

Atchison, KS

ALBERT LEONARD GIGSTAD

Albert departed this earthly life for his heavenly reward on Sunday, May 22, 2022. He was surrounded by his loving family in the comfort of his own home.

Funeral services will be held at 10:00 am on Saturday, May 28th, 2022, at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Nortonville, KS with Rev. Richard Lally officiating. Burial will follow in the Nortonville Cemetery. The family will receive friends from 7:00 to 9:00 pm on Friday, May 27th, 2022, at St. Matthew Lutheran Church, 312 Elm St. Nortonville, KS. Memorials are suggested to St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Atchison County Community Schools Education Foundation (ACCSEF), or Flights of Honor and may be sent in care of the Becker-Dyer-Stanton & O'Trimble Funeral Home who is handling the arrangements. Condolences to the family may be left online at www.beckerdyer.com.

Albert was born May 27, 1928, on the family farm north of Nortonville, Kansas, in Atchison County. He was the fifth of seven children born to Gustav and Elizabeth (Walz) Gigstad. In elementary school, Albert walked down the road to attend the one-room Star School. He graduated from Atchison County High School, Effingham, in 1945 at the age of 16. Albert farmed with his dad and the two of them wired many of the farm houses in the area in anticipation of receiving electrical service to the homes after the war. Albert entered the US Air Force in 1952 and was among the first Air Force pilots to be trained on the new jet aircraft that were replacing the propeller planes. Albert had various military domestic assignments and was stationed in France for several years. After an honorable discharge from the Air Force in 1956 with the rank of 1st Lieutenant, he farmed with his dad and brother John in Nortonville until he signed on as a pilot with Trans World Airlines (TWA). During Albert's nearly 30 years with TWA, he worked for 15 of those years as a test pilot at the overhaul base in Kansas City, ensuring that repaired aircraft were ready to return to service. For the other 15 years, he was flying passengers on regularly scheduled commercial flights across the US. In 1970, Albert had the pleasure of flying with his uncle, Ben Gigstad, also a TWA pilot, on a charter flight which took their family members over their homes in Atchison, Brown, and Jefferson counties.

Albert married “the prettiest girl in town,” Kathryn (Katie) Van Liew of Atchison, Kansas on September 27, 1953. They had two children, Lisa and Todd. Albert and Todd farmed together for many years. Al and Katie enjoyed many years of traveling in their RV after he retired from TWA, and spent each winter in Apache Junction, Arizona, where they participated in many activities including stained glass, Bible study, choir, hiking, shuffleboard, cards, and golf. Al was known for his sense of humor, his quick wit, and his intellectual curiosity – always wanting to learn new things and master new skills. He worked hard to become the most tech-savvy 90-year-old around. Al’s favorite food was pie and he only liked it two ways – with one crust or with two. He had a special ability to greet people and make you feel special when you walked in the room.

Albert was also active in his community, serving on the Board of Education for District #377, Effingham, and on the church council of St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Nortonville. In 2018 he enjoyed being part of an Honor Flight, honoring veterans with a trip to Washington, DC. He owns the farmland on which he was born and enjoyed a 100th anniversary of this Centennial Farm last year with a family reunion on the property.

Albert is preceded in death by his parents, Gus and Lizzie Gigstad, his wife, Katie, brothers George and John Gigstad, three sisters, Irene Toedter, Evelyn Foster, and Marie Nieman, in-laws Carl and Ruth Van Liew, John and Carroll Crawley, Chuck and Connie Van Liew, Leona Gigstad, Edward Toedter, Charlie Foster, and Ed Nieman, Jr., and nephew Charles Van Liew. He is survived by children Lisa and Paul Francel, Todd and Barb Gigstad, and grandchildren Leif and Laci Francel, Thea Francel and Reid Hansen, Karl Francel, Elise and Cruz Holguin, Jordan Francel, Andy and Darcey Gigstad, Allegra and Tom Grannell, as well as his precious great-grandchildren, who will miss their “Great Papa,” Ted, Clive, Burke, and Beatrice Gigstad, Henry and Gianna Grannell, and Athena and Gaia Francel. He is also survived by sister Mildred (Duane) Hawk, in-laws Charlene Gigstad, Norman and Sherry Van Liew, and a host of nieces and nephews, each of whom knew they were “his favorite.”