

**BARRY HENDRICKS**  
**A Life Well Lived**

Barry Michael Hendricks passed away unexpectedly in his sleep at his home in Phoenix, Arizona, on August 13, 2024.

Barry was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 27, 1946, the son of Irving and Pearl Berger. They preceded him in death.

Barry married Susan, the love of his life, on September 16, 1995. He is also survived by his brother Steve (Janelle) Berger; son Eric (Melinda); daughter Carolyn Shipley; and grandsons Daylan Berger, Austin Berger, Max Shipley, Jake Shipley, and his close cousins Bob and Linda Danielson, Rich and Ilene Goldberg, Judi Goldberg, Barbara Goldberg Chandler, Alan and Beth Goldberg, and David Goldberg.

Barry earned his business degree in 1968 at the University of Denver. After a career as a buyer and a consultant to manufacturing companies, from the late 80s until his passing Barry worked with his brother Steve, the staff at Timesavers in Scottsdale, and his vendors. His lifelong friends were people from all walks of life.

An incredible catcher and hitter, Barry loved playing pro baseball with the Pittsburgh Pirates and always wanted to be a "Cubby." When he lost his eye at 28 years old, he quit his amateur fast pitch softball team and concentrated on racquetball. He also played basketball in his early years and was an accomplished pool player, which funded his first year of college. He enjoyed bowling and golf as well.

Barry was a brilliant, funny, caring man. He loved his wife and family the most, but a close second was his absolute lifelong love of racquetball and barbecue! His days playing racquetball, up to and including August 9<sup>th</sup>, included 50 years of 30+ Championships all over the world. He was inducted into the National Masters Racquetball Association Hall of Fame in 2021.

Courtesy of the NMRA and Bruce Adams, please enjoy this video that was played at Barry's NMRA Hall of Fame Induction on July 17, 2021.

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xDfVFfQgzOc>**

For those who might wish to honor Barry's memory with a donation to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, please visit <https://www.stjude.org>.

A Celebration of Life is being planned for this autumn. Please see upcoming communications for dates.



## Barry Hendricks' History and Love of Racquetball By Susan Hendricks

Barry started playing racquetball in October 1969 with his neighbor at the famous Aurora YMCA in Aurora, Illinois, about 30 miles west of Chicago. They played with short-handled tennis racquets and a brownish/pinkish, kind of spongy ball. His memory was that the racquet felt like it weighed over a pound (454 grams). If they had swung as hard as they could, it still might not have been hard enough for the ball to reach the back wall. There was no terminology such as a kill shot, a ceiling ball, a splat, etc. at that time...because if they hit these shots, it was purely unintentional. The shot of choice was to guide the ball to ride close to the side wall. Passing shots were effective even then.

Being a former baseball player, Barry segued to racquetball pretty easily. Jim Stoltz was the Racquetball Director at the time. Jim soon started an in-house league in which Barry fared pretty well. Soon, other Y's had their own leagues and they started a travel league to compete. Sometime in the early 1970s, Barry was invited to play at the 1st private racquetball club in the Chicago area. It was a Court House. Soon there would be many of them. Each had 8 courts, a viewing area, and some had restaurants and bars in which to eat, drink, and socialize. And during that time period, an Illinois racquetball organization formed which governed the sport, set rules, arranged and monitored tournaments, set rankings, etc. Barry soon was playing virtually every day all around the Chicagoland area as private club construction exploded with the sport's popularity.

Barry's first big break came when he was invited to play against Jimmy DeVito, then a National Paddleball champ many times. He gave Barry his first formal racquetball lessons and they became dear friends. He was then 23 years old. Jimmy was able to kill the ball forehand and backhand, and Barry was amazed by his skills. Jimmy was maybe 5'6" and overweight, 58 years old, yet highly skilled. Barry always felt indebted to him.

Barry had achieved an 'A' level of play. But in 1974, he was participating in a doubles tournament and embarrassingly was not wearing goggles (which weren't yet a safety requirement). He was struck directly in the eye and eventually lost sight after several surgeries and hospitalizations over a year's period of time. He could not play for almost two years. Upon his return, he entered a tournament in the 'C' division, lost his first match and thought he would quit playing. Fortunately, he didn't and started practicing harder to learn how to play with no depth perception. He eventually became proficient at it. He still played almost daily, played 3 or 4 tournaments a month throughout the Midwest, improved his game, and started to compete in regional and national events.

By the time the 1980's rolled around, Barry was ranked in Illinois but never #1 as he could never beat Herb Grigg who ruled his age group for years. He later partnered with Ron Johnson, a legendary Illinois player, and won his first state doubles title. In the mid-1980s, Barry traveled to Ireland and won his first International singles title in Dublin. Many years later, he would return to Ireland in the 1990s and win an international doubles title with his wife Susan. He also participated in the first Senior Olympics in Toronto in 1985. In the early 1990s, he attended the U.S. Olympic Elite Training Camp which helped elevate his game more. He became a student of Dan Obremski, Chris Cole, Carol McKinney, Aaron Katz, and many others.

Barry won many Arizona State titles and doubles titles in the 1990s and 2000s. In more recent years, he was the assistant coach for three years beginning in 2015 on ASU's collegiate racquetball team, assisting Darrin Schenck. He also started to play in NMRA tournaments. In the ensuing years, he won 23 singles and doubles NMRA (15 NMRA) and World Seniors titles. He medaled in dozens more.

So 2024 was his 55<sup>th</sup> year. He witnessed virtually all of the changes in the game...larger and lighter racquets, faster balls, new strategies, rule changes, etc.

Barry's joyful, comedic, and quick-witted spirit left a deep impression on those who knew him well. He had a huge network of friends from all over the world and there has been an outpouring of adoration and respect for him with the news of his passing.

Barry said this just before his 2021 NMRA Hall of Fame induction, *"My appetite for the sport has never diminished. The titles are passing flashes of recognition. But my love for the competitors, many of whom have blessed me as lifelong friends, shines with intensity."*