

Silver and Black Report

Providing 24/7 coverage of the Oakland Raiders

The definition of a fan: Frank Jenkins, devotee of the Oakland Raiders
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July 22nd, 2009



Fan (fn) n. An ardent devotee; an enthusiast.

Frank Jenkins is the definition of a fan. A lifelong devotee to the Oakland Raiders, Frank represents the loyalty, pride & poise the Silver & Black fans have for their beloved organization.

A member of the Jersey Shore Raiders Booster Club (JSRBC), Frank's game day began early during football season and his commitment to rooting for his favorite team was a priority in his life all year long.

But now, Frank is in a hospital in Toms River, fighting for his life, as he has been since December of 2008 when he was told he only had 3-6 months to live with a diagnosis of terminal lung Cancer.

Now in a hospital, a quadriplegic attached to machines that aide his vitality, Frank's everlasting love for the Raiders still remains. It's stronger now more than ever, and as a 5 year member of the JSRBC, many of his dear friends have given SBReport and inside look at his fandom, passion, and how gridiron favorites that once donned the Silver & Black have come to his aide and made his difficult days memorable.

"I remember last year, he was having a lot of neck and shoulder pain. He asked me if I would rub his neck. I tried, but it wasn't helping. I have small hands and they aren't very strong!!! So I went to Henry (Lawrence) and asked him if he would help Frank out. Henry has those great massaging hands!!! I will never forget the look on Frank's face when Henry was massaging his neck and shoulders! He was SO happy and Henry made him feel so much better (thanks Henry, love you)!! It really is the little gestures in life that make a difference!! – Terri Russell

Frank, like all of the Raider Nation, is joyous after a Raider victory. And is disappointed whenever Oakland can't prevail on Sundays. And his exuberance and passion will be missed at Bar A, when Frank lit up the environment with his vibrant fanatical behavior that just touched everyone. JSRBC member Wayne Arrighi recalls how Frank poured his heart out during game days and displayed his lively nature:

"Diane had told me at Bar A he was sick towards the end of last season and was not advised of his condition when I last spoke to her in December."

He continued in an email, "Since I drive a ways to get to Bar A to watch the games, I usually get there early. Except for maybe one time I can remember, he was already there BEFORE me! We'd usually go to our spot in Bar A before the Raider game started and get 'ready' for the game. He was always approachable and knew the latest news of the Raiders. As a result, I got to talk to Frank and get to know him better than the previous years I had known him. I know some of you helped Frank with his personal 'gadgets' so he could enjoy the game better (cell phone, pencil/pen in his 'holder', wipe his glasses clean, adjust his big straw so he could drink from his big cup, and take pictures for him when guest were there). My heart would go out to the guy since he demonstrated what so many people like himself really want in life.... To be a part of the scene and to be treated like anyone else! I know that it will not sound funny when I can now admit that my favorite interaction with Frank is when he would order his 'usual' halftime food (hot dogs and beans) and allow me to cut the hot dogs up and assist with the meal. He is the kind of guy that made you think less of yourself and more about each other."

Raider fans came to his time in need, providing these adaptive gadgets and devices to make his daily living more functional.

Frank garnered a reputation like no other, and his rituals were like no other.

As a JSRBC member Charlie Gavinelli stated, "Frank's sporting interest life is the Raiders – in season or out of season. Frank's game day activities began before 9AM Eastern, showing up 7 hours before kickoff. He dressed in Silver and Black from head to toe every game day, something we take for granted in our day-to-day lives."

The Raiders were not too far behind with their generosity and showing their appreciation of Frank's fandom; demonstrating compassion, deep concern and empathy for a member of the Raider Nation.

Chief Executive Amy Trask provided "a bit of the Raiders..." in a care package that included team gear and a football autographed by JaMarcus Russell, Darren McFadden, Nnamdi Asomugha and rookie Darrius Heyward-Bey.

On June 21st, Raider legend Henry Lawrence, along with members of the JSRBC presented Frank with the generous gifts.

Bob Carr, owner of the largest online community for Raider fans remembered meeting a member of his web site (known as RaiderQuad), stating, "I remember meeting Frank back in 2004 at Bar-A (the home of the Jersey Shore Raiders Booster Club). When I arrived at the bar, I noticed he was the first Raider fan there. We chatted a good hour or so, I handed him a flier and talked to him about Raiderfans.net. Later on that night, he signed up and became a member.... Frank was always a fixture on Sundays at Bar-A, regardless if the team won or lost the previous week, he showed up every Sunday."

In another moment that demonstrates the care of these gridiron greats that have been effected by his story, current Raider linebacker and special teams ace Isaiah Ekejiuba and his sister, JSRBC member Felicia, found a way to enlighten Frank's tough days with a visit that again demonstrated the care and love extended out to Frank.



Ekejiuba visited Frank while bedside in his hospital room, signed a cap for the die-hard and touched him in a way that only a Raider could.

President of the JSRBC, Gary M. Brown, recalled, "He could not cheer as loud as the rest of us, so he had his brother install a strobe light and a horn that Frank would use when ever the Raiders scored. He has been a fixture with our booster club for 5 plus years and always found a way to help the JSRBC out."

Gavinelli recalls another great moment that made Frank a fixture on Sundays. In an email, he stated: "Gary mentions the horn on his wheelchair. One week, we were hitting on all cylinders and racked up a bunch of points. A touchdown was always the loud, long horn blast [on Frank's wheelchair]. But, paying attention to detail, he'd pop the horn after [Sebastian Janikowski] nails the point after touchdown. Well, one week, a fan of the opposing team makes a crack about the horn.

'Does he always have to play that horn?'

'If you guys play some defense, he'll stop.'

One thing that won't stop is Frank's devotion to the Raiders. And even through his difficult days, his passion for his team is undying. The Raider Nation hopes that Frank is able to watch some more touchdowns and view the Raiders win on the field as he has won throughout his whole life.

As Gavinelli stated in an e-mail, "to fight, claw and scratch every inch of the way. It takes a story like Frank's to remind us that some people need to fight, claw and scratch just to do the routine things many take for granted."

Phil Villapiano, a member of the JSRBC and a idol of Frank's, was another Raider legend aware of how much Frank struggled in his life, but was boisterous and dedicated when it came to representing the Silver & Black.

Villapiano stated, "Frank is a tough person, a die-hard in every sense of the word and an inspiration on how he lived his life, was dedicated to the Jersey Booster Club, the Raiders and made us look at life in a different perspective."

The Raider Nation thanks the JSRBC for all their contributions in making Frank's life as enjoyable as possible. We all thank the Oakland Raiders for their sincere concern in illuminating Frank's toughest days. To Frank and all his family, we will pray and hope that he continues to display pride & poise during these tough times.



Frank Jenkins, donning a signed Raider cap

Memoirs from those that care

Since we first met Frank Jenkins, he has really held a special place in our hearts. He is the most optimistic person we have ever met. If you ever have spent time talking with Frank, you will definitely walk away looking at life in a different way than you ever have before.

Frank is a man bound to a wheel chair since he was fifteen due to a football injury. The injury has never tainted his love for football or his love for life. He never used his disability to take advantage of anything; he even held a full time job at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, for twenty years.

When we first met Frank at Bar A, we realized his dedication to the Oakland Raiders goes beyond anything you could imagine. Even when his brother was not able to drop him off at the bar, Frank would take public transportation. He once told us that he had to take a train and a bus to get him from Eatontown, to Belmar; but that day he missed his bus transfer at Asbury Park and rode his electric wheel chair all the way from Asbury to Belmar (which is miles apart) and still made the game on time that day. Now that's dedication!

Frank also loved his photos with the ladies. I became his personal photographer. He would always make me take pictures of him and the Miller Lite girls that came to Bar A and all the other girls at the bar. He had a special way with the ladies; he definitely would get a lot of attention during the games.

Frank always wanted to attend the NFL draft and a home Raider game. One day we were talking about the NFL draft, and Frank wanted so badly to attend. I tried to get tickets for him, but had no luck. Luckily Frank made his own arrangements and was able to come up with two tickets to Radio City Music Hall. Frank took one of the soldiers he knew, he was being deployed soon to the Middle East.

When we spoke to him about it, he was elated. Like I mentioned before he had never used his disability for anything before, but for that one day, he told us he was treated like royalty. I believe he was given some Raider paraphernalia and met Al Davis' brother.

Frank always had such a love for the Raiders, always dressed in Silver and Black and even his wheel chair was decorated.

Frank also is a very patriotic man. Always thinking of our Soldiers and the wounded warriors. He truly is a special man!

Frank — we love you and our prayers and thoughts are with you always

Love,

Diane and John Dicks

Link to story: http://www.sbreport.net/raider_news/008/1363.html