



## Ellsworth Michael Bender Jr.

April 21, 1943 - September 24, 2016

Ellsworth Michael Bender Jr., age 73, of Hot Springs, formally of Forrest City, died in his sleep at home Saturday. Graduated with an Undergraduate Degree from the University of Arkansas and a Master Degree from Southern Arkansas University. Coach Bender was a beloved husband, father, and football coach. Coach Bender coached football for 31 years. He played on the 1964 National Champion Razorback team. In 1965, Coach Bender was a team captain and named all-Southwest Conference. Coach Bender was also a member of the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame.

Frank Broyles long time athletic director at the University of Arkansas said, "He was a team player, an excellent player, and an excellent coach, an asset to us in every way." Coach Ken Hatfield said, "He was just a prince of a guy." Coach Virgil Knight said, "Mike was not only a good football coach, he was a good teacher and a good person." Grant Garrett said, "Bender came in and saw the good in all of us. He molded us into the right type of players." Coach Danny Ford said, "I accredit Coach Bender with molding the Brandon Burlsworth, Grant Garrett, Russell Brown, Bobbie Williams, and Chad Abernathy offensive line that Houston Nut went 9-3 with in 1998."

Coach Bender was born April 21, 1943, in Fort Smith, Arkansas, but spent his childhood in Strong, Arkansas, where he developed a deep passion for football. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Forrest City, where

he served as a Deacon, taught Sunday School, and was a Gideon.

Coach Bender married Gayle Johnson Bender in 1966. He is preceded in death by his parents; Michael Bender Sr., and Avelene Bender, his wife, Gayle Bender, and a sister, Sandra Beauchamp. He is survived by his brothers; Alfred Bender of Houston, Texas, and Albert Bender of Strong, one devoted son, Brent Bender of Forrest City, a devoted daughter, Eden Pagan, and husband, Jody, of Stuttgart, and two grandchildren; Hunter and Alexis.

A Graveside Service for Coach Bender will be held at Strong Cemetery, located in Strong, Arkansas, Tuesday, September 27, at 1:00 P.M. under the direction of Stevens Funeral Home. Visitation will be held at First Baptist Church of Forrest City, 5:00 till 7:00 P.M., Monday, September 26, 2016. Memorials are to be made to the Burlsworth Foundation, 119 W. Central Avenue, Harrison, Arkansas, 72601. You may log on to [stevensfuneralhome.net](http://stevensfuneralhome.net) for the on line registry.

# Cemetery Details

## Strong Cemetery

Strong, AR

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP **26**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

First Baptist Church  
507 N. Rosser  
Forrest City, AR 72335

## Graveside Service

SEP **27**. 1:00 PM (CT)

Strong Cemetery  
Strong, AR

## Interment

SEP **27** (CT)

Strong Cemetery  
Strong, AR

# Tribute Wall

GO

“ As a classmate of Mike's at Strong High School, I remember him as being very powerful on the football field but gentle and mild-mannered off the field. I am so very sorry for your loss.

Gwen Gunn Ogle

Gwen Gunn Ogle - September 27, 2016 at 05:48 PM

PD

“ Brent, I am so sorry to hear of your Dad's passing. Everyone that knew him has such high praises for him. I know you idolized your Mom and your Dad. You were the apple of their eye. I did not know that your Mom has passed previously. My thoughts are with you and your sister and her family. I lost my Mom 2 years ago and it hurts for a very long time!

Pam Delaney - September 27, 2016 at 03:06 PM

BB

“ My Heartfelt thoughts and prayers are with the family. Mike was a great person to work with as I had opportunity to work with him at Eldorado High School. I know he will be missed.

Betty Burns - September 27, 2016 at 11:35 AM

PJ

“ R.I.P. old friend !! Pat Jones , Tulsa Ok

Pat Jones - September 27, 2016 at 07:26 AM

MB

“ My condolences to the family.

Mike Burson - September 26, 2016 at 01:22 PM

JK

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with the Bender family. May God bless and keep you in his embrace during this trying time.*



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**Judy Meshell Kemp** - September 26, 2016 at 11:12 AM