



Gerald E. "Jerry" Spear, Jr.

November 13, 1942 - October 3, 2025

Gerald E. Spear Jr., lovingly known as "Jerry," passed away on Friday, October 3rd, 2025, at Centralia Manor Nursing Home at the age of 82. Jerry was born in Centralia on Friday, November 13th, 1942, the son of Gerald (Jerry) E. Spear Sr. and Jessie (Ragsdale) Ramsey. He married Gladys Cohlmeier in 1962. They were divorced in 1994 with Two children, Robin and Scott, born from this marriage.

He is survived by his daughter, Robin Butcher, of Centralia; his brother, John Spear, of Collinsville, Illinois; his two granddaughters, Brook King of Iuka, Illinois, and Brittany Pate of Davenport, Iowa; and his nephews, Bradley Spear of Wichita Falls, Texas, and David Spear of Great Falls, Montana. Jerry also leaves behind numerous cousins who will remember him fondly.

Jerry was preceded in death by his parents, Gerald E. Spear Sr. and Jessie Ramsey, as well as his son, Robert Scott Spear.

Jerry led a distinguished career in the airline industry, beginning in 1964 with Ozark Airlines. His journey through the skies continued with the transitions to TWA Airlines in 1986 and ultimately American Airlines in 2000, where he retired as a respected pilot whose leadership and dedication were admired by many.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Jerry was an active member of his community. He was a cherished member of the Centralia Rotary and a passionate participant in the Centralia Wireless Association, proudly holding the call sign K9KWD. Further exemplifying his zest for connection and communication, Jerry was a lifetime member of the American Radio Relay League and the Experimental Aircraft Association.

A visitation will be held on Thursday, October 9, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home, followed by the funeral service at 12:00 PM. with Pastor Steve Upchurch officiating. Burial will follow at Ashley Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family respectfully requests memorial donations be made to the Centralia Humane Society and will be accepted at Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home, located at 235 North Sycamore Street, Centralia, Illinois 62801, (618) 532-3523, who is honored to serve Jerry's family. Friends and family are encouraged to express condolences online by visiting www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com or the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home Facebook page. Family, friends, and all those whose lives Jerry touched are invited to share in celebrating his remarkable life.

Jerry's warmth, humor, and spirit of adventure will be deeply missed but forever cherished by those who knew and loved him. May he rest in peace, soaring among the stars with the same grace with which he flew through life.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 9. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home
235 N. Sycamore Street
Centralia, IL 62801

Funeral Service

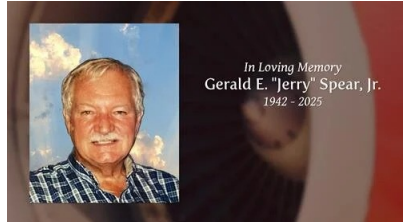
OCT 9. 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM (CT)

Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home
235 N. Sycamore Street
Centralia, IL 62801

Tribute Wall



“ *Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Gerald E. "Jerry" Spear, Jr.*



Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services - October 07, 2025 at 12:16 PM

MH

Jerry was a great guy to fly with at the airlines. Enjoyed time with him at various fly-in events. He called us often in the later years and still talked flying!
Mark and Elaine Harter

Mark and Elaine Harter - October 07, 2025 at 08:52 PM

CM

Jerry was one of the best pilots and nice guys I have ever known. We became great friends more than 50 years ago. We talked on the phone every week. We flew our Cessna 170's around in formation many times, visiting friends at airports in the St. Louis area.

I can say he was my BFF. I will miss him.

Chuck Midyett - October 09, 2025 at 07:23 PM

PB

So sorry to see this about Jerry.

Back in the day, as I was pursuing a career with the airlines, Jerry got me an application for Ozark. Gave it to me as a birthday gift, as it wasn't easy to get one then. I truly dreamed of working for Ozark, but it wasn't meant to be

I did work for other airlines and if Jerry happened to fly in to any station I was working, he always seeked me out and we chatted! Fun days those were. You will be missed my friend! 🙏💔😊✈️

Peggy Myers Means Beal - October 10, 2025 at 12:07 PM

JW

While Charlie Wells was owner and operator of Salem Air Service, Jerry could often be found working on his airplane working on his airplane in the shop there. It wasn't all work but much discussion and camaraderie with other pilots and visitors. After Charlie died, if Jerry was in the area he always made it to the Charlie Wells Memorial Fly In at Springfield, Illinois Airport. We know they are having a great pilots reunion, together again!

*Sincere condolences,
The Bruce Wells Family*

J. Maxine Wells - October 11, 2025 at 06:32 PM

EB

“ *One of my favorite Ozark pilots. Loved his sense of humor. Rest in Peace, Jerry.* ”

Eileen K Bryan - October 10, 2025 at 11:44 AM

DP

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss . I considered Jerry a dear friend. When I moved away from Ashley I didn't get to visit with Jerry very much. I remember when I lived in Kansas City Missouri when he would get a flight in he would call if he had a layover and my husband and I would meet him for lunch or dinner. He always made a point to see me when we would drive thru. He will be missed in many ways. I know he loved flying so he is soaring with the angels.* ”

Dorothy Poole - October 07, 2025 at 08:09 PM

PC

“ I met Jerry in about 1973 when I was into horses and cowboys. At one point he said "How would you like to try something with wings and a propeller instead of four legs and a tail ?"
Decided to try and, because of Jerry, I earned a Commercial license and became a Flight Instructor. My life changed at that time forever. I will always be grateful for his expertise and influence. Always admired his skill in the cockpit and his ability to make it look easy. I'll miss talking to you, Jerry.

Paul Cozadd

Paul Cozadd - October 06, 2025 at 06:44 PM