

even happier.

The real test of a person comes when faced with adversity. In 2005, Loretta suffered a severe traumatic brain injury. For the rest of her life, Bill dedicated all of his energy to her care, rarely leaving her side. He found his morning coffee outings with the guys a welcome, if brief, respite. Dad and Mom's relationship set a strong example for us, their children. Dad's undying devotion to Mom became a lesson in true unconditional love and set a standard which we aspire to. He found it most difficult to accept transitioning her care to Pioneer Cottages in 2020 when her needs became overwhelming. He felt he was letting her down and not living up to his wedding promises to care for her "for better or for worse."

Once he no longer needed to spend all of his time and energy on Loretta's care, Bill unfortunately suffered a series of health-related events that prevented him from enjoying his remaining time to the fullest. Fiercely independent, despite his obstacles, Bill fought to remain in his own home as long as possible. And he did, keeping his home, his wits, and his car keys to the very end.

As we grew up, when asked if we were Bill Giesen's kid, all of us were proud to say "Yes." In reviewing some cards Bill had saved from his retirement, comments kept repeating along the lines of "Bill, you are truly one in a million." and "The world would be a better place if there were more people like you, Bill. You are the BEST."

Perhaps we could have saved column space by just offering this comment we received from one of his long-time friends, "Tell them ... He was the finest man I've ever known."

Bill was preceded in death by his wife, Loretta, his parents, Albert and Eulalia (Kohler) Giesen, his sister, Patt Tomei, and adopted sister, Sally Ward. Bill is survived by his 7 children: Jeanne (Marvin) Lugert of Wyndmere, ND, Alan (Eileen O'Byrne) Giesen of Minneapolis, MN, Brad Giesen of Boise, ID, Hugh (Laura) Giesen of Champlin, MN, Dan (Julie) Giesen of Minneapolis, MN, Janet (Keith) Day of Dassel, MN and David (Kerrie) Giesen of Rochester, NY as well as 15 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

### **Blessed be the Memory of William Giesen**



*Together Again*

# Celebrating the **Life** of



# William Giesen

## Remembering the Life....

“The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Ralph Waldo Emerson could have written that poem about our Dad, Bill Giesen, who passed away at age 95 on May 17, 2023.

Bill was born on May 5, 1928 to Albert and Eulalia Giesen in Morris, MN. Bill had a fairly typical childhood for that time; not a lot of money, but a good, stable home, friends, a dog, and the freedom to use his ingenuity in the pursuit of fun. For instance, there was the time he and his friends formed lead shoes, grabbed a hose for air and walked the bottom of the local lake. Not surprisingly, when his mom found out, she buried those shoes. (We never did find them!)

As Bill grew, he kept busy in more constructive ways. As a teen, he had various summer jobs. He worked on a farm, for a veterinarian, on a railroad maintenance crew, for the local newspaper in the print shop and delivering papers, as well as a furniture store. Bill graduated from Morris High School in 1946 and continued working at the furniture store until 1947, when he started at Otter Tail Power Company as a cashier in the Morris, MN office for \$140/month. He advanced to Stock Clerk in 1949. While working for OTP, Bill supplemented his income running movie projectors at the Morris theater on nights and weekends.

During this time, Bill met the love of his life, Nurse Loretta Schuster, while his mother was hospitalized for appendicitis. Such was his love for Loretta, that he married her even after she showed up at a movie with another man AFTER having told Bill she wasn't interested in that movie (remember, HE RAN THE PROJECTOR!). This became a humorous family memory we kids enjoyed throughout their marriage.

Bill was drafted into the Army in 1950 and served through the Korean Conflict until 1953. He was a Special Agent in the Army Counter-Intelligence Corps doing background checks for top secret clearances.

Bill and Loretta were married on May 10, 1952, and resided in Duluth, where he was stationed until his discharge.

After military service, he resumed his career at OTP as a clerk in the Wahpeton, ND office. In the following decade, the first 5 of Bill and Loretta's children were born. In 1964, Bill took the Office Manager position at the OTP headquarters in Fergus Falls, where the last 2 of their children were born.

In 1972, Bill assumed the role of Division Manager in Milbank, SD, where they would live for 10 years.

During the move to Milbank, Bill, Loretta, and their 2 youngest children survived a horrendous head-on collision caused by a drunk driver. Their lives were saved because they were wearing seat belts, but if you'd seen the car you would wonder how that could be. Not surprisingly, we always wore seatbelts growing up.

His last career stop was back to Fergus Falls in 1982 as a Vice President of Operations. In all, Bill's career with Otter Tail Power spanned 45 years. He and Loretta remained in

Fergus Falls the rest of their lives.

One might think Bill did pretty well to advance from cashier to a vice president of a utility company without any post-secondary education. There is no doubt he did, but he also did much to contribute to his community. Bill was engaged with a large number of civic and church organizations, volunteer fire departments and industry groups, serving as an officer with many of them.

Yet, with all his career and civic responsibilities, Bill still had time for his kids and grandkids. Great memories were made playing catch (whatever was in season), canoeing, camping and fishing, playing cards, etc.

While Bill had a successful career, he could have done equally well as an engineer of some sort. He just seemed to “get” technical things. He enjoyed a challenge and loved working with his hands.

He could repair just about anything, especially electrical (such as a toaster element using baking soda, or the stripped gears of a small outboard motor temporarily repaired using needles and epoxy.) To accommodate their growing family while living in Fergus Falls in 1970, he and Loretta purchased a small house that had been burned in a fire, refurbished the house and added an addition that tripled the square footage. Other than the foundation and plumbing, Bill, and the sons old enough to wield a hammer, did the majority of the work. He also rewired and re-roofed their home in Milbank and enlarged and raised the garage, which had been a carriage house at one time. In his retirement he did some woodworking, using a lathe to turn table lamps for each of his kids using black walnut wood from his yard.

All the work and activities left little time for personal pursuits or hobbies outside of coffee and golf with his friends, but the one thing Bill did reserve for himself was his yearly camping/fishing trip to Canada. His love of camping started with Boy Scout trips as a kid. As an adult, he and his buddies would pack up vehicles with canoes, small outboards, camping and fishing gear for a week in the Canadian wilds. In later years, he would get one trip in with his friends and another with his sons/son-in-law. These trips were a highlight of his year and the memories were very special to him.

As one might expect, Bill and Loretta did not sit around the TV during retirement. In Loretta, Bill had a soulmate who was just as motivated as he was to stay busy and productive.

For many years they were involved with the Godchild Project, a volunteer organization that built schools and clinics and provided financial and material support to needy children. They made several trips to help build facilities in Guatemala and spent much time and energy at home collecting donations of goods that helped the cause.

Bill and Loretta also enjoyed long sightseeing trips. He outfitted their minivan with custom tables and helpful amenities to make their trips more comfortable. The two of them made favorite trips to Alaska as well as to many areas of the United States, visiting relatives or just bopping around, stopping wherever they wanted.

They also spent a lot of time following their grandchildren and great-grandchildren, catching concerts and events and enjoying their visits. They were always available to help their children, or grandchildren in any way they could. Their home was always open for drop-ins and if they could provide a washing machine or a meal, they were

*In Loving Memory Of*  
**William A. Giesen**

May 5, 1928 - May 17, 2023

**Mass of Christian Burial**

Friday, June 2, 2023 at 10:00 AM  
Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

**Officiating**

Father Alan Wielinski  
Deacon Dean Pawlowski

**Eulogy**

David Giesen

**Congregational Hymns**

Paula Leich, organist  
"Old Rugged Cross"  
"On Eagle's Wings"  
"How Great Thou Art"  
"Amazing Grace"

**Interment**

St. Otto's Cemetery  
Fergus Falls, Minnesota

**Military Honors**

VFW Post 612 & American Legion Post 30

**Appreciation**

William's family is grateful for your attendance at this service.  
Your many expressions of kindness and love are deeply appreciated. Please join family and friends for lunch and fellowship following the service.

**Arrangements by**

Glende-Nilson Funeral Home ~ Fergus Falls  
[www.GlendeNilson.com](http://www.GlendeNilson.com)

**Miss Me - But Let Me Go**

When I come to the end of the road  
And the sun has set for me,  
I want no rites in a gloom filled room  
Why cry for a soul set free.

MISS ME a little - but not too long  
And not with your head bowed low  
Remember the love we once shared,  
Miss me - but let me go.

For this is a journey we all must take  
And each must go alone,  
It's all a part of the Master's plan  
A step on the road to home.

When you are lonely and sick of heart  
Go to the friends we know,  
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds  
Miss me - but let me go.

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