

## James Michael Fritz

March 1, 1943 - March 30, 2024

James Michael Fritz, 81, of St. Augustine, FL, passed away on March 30, 2024, at Flagler Hospital in St. Augustine.

Mike was born on March 1, 1943, at St. Mary's Hospital in Louisville, KY, to the late Dremetra May (Wilkins) and William D. Fritz. In 1949, the family moved to Evansville, IN, and later settled in Elberfeld, IN, where Mike was baptized as a Christian at Warren's Lake. When Mike was a freshman, he attended Elberfeld High School, where he excelled at baseball and basketball. In 1958, the family moved back to Evansville, and Mike enrolled at North High School, where his talent earned him a letter in baseball and basketball. As a senior, Mike led Evansville and the SIAC conference in batting with a .419 average. He was selected to both All-City and All-Conference teams and earned a scholarship to Southern Illinois University. At SIU, Mike continued to sharpen his skills on the field and also participated on the freshman basketball team.

Mike's baseball talent led him to a Major League Baseball Camp tryout, where he was the only player out of a hundred hopefuls to be selected by the Kansas City A's. He was sent to the Class A Daytona Beach Islanders, where his throw from center field to home plate was the fastest of anyone else in the entire A's organization, including the major league team. Mike made the local newspaper after a photographer caught on film the instant his bat hit the ball

for a grand slam home-run. That photograph had a special place among Mike's sports memorabilia.

In the mid-1960s, Mike left the Islanders and returned to Evansville, where he joined the Army Reserves and was stationed in Fort Campbell, KY. He soon married and started a family, which included three beautiful daughters. During the summers, the family spent time enjoying nature and the activities at Camp Carson in Princeton, IN, where Mike's father was Property Manager for the YMCA, which owned the camp. Mike continued his love of baseball in Evansville by playing slow pitch softball in a local league, which won several state championships. In 2019, Mike was inducted into the Greater Evansville Sports Hall of Fame.

Mike worked in sales for a couple of firms in Evansville, but he was ambitious and wanted to own his own company. That came to fruition in the mid-1970s, when he became owner and President of Mr. Carpet, a successful flooring company. He joined the West Side Civitan Club and was honored with their Outstanding Service Award in 1977. In the 1980s, Mike moved to Dalton, GA, and later to Atlanta, to become a Sales Executive in the flourishing flooring industry that was centered in that part of the country. It was here that Mike met his wife, Claudia. They remained in the Atlanta area until they both retired and moved to St. Augustine, FL, in 2005.

When Mike could no longer wield a bat, he turned to golf and regaled his new friends at the Royal Country Club with his dry wit and funny stories. In 2009, Mike got the opportunity of a lifetime when he was selected to be a volunteer gallery guard at the Masters Tournament at the Augusta National Golf Club in Augusta, GA. It was a position he held through 2019. Mike was in charge of Hole #10 and enjoyed sharing the details of that hole and the players he met with curious patrons. One of his favorite stories was about the 2012 Masters,

when Bubba Watson shot his ball out of the trees on the second hole of the sudden death playoff to win it all. It was described as one of the best shots in the history of golf. In later years, Mike was joined at the Masters by his grandson and stepson, who were in charge of different holes.

Mike was well-known as an outstanding athlete, but more importantly, as a man who loved his family and friends, unconditionally. He adored his wife, Claudia, his three girls, and Nell, his favorite aunt. Mike enjoyed nature and had a heart for animals. He was compassionate, loving, and generous, sometimes to a fault. He had a wicked sense of humor, made friends easily, loved to tease those he cared about, and always made people feel welcome. He will be sorely missed.

Surviving Mike are his wife, Claudia Austin Fritz; daughters, Gretchen (Brian) Raben, Kimberly (Scott) Bonnell and Kelly Fritz; stepsons, Darren (Mardee) Austin and Rusty (Jana) Austin; a brother, Steven (Suzette) Fritz; sister-in-law, Ellen Fritz; grandchildren, Tyler (Brooke) Raben, Emma (Jace) Bartley, Elizabeth Raben, Lauren Raben, Evan Bonnell, Ellsa Bonnell, Estelle Bonnell; great grandchildren, Sloan and Mila Raben and step grandchildren, Evan and CJ Austin.

In addition to his parents, Mike was preceded in death by a brother, Ronald Fritz.

Friends may visit with the family from 1:00 until 4:00 PM on Sunday, April 21, 2024 at Pierre Funeral Home, 2601 W. Franklin Street, where there will be a service held at 4:00 PM. Burial will take place on Monday, April 22, 2024 at St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to YMCA Camp

Carson, 2034 Outer Lake Road, Princeton, IN 47708 or to  
[ymcacampcarson.org](http://ymcacampcarson.org).

Condolences may be made online at [www.pierrefuneralhome.com](http://www.pierrefuneralhome.com).

# Cemetery Details

## St. Joseph Catholic Cemetery

2500 Mesker Park Drive  
Evansville, IN

# Previous Events

## Visitation

APR 21. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Pierre Funeral Home  
2601 West Franklin Street  
Evansville, IN 47712  
(812) 423-6471  
info@pierrefuneralhome.com  
<https://www.pierrefuneralhome.com>

## Funeral Service

APR 21. 4:00 PM (CT)

Pierre Funeral Home  
2601 West Franklin Street  
Evansville, IN 47712  
(812) 423-6471  
info@pierrefuneralhome.com  
<https://www.pierrefuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Pierre Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of James Michael Fritz*



Pierre Funeral Home - April 18, 2024 at 06:38 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Life Tributes*



Pierre Funeral Home - April 20, 2024 at 11:14 AM



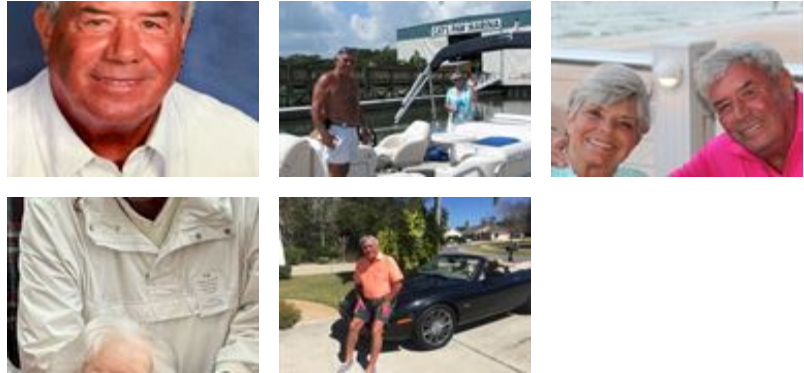
“ *Riley and Gail Randall purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of James Michael Fritz.*



Riley and Gail Randall - April 19, 2024 at 04:07 PM



“ 52 files added to the album Life Tributes



Pierre Funeral Home - April 18, 2024 at 06:35 PM



“ Laura and Jackie Talbert purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of James Michael Fritz.



Laura and Jackie Talbert - April 18, 2024 at 10:12 AM



“ With love, 1240 <3 planted a <a href="/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518">Memorial Tree</a> in honor of James Michael Fritz.

With love, 1240 <3 - April 17, 2024 at 10:25 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of James Michael Fritz.



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April 17, 2024 at 10:25 PM



“ Gretchen, Kim, and Kelly - I'm sorry to hear about your dad, "Mr. Fritz"; my thoughts are with you and your family. Being next door neighbors, I remember being terrified every time you went out of town because that meant I had to take care of the "Fritz Spitz", Blazer. I would have to try and sneak up the back steps into the garage to try and feed and water Blazer without waking him up so he wouldn't chew my leg off. Of course he always woke up and of course he never bit me, but he did scare the liver out of me. I remember working a few weekends with your dad at Mr. Carpet (his shop was in an old factory at the corner of Fulton and Division - since torn down when they built the Lloyd Expwy). He gave me a lovely brown swirled deep shag remnant that I proudly took up to my dorm room. I remember falling asleep to the rhythmic sound of your dad swinging a training bat in the late evening. Peace

*Bill Bartek*

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**William Bartek** - April 15, 2024 at 11:10 AM



“ From Scott and Carol Austin purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of James Michael Fritz.



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**From Scott and Carol Austin** - April 14, 2024 at 12:47 PM

WF

“ Mike was a great friend through high school and we were in the same home room. I played against Mike when we were younger and with him when we came together in High School. We lost touch when we left High school and his friendship was my loss. My condolence to his family and brother. He was just a great guy...Wayne Foster

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**Wayne Foster** - April 13, 2024 at 10:42 PM

BT

“ Mike and Claudia have been dear friends for many years. He and Jim had many great times on the golf course and sharing stories over a good drink!  
We both have wonderful memories of Mike and Jim will certainly miss their phone calls to catch up. Our prayers are with you all.  
Jim and Brenda Terral

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**Brenda Terral** - April 12, 2024 at 09:33 AM

RG

“ Mike was a great friend of mine. A great host and the most generous man ever. Today, as I watch the Masters,I think of Mike. Because of Mike I was able to attend the Masters three times- one of the premier events in the world. Every April when the azaleas bloom Mike Fritz will be with me. Prayers for Claudia and the girls. We lost one of the good guys, Roger Griffin

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**Roger Griffin** - April 11, 2024 at 08:05 PM

FS

“ I remember many days spent pitching too you so you could hone your hitting. In particular curve balls. I'll bet there were thousands !!!  
RIP my friend. You will be missed.

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**Frank Studer** - April 11, 2024 at 06:43 AM

SG

“ *What a bright light shining always around this great guy. Mike was an inspiration to many. Marty and I send love and prayers to the family. May the angels wrap their wings around Claudia and all who loved him.*

Suzanne Geimer - April 10, 2024 at 09:16 PM

BB

“ *Claudia Bob and I are so very sorry to hear about Mike.*

Bob and Joyce Bonner - April 10, 2024 at 09:15 PM

CF

“ *Corey and Addison Fritz planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Michael Fritz.*

Corey and Addison Fritz - April 10, 2024 at 05:53 PM



“ *Treasured Lilies Spray was purchased for the family of James Michael Fritz.*



April 10, 2024 at 05:53 PM

TF

“ *The Schuler family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Michael Fritz.*

The Schuler family - April 10, 2024 at 05:08 PM

TF

“ *The Schuler family purchased the Love's Journey  
for the family of James Michael Fritz.*



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**The Schuler family** - April 10, 2024 at 05:08 PM