



Joseph Ellsworth May

July 3, 1929 - December 31, 2021

Joseph Ellsworth May, 92, of Bloomington, Indiana died on December 31, 2021. Born on July 3, 1929 to Russell and Helen May. Fondly known as Grandad, his legacy is steeped in the family he has left behind. Survived by his wife, Barbara Joanne May (Finley), sisters, Marilyn Roush and Nancy May-Scott, 5 children, Kathryn Galvin (Timothy Galvin), Thomas May, Joseph May (Tammy May), Cindy Waterford (Rick Waterford), Pamela Kerr (Jeffrey Kerr), 16 grandchildren, 28 great grandchildren and counting.

Joe and Joanne's love story began over 70 years ago and nary a day apart since. In Joanne and her family, Joe saw a kindness and a devotion to each other that he longed to be a part of and a vision for a family that did the same. Joe and Joanne embodied love through serving one another on a daily basis. Joe communicated his endless adoration and affection through small, consistent gestures: a squeeze of the hand, a pat on the butt, finding harmony in song, and the occasional side eye. Joe's dedication to Joanne was unmatched.

While attending Indiana University and working for Indiana Limestone Company, Joe was drafted into the Army to serve his country in the Korean War. After his service, Joe returned to cutting stone and toiled to provide for his expanding family. And, provide he did.

Joe personified true grit. Eager to foster in his children an appreciation of hard work and a love of the blessings of earth, Joe moved his family to what would become his forever home. Through white-knuckled determination, they maintained an expansive garden, rambunctious farm animals, and acres of land. The provisions fed their family well, but their real sustenance came from the care and consistency of working together.

After retirement, the limestone dust on Joe's Red Wing boots was replaced with dirt from his garden. He focused more on life's simplicity, like the unique beauty in zinnias. Joe found joy in planting endless rows of those pollinators and sharing the seeds with family and friends. He also wandered Bloomington with his friends, scouring the ground and antique shops for one-of-a-kind trinkets, most of which he gave away or stuffed into a Christmas stocking.

His voice maintained a bellow, but his heart brightened as he found happiness in the time he got to spend with his ever growing family. Age crept over his body, but the twinkle in his eye grew larger as his kids' kids regaled him with their stories and played at his feet.

With the same vigor he had for feeding others, Joe fed himself through reading. He devoured stories of great American leaders like Truman, Lincoln, and Wilson until his eyes couldn't keep up with the dimming light. Even as his family pursued college degrees, no one would dare assume they knew more than the man whose book collection never stopped growing.

Joe was a collector of antiques, friends, and stories. Principled in character, he lived by honesty and respect and expected the same from others. He will be remembered. Forever a devoted husband, steadfast father, humble veteran, hard worker, ferocious reader, treasure collector, snake slayer, card shark, coffee drinker, and complete legend.

The visitation will be held at 11:00 AM on Thursday, January 13, 2022, at Allen Funeral Home in Bloomington, Indiana. Funeral service to follow at 1:00 PM. Masks are required. In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to Clear Creek Christian Church or IU Health Bloomington Hospice.

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory, 4155 S. Old State Rd. 37 in Bloomington have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencares.com

Cemetery Details

Clear Creek Cemetery

W Church Lane
Bloomington, IN 47403

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 13. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Service

JAN 13. 1:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory
4155 S. Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47401
(812) 824-5905
<http://www.allencares.com>

Tribute Wall

RH

“ When I think of Joe, I think of the word "solid." He loved his family and friends with all his heart. He was a great provider. Despite his sometimes gruff outer shell, he was incredibly kind. He was a lover of stimulating conversation. He was well-read and an avid fan of history. I will always remember him sitting around the kitchen table with friends and family enjoying a a cup of coffee, something sweet that Joanne had made, talking about a variety of subjects. I was always struck by his knowledge of so many things. My deepest sympathy and love to the entire May and Finley families. He will be missed. May your memories of this amazing man bring you comfort in the days, weeks, and months ahead.

Robin Hegner

Robin Hegner - January 13, 2022 at 11:48 AM

VM

“ Joanne, My sympathy to you and your family. Glad you and Joe had so many good years together. Life will be different but the wonderful memories will make it easier.

*Vera May
Cookeville, TN*

Vera May - January 10, 2022 at 09:09 AM

TC

“ Cindy so sorry for your loss. Thoughts and prayers are with you all



Thelma cox - January 09, 2022 at 08:17 AM

TH

“ Joe, Cindy, Pamela & entire May family,
I am sorry for your loss, but heavens gain!!
Prayers for strength & peace in the days
ahead..

Tara Woods Hardwick



Tara Hardwick - January 06, 2022 at 10:35 PM

RI

“ He was a very good man. Every time I drove into town I would look
over to see what he was doing in his garden.

Rod Ira - January 06, 2022 at 06:09 PM

TC

Cindy and family, so sorry for your loss. Thoughts and prayers are with
you all. Thelma cox

Thelma cox - January 09, 2022 at 08:11 AM

JR

Joanne and family, My thoughts and prayers are with your family Joan
Ray

Joan Ray - January 10, 2022 at 12:44 PM