



Samuel Ray Lehman

December 19, 1932 - November 18, 2023

BLOOMINGTON --Samuel Ray Lehman, age 90, passed away peacefully at home on Saturday, November 18, 2023. Public viewing will be from 11am to 1pm Monday November 27, with funeral services starting at 1:00 pm. Interment will follow at Grandview Cemetery. Arrangements will be handled by Lester Jenkins & Sons Funeral Home, Bloomfield.

Sam was born on December 19, 1932 to Cloe and Evadine Lehman, who preceded him in death, as did his wife of 66 years, Mary Kathryn Fischer. Also passing before his death were grandson Wesley David Lehman, niece Lu Ann (White) Porter and nephew Robert White, brother Billie Joe Lehman, and nephew Matt Lehman. Survivors include his children and their spouses, Michael (Maiko) Lehman, David (Cheryl) Lehman, Susan (Chris) Lee, and Gregory (Teresa) Lehman. Other survivors include his sister, Phyllis (Lehman) White, niece Cathy (Kevin) Turpin, and nephew Steven (Cindy) White along with numerous other nieces and nephews, great nieces and great nephews.

Surviving grand- and great-grandchildren and spouses include Angela (Jeremy) Inman (Brenden, Jarrett, Hayden, and Jaxsen); Jessica (Shawn) Cullison (Hunter, Weston, and Colton); Kathryn Michelle & Kyle Stallings; Manda (Cass) Smith-Collins; Nathan Lee & Caroline Hyatt (Josephine); and Alex Lee & John Musichuk.

Growing up in the Goose Pond south of Linton in Greene County, Sam was an avid hunter and fisher, who passed on these skills to his children. Sam played basketball for Marco High School, which won the Sectional. Farm life provided a great facilitation of work with his hands, eventually leading to college training as an industrial arts educator at what is now Indiana State University. Sam met Mary there, leading to marriage.

After their graduation, Sam joined the Air Force in 1954 as an enlisted man despite his college degree. As we learned many years later, the unit he served in was considered to be the most educated in the Air Force. Known early on as AFOAT-1, it became the Air Force Technical Applications Center in 1959. The obscure name was intentional, as the unit operated the nation's most important strategic intelligence asset prior to the U-2, the Atomic Energy Detection System. Sam's role initially involved using a standard oxygen generator to liquefy whole air, then using a "classified manifold" to collect a particular gaseous isotope which revealed how much plutonium-239 the USSR was producing. Mary often spoke of her fears about the danger to Sam from liquid oxygen, which is highly explosive. It wasn't until after 1997 that AFTAC veterans were permitted to tell their loved ones some basic facts about what their service involved, clarifying the tradeoff between the dangers of liquid oxygen being balanced against the insight this technique provided into the weapons the Soviets had available.

Sam was selected for officers candidate school in 1962 when, despite vision that needed a strong prescription to correct, he won the San Antonio area .45 caliber pistol championship against strong competition. Air Force assignments took Sam to Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, then to Dayton, Ohio; the Panama Canal Zone; Phoenix, Arizona; Randolph AFB, Texas; Mesa, Arizona; then back to Randolph.

Sam and family then enjoyed a brief stint near home in Bloomington while

Sam earned his MBA at Indiana University after choosing it over Harvard, the other choice the Air Force offered to earn this advanced degree. Assignments at Headquarters USAFE in Wiesbaden and Ramstein (Sembach), West Germany followed, then finally back to Chanute AFB, Rantoul, Illinois as a squadron commander. Among the awards he received were the Meritorious Service Medal and the Air Commendation Medal.

After Sam retired from the Air Force as a major, he and Mary lived just south of Bloomfield for three decades doing furniture refinishing, house restoration, rental and sales, before settling again in Bloomington. Sam and Mary remained adventuresome and avid travelers until they just couldn't anymore. Sam converted to Catholicism after he married Mary, attending among others St. Monica's, Converse, Texas (where he served as PTA president and became lifelong friends with Father George); Holy Name of Jesus, Bloomfield; and St. John's the Apostle, Ellettsville, Indiana.

With a big heart for animals, Sam raised and enjoyed many species and breeds, from cats and dogs to farm animals to peacocks. He enjoyed a good catfish pulled from a trot line, brought home quail and squirrels to cook, as well as showing his sons how to gig frogs to fry up tastily. Sam could also cook a delicious potato soup.

Memorials in lieu of flowers are requested to be made to the American Legion Memorial Post 196 in Bloomfield, IN.

Cemetery Details

Grandview Cemetery

N. Washington Street
Bloomfield, IN 47424

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 27. 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM (ET)

Lester Jenkins and Sons Funeral Home Inc. - Bloomfield
421 South Seminary Street
Bloomfield, IN 47424
(812) 384-4212
info@jenkinsfuneralhomes.com
<https://www.jenkinsfuneralhomes.com/>

Service

NOV 27. 1:00 PM (ET)

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Tribute Wall



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Samuel Ray Lehman.*



November 22, 2023 at 12:27 PM



“ *My son Adam Vandeventer worked for Sam & Mary Kate during his high school years. Adam learned so much from Sam. Sam & Mary Kate were good folks. Our condolences to the family. Mark & Kelli Usrey*

Kelli Usrey - November 21, 2023 at 12:53 PM



“ *2 files added to the album Sam Lehman*



Lester Jenkins and Sons Funeral Home Inc. - November 21, 2023 at 10:51 AM