Fayetteville, Arkansas. It was such a frigid winter, his mother Dorthy Gardner knew keeping her newborn warm, was key to his survival. She kept him near their wood stove and in the bread warmer to ensure his safety. Thankfully, he grew up strong and healthy. His dad, Earnest Gardner, was beaming with pride with the birth of their firstborn

son. Junior had one younger brother, Arlen, and one younger sister, Joyce. In Arkansas, they lived in a home that Junior's dad built, enjoying the country life, everything from raising chickens and pigs, to gardening many types of vegetables for food.

The family moved from Arkansas to the central valley of California in the early 50s. Junior's dad worked as a school janitor and his mom as a nurse. Junior worked as a young man picking peaches, apples, and cherries. The family enjoyed attending the Theater a few times a week. Back then, \$.25 would buy you popcorn, soda and a movie, with some change to spare.

With the permission and blessing from both of their families, on May 13, 1957, Junior married the love of his life, Joy Bradford. These two were honestly lifelong friends, at one point they even shared the same babysitter in Ivanhoe. At very early ages they knew they had found true love, ready to commit the rest of their lives to each other. They lived in southern California as newlyweds. Joy found a job working as a server for a restaurant on the pier. Later she shared stories of the kindness received from her employer and what great tips she had made working there. Junior found his lifelong career as a machinist at the age of 18 and worked many hours of overtime to provide for his family. He was an excellent machinist, always finding creative ways to machine faster, develop and improve his trade. This couple was blessed with two sons, Richard and Ronny Gardner. Family was very important to them, and they were always dedicated to each other.

Junior moved with his family to Visalia California, bought a house surrounded by walnut orchards, and remained there for the rest of his life. Both his sons were very active and enjoyed participating in sports from an early age throughout their high school years. Junior bonded with his two sons while coaching both Little League and Babe Ruth Baseball. However, feeding his growing boys was no easy task. Junior said, "He would have to grow four large rows of corn just to have enough," not to mention all the okra, tomatoes, peppers, broccoli, cucumbers and other vegetables. This love for gardening has been passed down for generations.

Occasionally the Gardner's would travel back to Arkansas to visit family, make new memories and share stories of childhood days. During one particular family adventure, Junior, his boys, and cousins traveled downstream on a river Junior had fished as a kid. As there day drew to an end, they were encountered by a mean-old farmer who threatened to release his dogs if they entered onto his land. Junior first tried negotiating with the man, but after discovering quickly the man was unreasonable, a favorite quote from Ronald Reagan must have entered his mind, "self-defense is not only our right; it is our duty." He quickly gathered the kids and told them to arm themselves with handfuls of rocks, instructing them to throw the rocks at the man or dogs if they came near. Surprised by the tenacity shown by the Gardner's charging forward, the landowner withdrew his threats of releasing his 4 Queensland Heelers. They had been barking at the other side of the river. Everyone was allowed to cross the river safely and get to their car where Earnest awaited to pick them up.

In the 80s, Junior and Joy were blessed with 4 grandchildren and proudly opened, "Gardner's Machine Shop." Times were good! Both Richard and Ronny were also machinists, all working together as a family. His shop was open for about 10 years. From father and sons developing their craft, to watching grandchildren after school, teaching them good work ethics and sharing knowledge of restoring old tools, many unforgettable memories were made during this time.

Junior and Joy loved their home and eating good food. Junior especially liked his sweet treats! They had fun attending yard sales on the weekends and visiting family and friends. They both especially liked sharing new card games with the family like Pinochle or Gin Rummy, and sometimes, would even let you win. To say they were lucky would be an understatement, receiving winnings high enough to claim on their taxes at times.

We will miss his great stories about the good old days, his jokes, his infectious smile, shared laughter, and his amazing ability to always lift your spirits. May

God bless you, Junior. We love you and thank you for the family you built. A service will be held for Ernest Washington Gardner Jr on Sunday, March 13, from 10-12 at Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Please join us to celebrate Junior's life together.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto [www.salseranddillard.com](http://www.salseranddillard.com).

# Previous Events

## Memorial

MAR 13. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel  
127 E. Caldwell Ave.  
Visalia, CA 93277

# Tribute Wall



“ *Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel created a Webcast in memory of Earnest Washington Gardner, Jr.* ”



Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel - March 13, 2022 at 01:00 PM



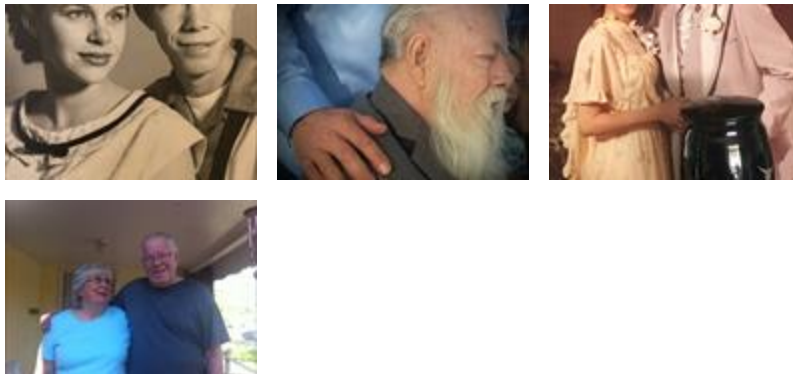
“ *Ricky G lit a candle in memory of Earnest Washington Gardner, Jr.* ”



Ricky G - March 13, 2022 at 12:40 AM



“ *4 files added to the tribute wall* ”



Ricky G - March 13, 2022 at 12:36 AM

SG

“ *Sandy G lit a candle in memory of Earnest Washington Gardner, Jr.*



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**Sandy G** - March 12, 2022 at 11:32 PM

RG

“ *Ricky G lit a candle in memory of Earnest Washington Gardner, Jr.*



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**Ricky G** - March 12, 2022 at 07:45 PM

KA

“ *Jr. loved to have fun! I'm not sure who enjoyed Christmas and 4th of July more him or the kids :) He loved to laugh and play games he always greeted me with a big smile and gave me a hug before I left, (which wasn't easy because his dog Coco was very protective of him) I will miss him very much! He will live on in our hearts!*

*Karen*

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**Karen** - March 12, 2022 at 03:56 PM

RO

“ *My uncle jr was my favorite uncle..when we were little and came 2 visit uncle would get us down one at a time and tickle us and say give uncle jr a kiss..over the years since my mom passed i would call him alot just 2 hear his storys or ask advice..and he would always tell me glad u called boy and i love u..you will be missed...cant wait 2 see u again in heaven..love rodney owen*

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**Rodney owen** - March 08, 2022 at 07:49 PM