



## Verle Besant

June 4, 1935 - September 25, 2023

Verle Jerome Besant, 88, recently of Alpharetta, Georgia – but forever of Centralia, IL – passed away peacefully and surrounded by his family on September 25th, 2023. He was born June 4th, 1935 to Jerome Besant and Selma (née Krietemeyer) Besant. He later married Jo Ann (née Redeker) Besant on June 25th, 1980.

Verle is survived by his wife Jo Ann (affectionately, “Jo”); his children Craig Besant and wife Christi of Mt. Vernon, IL; Karen “Libby” Breeze and husband Steve of Niceville, FL; Teri Miller of Johns Creek, GA and Gary Schuchman of Wilmington, NC; and his grandchildren Claire Besant, Henry Besant, Emma Breeze, and Cooper Breeze.

Verle was a graduate of Schiller Grade School, Centralia High School, and the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (1957) with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics/Insurance. He served on active duty with an anti-aircraft artillery unit. He also served seven years in the Army Reserves, attaining the rank of Captain.

In 1957, he became an agent for New York Life Insurance. In 1960, he became an associate for the Redeker Insurance Agency; in 1964, a partner; in 1977, the owner. The agency is now known as the Centralia branch of Dimond Brothers Insurance.

He was a lifetime member of Trinity Lutheran Church and served as Elder. He was a member of Sunshine Rotary, board member of St. Mary’s Good Samaritan Hospital, board member of Felician Services, Inc., Director of

Centralia Industries, Chairman of the Centralia Foundation and Chairman of the Centralia Redevelopment Commission. He was also a member of the Centralia Recreation Complex, Centralia Elks, and Meadow Woods Country Club.

He was a past member and President of Centralia Independent Insurance Agents Association, board member of Illinois Association of Insurance Agents, past Chairman of Centralia United Fund, County Chairman of National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, founding member of the Board of Trustees, Kaskaskia College 1965-1972. Instrumental in establishing Kaskaskia College District 1965. President of Kaskaskia College Foundation 1965-1972. President, Illinois Community College Trustees' Association 1968-1969, and member 1968-1972. Member of Board of Directors of First National Bank and Magna Bank.

He was also President of Centralia Cultural Society in 1976. Member of Centralia Economic Development Council, past President of Centralia Chapter of American Red Cross, recipient of the Centralia Jaycees Distinguished Service Award. President of Centralia Jaycees 1961 and 2002 Recipient of Small Business of the Year Award by Centralia Chamber of Commerce. Verle received the Centralia High School Distinguished Alumni award in 2012 and the Centralia City Schools Reach for the Stars award in 2009. He was a lifetime member of the Centralia Chamber of Commerce. In April of 2015, he was presented a Key to the City of Centralia by then Mayor, Tom Ashby. He was an active member of Trinity Lutheran Church in Centralia until moving to Alpharetta, GA where he became a member of Cross of Life Lutheran Church.

Verle was a steady and quiet leader who dedicated his life to service in the name of community, particularly within that which he loved most – his hometown of Centralia. To memorialize our husband, father, and grandfather properly is to recognize the litany of generosity he dedicated his life to building.

He also had a thoughtful habit of including batteries with his gifts to his

grandchildren, which their parents appreciated.

First of all, thanks to all of you who have reached out to our family, after our dad, Verle Besant, and mom, Jo Besant passed away. It means a lot to all of us! We are planning a "Celebration of Life" for them on Saturday, November 4th from 2pm-5pm at the Cultural Society in Centralia with a short program scheduled at 3pm. Thanks again for all of your heartfelt messages. We hope you can join us on the 4th to say goodbye to "the folks". In lieu of flowers, memorial donations can be made to Centralia Foundation and will be accepted at Sutherland-Garnier Funeral Home at 235 North Sycamore Street, Centralia, Illinois 62801 (618) 532-3523, who is honored to be of service to the Besant family. Online condolences may be made to the family by visiting [www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com](http://www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com) or the Funeral Home's Facebook page.

# Previous Events

## **Celebration of Life**

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NOV 4. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM.

Cultural Society

# Tribute Wall



“ *Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services created a Tribute Video in memory of Verle Besant*



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**Sutherland Funeral Homes, Cemetery and Cremation Services** - November 02, 2023 at 09:01 AM

LR

“ *I started working at the Redeker Agency in 1978 right out of college and worked there 8+ years. Verle was the most compassionate person I have ever met in my years of working. He was honest, fair, and treated his employees like family. It was a privilege to know this great man and to work with him. His family was very lucky to have such an inspiration in their family. My heart goes out to all the family.*

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**Lana Rubin** - October 03, 2023 at 09:56 AM

KJ

“ *Each and every time I was around Verle he was always such a kind man. I know he will be missed by many. My condolences to Jo, Teri, Craig, Karen and their families. You're in my heart and prayers.*

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**Kathy Jackson** - September 28, 2023 at 09:39 PM

DR

“ I truly enjoyed my many years of collaborating with Verle while I was employed at St. Mary’s. He was a loyal, honest and hard working man but I most am proud to have called him friend. Condolences to his family who I know he held so dear. RIP Verle.

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**Debi Richardson** - September 27, 2023 at 06:41 PM

DP

“ So very sad to hear of Verle's passing. Nobody worked harder for Centralia than Verle. I'm proud to call him a friend. Blessings to Jo and her family.

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**Dan Parker** - September 27, 2023 at 08:15 AM

SS

“ How blessed we all have been to have had Verle in our lives, our community, and in our hearts. As a personal mentor to me his guidance, counsel and practical approach to so many circumstances were gifts I will always treasure. Rest in peace, Verle. Sr. Clarette

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**Sr. Clarette Stryzewski** - September 26, 2023 at 06:43 PM

SH

“ No one can ever say enough good things about Verle. He was the best of the best. He cared about his community like he did his family. Gave his heart and soul. God bless him for all his hard work and hours of community service.

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**Steve and Mary Jane Hardy** - September 26, 2023 at 01:09 PM

JM

“ Verle was a pillar of Centralia. His mark in our community will be felt by those that knew Verle and the many contributions he made by his leadership. To know Verle was a pleasure that many of us were fortunate to have. Rest in peace my friend and my deepest condolences to Jo and family.

jan monken - September 26, 2023 at 12:09 PM

KW

“ Oh, so many and all good memories. Hickey's was the place and we all chatted and ate fries :-)

Karen K. Wyatt - September 26, 2023 at 11:43 AM

BL

“ We are so sorry for your loss. Verle was a great man and one of the best employers to have ever worked for. Love to all of the family. 🙏  
🙏🙏❤️❤️❤️

Benita Langenfeld - September 26, 2023 at 11:19 AM

JK

“ Dear Jo..so sorry to hear of Verle's passing ... he was a wonderful guy..my dad admired him so. He taught me I couldn't drink beer at U of I. Before school even started! We always had a laugh.. I know he was a good husband and father because that's the kind of person he was.. Bruce and I sending hugs..the KIRKLANDS



Judy Kirkland - September 26, 2023 at 11:15 AM

KW

*Dear Jo and family,  
So very sorry to hear about Verle. I have so many memories of him.  
Many us survived our High School years because of him. He was a  
dear sweet man. Blessing to you and yours. Karen*

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**Karen K. Wyatt** - September 26, 2023 at 11:52 AM

CF

*We are sad to hear of Verle's passing. I speak for my Dad and our  
whole family when I say we loved and were very blessed to have  
known such a good man.  
Our deepest sympathies to the family and prayers for you during this  
time of celebration of his life.  
Many of our memories are entwined with yours and we will cherish  
those forever. Thank you Verle and God bless you Jo Ann and kids.  
We love you all.*

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**Charles and Sally Schwartz family** - September 26, 2023 at 04:18 PM

SP

*Dear Jo, Craig, Christi et al -- Susan and I regret never having had an  
opportunity to meet Verle, since it is obvious he was a remarkably kind  
man and a true servant leader. Very sorry for your loss. May Our Lord  
grant him eternal rest and may His perpetual light shine upon him.*

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**Susan and Mike Petrik** - September 30, 2023 at 09:20 PM