



Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens

December 6, 1919 - March 6, 2019

Gerald Frank Stephens was born on Dec. 6, 1919 on a farm south of Stockton, MO. to Lula Peach Stephens and John D. Stephens. Gerald passed away on March 6, 2019 at the Butterfield Assisted Living Facility at the age of 99 years and three months. Gerald's father, John passed away when Gerald was four, and two years after that, Lula married Frank Routh who became the only father Gerald knew and later, the beloved grandfather of his children. Gerald's life ethic was forged in the coming years of hard work on the farm, a nurturing mother and a coming of age in the great depression which he always described as no money but always plenty of food. He graduated from Stockton high school in 1937, an accomplishment not shared by many of his neighbors and relatives, and went on to Springfield Teachers College, later SMS, later MSU. He taught for a while in a one-room country school before returning to college. His academic career was interrupted by the outbreak of war. He moved to Kansas City to work in an aircraft assembly plant where he caught the eye of a certain pretty farm girl from Kansas. He and Helen struck up a romance before he was accepted as a Navy Air Corps pilot cadet. They married (against navy rules) secretly before going off for training. After his commissioning they spent the next months in Miami beach where he trained on amphibious aircraft that would rescue fighter pilots downed in the ocean in the invasion of Japan. The atomic bomb put an end to that. After the war, Gerald used the G.I. Bill to train as a professional photographer and opened a studio in Bolivar in 1946. Over the next eighteen years, they bore three children who book-ended the baby boom generation, in those and later years they grew a successful business, raised a happy family and enjoyed the fellowship with many dear friends. Gerald (Steve) and Helen retired in 1984, turning over the business to their son Mark. Several years of relaxing retirement followed before Helen's long slide into dementia, ending in 2012. Steve became especially close to and dependent on his children after Helen's passing, especially enjoying visits from Meleah from California. His memory began to fade but he remained his real self to the end, full of good humor, gracious to everyone around him, steadfast to the principles that formed him. What a life! Love, laughter, wife, family, business, health, friends, golf, church, rotary, music, travel, skiing, swimming... Steve took the ride we all dearly wish for ourselves. To say he will be missed is an understatement.

Gerald is survived by three children, Mike Stephens and wife Nancy, Mark Stephens and wife Susie, and Meleah Larroca and husband Ray; Ten grandchildren: Mary Helen Jordan and husband Erik, Carmen Stephens, Nancy Stephens, John Stephens and wife Alisha, Ty Smith and wife Joy, Christie Jones and husband Andy, Brandon Baker and wife Shay, Brock Baker and wife Laura, Anthony Wells and wife Karin and Angela Modesitt; Fifteen great-grandchildren: Madison Stephens, Zane Stephens-Butler, Lyla Jordon, Molly Jordon, Michael Modesitt, Kayla Wells, Mya Smith, Ella Smith, Baylee Sharp, Bryce Jones, Emma Jones, Allison Jones, Madeline Hall-Baker, Beckham Baker and Braelyn Baker.

In addition, he is survived by many nephews, nieces, cousins and friends.

Mike, Mark, Meleah and families wish to thank Marilyn Bulloc, Nancy Stretch, Michelle Wheeler, staff at Butterfield Residential Center, and caregivers for the excellent care they gave to Gerald.

Donations may be made to the First Christian Church, Bolivar, Missouri in Gerald's name.

Visitation for Gerald Stephens will be held Saturday, March 9, 2019 from 3-5 PM at the Butler Funeral Home in Bolivar, MO. A memorial service will be held Sunday, March 10, 2019 at 3 PM at the First Christian Church in Bolivar, MO. Memorial contributions in Gerald's honor can be made to the First Christian Church in Bolivar, MO.

Events

MAR **Visitation** 03:00PM - 05:00PM

9

Butler Funeral Home - Bolivar
407 E. Broadway, Bolivar, MO, US, 65613

MAR **Memorial Service** 03:00PM

10

First Christian Church
407 W Broadway, Bolivar, MO, US, 65613

Comments



“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Meleah Larroca - March 13 at 11:55 PM



“ Dear Mike & Nancy, Mark & Susie, Meleah & Ray and Families,

I was so saddened to hear of your Dad's passing. Due to illness, I was unable to attend his visitation or celebration of life. Your Dad was one of a kind and will be missed greatly. As many growing up in Bolivar, your parents documented our lives in pictures. Each picture represents a very special time and place in our lives. I am forever thankful to have known your family my entire life. I will miss your Dad's smile, laughter, jokes & singing.

My Prayers & Loving Thoughts are will all of you. Until we meet again Steve.....

Helen Ann Strack

Helen Strack - March 11 at 05:30 PM



“ I never had the honor of knowing Steve, however we were related. My great-grandmother was Lula Peach, (I would have to re-visit her grave to make sure) and was buried at at Gum Springs (south of Stockton.)

When I was young we used to visit either Frank or Elza Routh who lived south of Stockton.

I remember when I went to Stevens Studio to get my Senior picture taken Mother told me that we were related.

When I saw his obit. it made me walk down memory lane.

Sharron (Kennedy) Ward - March 10 at 09:56 PM



“ So sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with your families!! Steve and Janet Timmerman.

Janet Timmerman - March 10 at 07:37 PM



“ Your dad has touched so many lives over the years. I hope you find comfort in his legacy of a life well lived.
Linda York (the family of Jim and June York)

linda york - March 09 at 05:01 PM



“ Joel Thomas Family purchased the Simply Chic Mixed Plant Basket for the family of Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens.



Joel Thomas Family - March 08 at 02:26 PM



“ Gerald was one of the most positive people we've ever known!! He always had a smile, positive word, and a great laugh! I observed him being a great dad and husband, and he was supportive in so many ways around Bolivar. His life is truly one to be celebrated!
Jim & Dawn Hall

Jim & Dawn Hall - March 08 at 01:06 PM



“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens.



March 08 at 12:58 PM



“ To me he will always be the "smiling photographer", who made me feel like a princess, as he took pictures of me or my family or of high school events. A great man who carried himself with such grace and dignity. A life well lived. John and I extend our deepest sympathy to the family. Joyce Davolt Henry



“ I enjoyed Steve's humor, kindness and stories. Especially when he would tell me about meeting Helen. That always put a twinkle in his eyes. Love, Michelle

Michelle Wheeler - March 07 at 07:40 PM



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens.



March 07 at 04:14 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens.



March 07 at 03:02 PM



“ Missouri Pharmacy Association purchased the Guiding Light Bouquet for the family of Gerald F. "Steve" Stephens.



Missouri Pharmacy Association - March 07 at 02:43 PM



“ Allen and Louise Talley & family purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Gerald Stephens.



Allen and Louise Talley & family - March 07 at 12:29 PM



“ He had such a sweet smile as he would shake hands and say, "God loves you! And so do I!" He was so gracious and kind. I will miss him.

Noella Thomas - March 06 at 12:56 PM