

Jay and Mavis Gerrells Endowment



“supporting Royals athletes”

The Jay and Mavis Gerrells Endowment supports student athletes at Lake Region State College by awarding academic scholarships to Royals basketball players.

Gerrells Sports Center is known as the sports and outdoor equipment headquarters of the Devils Lake region. Gerrells was opened as a Firestone store in 1946 by C. E. “Hoopty” Gerrells. Hoopty’s son, Jay, came into the business in the early 1950s, and by 1960 Gerrells was a full sporting goods store equipped with hunting, fishing, and athletic gear and apparel. Other stores were opened in Bismarck in 1967 and in Grand Forks in 1971.

Jay attended Lake Region State College from 1947 to 1949 and the University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, from 1949 to December of 1950. He married Mavis Garske in 1950. After Jay and Mavis married, he entered the U.S. Army, serving from January 1951 to September 1952 in the 164th Infantry unit—47th division at Camp Rucker, Alabama. When Jay entered the Army, he was six credits shy of a degree at UND. He had planned on returning to UND to complete his degree, but after returning from the military, he began helping his dad with the business “temporarily” after his dad’s right-hand man left. *“I planned on only staying until mid-semester and then going back to UND, but I never left,”* Jay said with a grin.

Gerrells Sports Center's success in the athletic business led to Jay being appointed to the Riddell Helmets Dealers Board. Gerrells received recognition as the most improved Riddell dealership in the nation. The award was presented to Jay by NFL star Frank Gifford. Mavis also had a hand in the store. Her seamstress skills really came in handy at Gerrells. Many times she sewed braids on the sides of uniforms and cheerleading outfits for local high school athletes.

Both Gerrells were active in the community. Jay is a past commander of the American Legion and was a member of the Devils Lake Area Chamber of Commerce. He served three years on the United Fund board (one year as president), is a former co-chair of the American Red Cross (one year), and is past president of the Quarterback Club (boosters).

Mavis also kept busy as the friendly face that said "welcome" to newcomers to the community of Devils Lake, a position she held for more than ten years. She was active in Mrs. Jaycees and was selected *Outstanding Mrs. Jaycee* for Devils Lake one year. She was also active in PTA where she served as president.

Several of their grandchildren have walked the halls and sat in the classrooms at Lake Region State College. "This college is part of our family," Jay says. Jay eased out of the business in his fifties, eventually selling Gerrells to his partners. This endowment provides a lasting legacy for the family and the history of their business in the region. •

