



Gary William Eads

March 6, 1944 - May 4, 2026

Born in South St. Louis in 1944, he was known for his strength and resilience from an early age, earning the nickname “Butch.”

He is survived by his three daughters, Caroline Toye, Christine Eads, and Shannon Suydam; his son-in-law, John Suydam; his former son-in-law, John Toye, with whom he remained close; his grandsons, Brandon Toye, Ryan Toye, Michael Toye, Aidan Eads-Shields, Jackson Suydam, and Justin Suydam; and his two brothers, Ron Eads and Phillip Eads.

He attended Southwest Missouri State University before joining the United States Air Force, where he began his aviation career as an air traffic controller. His service as a veteran remained an important part of his identity throughout his life. He went on to serve in several leadership roles within the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO), ultimately becoming President during the historic 1981 strike—a pivotal moment in the profession.

He met the love of his life, Sharon, at just 16, and they married in 1964, sharing 58 years together until her passing in 2022. Together, they built a life centered on family and partnership, including running their successful business, DEP Printing and Graphics in Woodbridge, Virginia, for over 25 years.

He was committed to his community, serving on the fire services board, volunteering with the Democratic Committee and supporting local elections, and remaining an active Rotarian for many years. Even in retirement, he continued to give back.

An avid athlete throughout his life, he enjoyed football, baseball, basketball, softball, and golf. He also loved coaching his children, grandchildren, and many others in the community. He cherished being a grandfather—attending their events, spending time together, and treating them to his famous root beer floats. He shared a unique and close relationship with each of his grandsons, taking pride in who they were and who they were becoming.

He was fortunate to have lifelong friendships, many of which spanned 40 to 50 years. He was a loyal and devoted friend, always there when it mattered most.

Above all, he was a family man who believed in serving others.

A viewing will be held at Jefferson Funeral Chapel from 2:00–4:00 PM on Saturday, May 16, at 5755 Castlewellan Dr., Alexandria, VA 22315. A celebration-of-life reception will follow immediately at the home of Shannon and John Suydam. A military burial for Gary and Sharon will take place for the immediate family in early July.

Cemetery Details

Quantico National Cemetery

18424 Joplin Rd
Triangle, VA 22172

Upcoming Events

Viewing

MAY 16. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Jefferson Funeral Chapel
5755 Castlewellan Drive
Alexandria, VA 22315
(703) 971-7400
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<https://www.jeffersonfuneralchapel.com>