



## Lester T. Byrd, Jr.

April 1, 1930 - July 9, 2022

Lester Truman Byrd, Jr. 92, of Centralia, passed away in peace surrounded by his family on Saturday, July 9, 2022 at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital in Saint Louis, MO.

Lester was born April 1, 1930 in Island Grove in Sangamon County, Illinois to Lester T. Byrd, Sr. and Eliza E. Byrd née Laxton. He married the love of his life Permelia A. Byrd née McMeen on January 7, 1951 and was blessed with over 71 years of marriage.

In addition to his wife Permelia Byrd of Centralia, he is survived by his two sons: Gary A. Byrd and wife Barbara Byrd of Foley, Missouri and David R. Byrd of Centralia, Illinois; six grandchildren: Gary Byrd, Jr. and wife Stefanila Byrd of Perryville, Missouri, John Byrd of Perryville, Missouri, Shauna Crocker and husband Rob Crocker of Springfield, Missouri, Christopher Byrd and wife Susan Byrd of Maryland Heights, Missouri, Nathaniel Byrd and wife Stephanie Moore of St. Louis, Missouri, Kayla Byrd of Trussville, Alabama; ten great-grandchildren; two step-great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren; a sister: Mildred M. Hutchinson of South Carolina; nieces and nephews.

Lester was preceded in death by his parents: Lester and Eliza Byrd, two brothers: Rev. Melvin R. Byrd and Loren E. Byrd, and two sisters: Ruth E. Venezia and Sarah E. Baun.

Lester served in the U.S. Air Force where he attained the rank of Staff Sergeant. Following his service, Lester worked in the private sector as an accomplished engineer and scientist, including work on rocket guidance systems, radar systems, automated test equipment for aircraft, battery technology, and more. Many times, his work took him across the country and around the world.

No matter how accomplished he was at work, Lester always put his family first. The job he most excelled at was as a husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. He was a role model to many and was always there to help or provide advice.

Lester enjoyed photography, he first developed skills in camera and darkroom techniques while in the Air Force and deployed to a remote outpost on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. Lester continued his photography hobby years later during civilian life when he set up a darkroom in his home basement. His son David recalls as a young child watching his father develop film and seeing the latent image emerge from the paper in the developing tray as if by magic. This inspired David to learn these skills and later to use them many times during his engineering and graphics careers.

Lester was skilled at repairing just about everything. Several times he remarked that working as a repair man in his teen years was one of the best jobs that he ever had. He always insisted on repairing his cars and generously took time to teach his sons the basics of mechanical repair. His son Gary learned these skills especially well and went on to become an auto mechanic and later to work as a machinist for a major aircraft company.

Visitation will be held Friday, July 15, 2022 from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home in Centralia. Funeral Services for Lester T.

Byrd, Jr. will be held Saturday, July 16, 2022, at 11:00 a.m. at the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home in Centralia, Illinois. Burial will follow at Hillcrest Memorial Park in Centralia. In place of flowers, memorial donations may be made to the Parkinson's Foundation and the American Cancer Society and will be accepted at the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home at 235 North Sycamore Street Centralia, Illinois 62801, (618) 532-3523, who is honored to be of service to the Byrd Family. Online condolences may be made to the family by visiting [www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com](http://www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com) and the Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home Facebook Page.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

JUL 15. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home Inc.  
235 North Sycamore  
Centralia, IL 62801

# Tribute Wall



“ *Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Lester T. Byrd, Jr.*



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**Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services** - July 14, 2022 at 06:26 PM

DK

“ *To the Byrd Family,*

*I was so sorry to hear about Lester's passing. I grew up visiting Lester and Permelia over in Missouri with my mom and dad, Ken and Verna Trieglaff. Lester and Permelia would come to my Aunt Sandy Stuber's house for the Halloween Parade and have soup and visit. My mom always said "If you could have a conversion with Lester Byrd, then you were a very smart person!" LOL. Lester was such a kind man. I always looked up to him. Please tell Permelia she is in my prayers for comfort. I will also pray for comfort for the family as well.*

*Love,  
Darla (Trieglaff) Kasperek*

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**Darla Kasperek** - August 08, 2022 at 12:31 PM

LW

“ Thank you for your service Mr. Byrd...rest in peace Laura Warren-Cashman

Laura Warren-Cashman - July 14, 2022 at 04:48 AM

RA

“ My heart breaks with you at the loss of Lester. What a beautiful legacy he is leaving behind. No words I can offer will make this hurt go away. Know I am here for you always.

Rama - July 13, 2022 at 09:16 PM

MH

“ Mildred, Tim, and Suzan Hutchinson purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Lester T. Byrd, Jr..



Mildred, Tim, and Suzan Hutchinson - July 13, 2022 at 01:57 PM

RW

“ July 4th picnics were always a blast. The whole family present and sweet uncle Lester with camera in hand. Lots of wonderful memories of those days. I will dearly miss my Uncle Lester.

Rhonda Wiatrek - July 13, 2022 at 12:53 PM



“ *Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Lester T. Byrd, Jr..*



July 13, 2022 at 12:45 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Lester T. Byrd, Jr..*



July 13, 2022 at 11:01 AM



“ *Condolences to the family. Lester was a kind, patient, intelligent man who was a great role model.*

**Harry Reed** - July 13, 2022 at 09:06 AM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Lester T. Byrd, Jr..*



July 12, 2022 at 07:34 PM