



Robert L. Jenkins Sr.

June 21, 1939 - January 14, 2026

Robert L. Jenkins, Sr., affectionately known as "Fish," was born on June 21, 1939 and passed away on January 14, 2026 at the age of 86. He was a loving father, beloved husband, legendary coach, longtime educator, and cherished mentor.

Robert was the third of nine children born to his parents Bryant Jenkins, Sr. and Lula Mae Jenkins. His brothers and sisters were Addie Mae, Bryant, Theodore, Oliver, Annette, Marcene, Emogene, and Gloria. All of his siblings except Gloria have preceded him in death. He grew up in Detroit's historic Brewster Projects and spent his childhood in the Black Bottom neighborhood.

Robert attended Tennessee State University from 1959 to 1964 on a full athletic scholarship on the swim team. While there, Robert helped to build a dynasty. The team went 29-3 during his tenure and was undefeated in 1962. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Education in 1964, later adding a Master of Science in Education from the University of Michigan in 1973. Initially pursuing pre-med, he discovered his true calling after teaching swimming to fellow students.

Robert Lee Jenkins, Sr. was a proud member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated (initiated 1963). After returning to Detroit, he met Norma Jean Andrews in August 1965 while she was a student at Wayne State University.

They married the following June.

Robert Jenkins arrived at Northern High School in 1969 as head swim coach. Over the next three decades, Coach Jenkins built an unprecedented track record across multiple sports.

12 Swimming Championships (6 Boys, 5 Co-Ed, 1 Girls)

8 Golf Championships (5 Co-Ed, 2 Girls, 1 Boys)

4 consecutive Soccer Championships (every year the sport existed in Detroit Public Schools)

24 total championships from February 1971 through May 2014

He officially retired from Northern in 2001, but he couldn't stay away from coaching. In 2012, he was recruited to coach at East English Village Preparatory Academy. Coach Jenkins's final championship came in 2014 with the school's Boys Golf Team.

During their 59 year marriage, Robert and Norma raised two children, Marlo Rencher and Robert L. Jenkins, Jr. Robert and Norma were active and involved parents with a vibrant social life and wide circle of friends. Robert was a member of St. Matthew AME Church since 1965, serving on the Board of Trustees, the Men's Club, and the Usher board.

Robert's philosophy was simple but profound: "If you plant a seed, and you watch it and nurture it, it will turn out to be beautiful." Over five decades, Coach Jenkins planted hundreds of seeds. Those seeds grew into doctors, educators, business leaders, and parents who passed on his lessons to the next generation. His legacy lives on in every championship banner, every scholarship earned, every life redirected toward purpose. Rest in Power, Fish.

Robert leaves to cherish his memory his beloved wife, Norma Jean Jenkins;

his daughter, Dr. Marlo (Charles) Rencher; his son, Robert L. Jenkins, Jr.; five grandchildren: Landon McKinney, Mali Rencher, Imani Rencher, Robert Jenkins, III, and Jacob Jenkins, a host of nieces, nephews, family and friends; and countless athletes and students whose lives he shaped.

Previous Events

Family and Friends Hour

FEB 7. 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Matthew AME Church
9746 Petoskey St.
Detroit, MI 48204

Kappa Alpha Psi Service

FEB 7. 10:30 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Matthew AME Church
9746 Petoskey St.
Detroit, MI 48204

Funeral Service

FEB 7. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Matthew AME Church
9746 Petoskey St.
Detroit, MI 48204

Tribute Wall

MY

“ *Condolences to the Jenkins Family. I met Fish through the late Al Talley when we formed the Friends of Clearview Golf Club to support the Black owned designed and built by the legendary, Bill Powell in Canton, Ohio. We had golf outings to support the golf course. Fish always had funny stories. May he Rest in Peace.*



*Sincerely,
Miss Stephanie Young*

Miss Stephanie Young - February 28 at 07:09 PM

B-

“ *My Condolences to The Family...His Sister Gloria Jenkins was a classmate of mine...May He Rest In Eternal Peace 🙏🙏🙏*

Barbara Whitfield -Miller - February 07 at 03:09 PM

DB

“ *Destinee Barmore-Hicks purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



Destinee Barmore-Hicks - February 06 at 09:05 PM

GW

“ *Gigi Branham Williams lit a candle in memory of Robert L. Jenkins Sr.*



gigi branham williams - February 06 at 07:12 PM

AC

“ *Ada & Jim Cole purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



Ada & Jim Cole - February 06 at 10:18 AM

JH

“ *Mr. Jenkins was a wonderful neighbor of mine. Always enjoyed sharing pleasant conversation with him. Bobby n Joyce Hutcherson*

joyce hutcherson - February 06 at 09:53 AM

LF

“ *Love, The Brooks Family purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



Love, The Brooks Family - February 06 at 12:23 AM

LF

“ Love, The Brooks Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..

Love, The Brooks Family - February 06 at 12:23 AM

DB

“ David L. Bargainer purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



David L. Bargainer - February 05 at 11:55 PM

DB

“ David L. Bargainer planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..

David L. Bargainer - February 05 at 11:55 PM

DL

“ Dwight/Evelyn/Tanner Lawrence purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



Dwight/Evelyn/Tanner Lawrence - February 05 at 12:34 PM

S9

“ Summer 92 planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..

Summer 92 - February 04 at 06:16 PM

S9

“ Summer 92 purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



Summer 92 - February 04 at 06:16 PM

CF

“ Challynee and family purchased the Be My Love Bouquet with Red Roses for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



Challynee and family - February 04 at 06:21 AM

SR

“ Shirley Rencher purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



Shirley Rencher - February 03 at 04:21 PM

VJ

“ Vera J. purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



Vera J. - February 03 at 12:42 PM

DE

“ In loving memory of Coach Robert Jenkins. My condolences and prayers to Mrs. Jenkins and the entire family.
Debra Wilson



Debra - February 01 at 05:08 PM

RB

*Fish, my Nupe you will be truly missed
Rest in peace my brother.*

Robert Boone - February 03 at 10:24 AM

AS

*Remembering the humor with you at TSU and in Detroit. You were truly an asset to the swim team and your teammates, especially with your return to Detroit. The students and staff at Northern will remember your mentoring.
Audrey Lewis Stradford*

Audrey Stradford - February 06 at 02:16 PM

CF

“ CaSandra Edmonds and Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..

CaSandra Edmonds and Family - January 29 at 02:39 PM

CF

“ *CaSandra Edmonds and Family purchased the Cheeseboard Gourmet Gift for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



CaSandra Edmonds and Family - January 29 at 02:39 PM

CE

“ *My prayers to Norma, Marlo, Robbie and the entire Jenkins Family, I served on the Usher Board at St Matthews with "Jenkins" as I always called him....*
He was always full of joy, fun and energy. Always of service and ready to assist. He documented ALL of our events through his wonderful photography and most of all, HE NEVER, EVER LET US HAVE A DULL USHER BOARD MEETING. (It would take Jerry Clea, the only person to calm Jenkins down, :)
Everyone past and present at St Matthew knew Jenkins, he never met a stranger. He will be missed.
I know the two of you did everything together and it's going to take some time, Just hold on to those memories and know that God's got his hands on you! MUCH LOVE, CaSandra Edmonds & Family

CaSandra Edmonds - January 29 at 02:34 PM

TL

“ My condolence from Minister, Tony Lee, my high school, swim coach, father and brother my condolences from the LEE family with love and long memories that God may bless and keep the Jenkins family that having me smile upon you earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal I can be reached at 586-742-0353. If any swim team members of Family need to reach me my phone is on 24 hours on this time of bereavement or prayer or condolence from family friends swim team members then I hesitate to call God bless you and God keep you love you always coach

Tony lee - January 28 at 11:40 PM

DM

“ To the entire Jenkins Family - To God Be The Glory for the life of Coach Jenkins (aka Fish). He was such an inspiration to so many of us from a swimmers perspective and he was also a father figure to some. His passion for teaching was impeccable. He taught us discipline and how to be responsible. Coach maybe gone, but not forgotten.
Donna McAlister



Donna McAlister - January 28 at 07:30 PM

W9

“ With Love: Jayhawks Class of 93 purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..



With Love: Jayhawks Class of 93 - January 28 at 05:54 PM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



January 28 at 07:56 AM



“ *Vanessa Hughes & Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



Vanessa Hughes & Family - January 27 at 01:45 PM



“ *Vanessa Hughes & Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*

Vanessa Hughes & Family - January 27 at 01:45 PM



“ *Robert (Fish) brought much joy and laughter into our lives. His memory is definitely a treasure. His life was a blessing to all of us, with the support of his loving family. Fish is loved beyond words and deeply missed beyond measure. Rest in peace our dear friend. You are gone but never forgotten. The Roys. Ozzie (Bugs), Margaret & Daryl Roy.*



Ozzie (Bugs), Margaret & Daryl Roy - January 22 at 01:27 PM

MT

“ *Hurt, Pain, and Agony was the biggest lesson you taught me. You showed me how to push past each 3 mentally and physically. You went from a coach and teacher to a friend. The doors of Tennessee State University was open to my eyes because of you. Thank you for being you....much love, rest well...* ”

Michael Taylor - January 21 at 09:39 PM

AC

“ *I'm so sorry to hear of your loss, and I feel truly privileged to have known Uncle BoBob. I first met him through his niece, whom I grew up with, and from that moment on, he became “Uncle BoBob” to all of us. He always brought such energy into any room — you always knew when he was there.* ”

It's a joy and a blessing to know that he lived his purpose: to make a difference, to touch lives, and to nurture the seeds he planted in others.

Rest in power, BoBob. Job well done.

*Blessings to the entire family,
Arleen Harrison Coffee, from Steel Street*

AH Coffee - January 21 at 08:37 AM

TC

“ *The Conrad Cousins planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..* ”

The Conrad Cousins - January 21 at 06:53 AM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



January 21 at 06:53 AM



“ *Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of Robert L. Jenkins Sr..*



January 20 at 12:57 PM