

Seneca, KS

At the young and playful age of 89, Elmer Peter Lierz, adoring and devoted husband to JoAnn, proud and dedicated father, and loving grandfather and great-grandfather, passed away at his home surrounded by family on July 2, 2017.

The first of eight children to Leo and Bertha Bergman Lierz, Elmer was born in his parents' farmhouse at 8pm, Thursday, April 12, 1928. Just 11 months later he became a big brother to Lester. Elmer enjoyed telling the stories of the teachers that mistook him and Lester as twins during school. Within 3 years, 2 boys had grown to 4 with Verness and Gerald, and by age 12, Elmer was also big brother to 3 sisters, Cleta Mae, Eileen and Marceil. After completing the 8th grade at Fidelity Country School, Elmer left school to assist on the family farm near Sabetha. Elmer enlisted in the National Guard Army Reserves on June 22, 1948 at 20 years old and was honorably discharged on June 21, 1955 after 7 years of service, having earned the highest rank of Sergeant First Class. He also played with his brothers on the Fidelity Woodlawn Meadowlarks baseball team with Elmer at 2nd base, Lester as shortstop, Verness catching and Gerald pitching or in the outfield.

At 21, Elmer had been eyeing and admiring the dancing talent of the young JoAnn Elizabeth Heiman, so when JoAnn's 'ride' wanted to leave a dance early, Elmer offered to take her home and took the chance to sweep her off her feet. Elmer proposed on Christmas Eve, 1950 in the car outside of church and finally made JoAnn his bride on February 9, 1952 at St. Mary's Catholic Church in St. Benedict, Kansas. Elmer and JoAnn made their home on a 240-acre farm just west of Oneida, only a 5-mile drive from Seneca. They worked hard milking cows, growing crops, raising chickens, hogs and eventually 8 children in the 4 bedroom, 1 bath 2-story farmhouse on the hill (Poverty Knob, as Elmer would often call it).

As a farmer, Elmer was known for his pristine fields and immaculately clean machinery. In 1978 the Kansas Bankers Association presented Elmer, JoAnn and Elmer's dad, Leo with a Soil Conservation Award for establishing practices to prevent erosion and maintain the fertility and productivity of the land. Elmer was blessed to farm side-by-side with Leo until his death in June, 1987.

Elmer served as Treasurer for the Gilman Township for many years & was an avid hunter. He put his National Guard marksman and sharpshooting experience to good use, eventually taking the CB radio handle name, "One Shot." Elmer and JoAnn enjoyed socializing and having company over, playing cards, square dancing, attending all the local church picnics and traveling to Kansas City, Iowa, Washington state and California. Elmer enjoyed seeing his family grow as well as attending the baptisms, birthday parties, graduations, games and weddings of his children and grandchildren.

Once all 8 children were grown, Elmer and JoAnn sold the rest of their dairy herd to an Iowa lady and her daughter, Doris and Phyllis Lemke, and, as was customary, a lifelong friendship was born.

In March, 2000, after 48 years on the farm, Elmer and JoAnn moved into their 4-bedroom, 3 bath ranch home in Seneca. Enjoying their new adventure, but missing his 240 acres, Elmer quickly became bored. Living only ½ block east of Crestview Manor, it was not long before Sara Sourk, Administrator noticed his perfectly manicured lawn and approached Elmer about the opportunity to take over as Groundskeeper. As he did everything in life, Elmer took great pride in his work meticulously tending to the lawncare at Crestview. After almost 17 years and at the age of 89, Elmer handed over the lawncare duties to his son, Alan.

Although he missed his days on the farm, Elmer was in high demand once moving into Seneca. At 72 he began working for the Nemaha County Co-op fertilizer department driving trucks to haul anhydrous, corn, soybeans, etc. He relished those days spent with the guys and could still be found working overtime hours at the age of 88. Elmer was also recruited by Nemaha Valley Motors to drive cars, by his son, Lynn to pick up countertops from Lincoln and his son, Gene to assist on his farm.

Elmer's love for red was on display every spring and summer as he and JoAnn tended to their multiple red geraniums around the house. They also came to love the wrens, finches, sparrows, robins, cardinals, blue jays, orioles and hummingbirds that visited them throughout the year to occupy Dad's coffee can bird houses, the purple martin bird house, hummingbird feeder, bird bath and water bowl. One day a hummingbird flew into their glass patio door and fell to the step below. Dad hurried out to pick it up, held it in his strong hand while gently petting it until it woke back up and flew away.

Elmer volunteered countless times as a funeral usher at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, could be heard leading the rosary before daily masses, seen with JoAnn every Monday at 8am adoration (which they did for over 20 years) and visiting friends and family at Crestview Manor and Life Care Center.

Taking every opportunity to celebrate life, Elmer and JoAnn brought family together for their 25th, 40th, 50th, 60th and 65th wedding anniversaries as well as their 80th and 85th birthdays.

Elmer was a diehard fan of the Kansas City Royals and the KU men's basketball team. He was a man of strong faith, always had a corny joke to share or felt the need to give everyone a hard time, loved to celebrate, never had a hair out of place, kept an immaculate farm, always gave when he could (and even when he couldn't), had a love for red (his cars, Mom's geraniums, his ties, Mom's clothes, etc; "Everything looks better in red.") and had a passion for farming and all things outdoors. Above all else and no matter what, Dad wanted his family to stay together.

Elmer was welcomed 'Home' by numerous family members: his parents, Bertha (1976) and Leo (1987); brothers Victor (1937), Lester (1963) and Verness (2014); sisters Cleta Mae Hammes (2005) and Marceil Rottinghaus (2009); son Gerard (1963); and granddaughter Heather (1986).

Elmer leaves behind his dance partner and wife of 65 years, JoAnn; 6 sons, Lynn (Gail), Gene (Joan), Alan (Julie) and Russel (Amy), all of Seneca; Linus, Baileyville; Gary (Brenda), Sabetha; 2 daughters, Donna, Dexter and Sandra (Mike), Wichita; 12 grandsons, Ryan, Randy,

Matt, Jeff and Philip Lierz, Bradley Berkley, Chris, Logan, Colin, Jason and Nicholas Lierz and Jacob Berkley; 9 granddaughters, Laurie Osterhaus, Wendy Fleagle, Nikki Ronnebaum, Krista Morgan, Michelle Keim, Lindsey Lierz, Kaylie Berkley, Bridget and Kaitlyn Lierz; 9 great-grandsons, Ethan and Mason Ronnebaum, Aiden Lierz, Hunter Fleagle, Fenton Keim, Jeffrey Lierz, Brycen Ronnebaum, Leo Lierz and Tucker Keim; and 3 great-granddaughters, Josie and Addison Osterhaus and Charli Fleagle; 1 sister, Eileen (Francis) Sudbeck, Seneca and 1 brother, Gerald (Ethel) of Holton.

Elmer will be laid to rest near his son, Gerard, granddaughter, Heather & his parents in the Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Seneca, KS. Pallbearers for the funeral service are all his grandsons.

The rosary will be prayed in the Lauer Funeral Home at 2pm and 7pm on Thursday, July 6th.

The mass of Christian burial will be on Friday, July 7th at 10am, at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Seneca, KS.

Memorials are for Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church's window project and/or Crestview Manor sent in care of the family.