



Mr Albert Richard Gustainis Jr

June 28, 1957 - June 28, 2021

Beloved Son of Evelyn and the late Albert Gustainis; Dear Brother of Elaine Gustainis and Donna (Darrel) Fuller; Fond Uncle of Jennifer (Kyle) Wraught, Nate (Ashley) Fuller, Nick (Kristy) Fuller, Mandy (James) Myers, and Jace Fuller; Great Uncle of Jenika and Kierra Wraught, Chrly, Nash, and Lily Fuller, Ophelia Fuller, and Evie and Ezra Myers. Visitation Saturday, July 3, from 9:30am until 10:30am. Interment Acacia Park Cemetery.

Melrose Park has a colorful history. In the early 20th century, it had a strong Lithuanian demographic. Then Italians moved in. Two of the Lithuanian citizens were John and Elizabeth Gustainis, owners of the Bonnie Bee grocery store and parents of a boy named Al. On the Italian side, you had Nick and Marie Bruno, parents of a beautiful little girl named Evie. Little Evelyn and Al met in elementary school. In first grade, Evie showed her aunt a picture of a boy in her class and said, "Isn't he cute. I'm going to marry him." In fact she did marry him, about sixteen years later in 1956. A year later, on June 28th, 1957, they welcomed their first child into the world, a little boy who they named Albert, after his dad.

Little Albert was the first grandchild on both sides of his family and held a special place in the hearts of his grandparents. His grandpa Gustainis had a favorite reclining chair. It was his chair. No one else sat in it. No one! Not even the parish priest. The lone exception was his little grandson, Albert.

His love of sports and baseball began as a toddler, as he sat on the porch of

his grandparent's home on Melrose Park. He picked an egg from a basket, threw it on the sidewalk and said, "I throw the ball." That wasn't the only food-baseball combination he discovered. One day, his mom was dressed up to go out with his Dad. Mom was feeding him some oatmeal, and, you guessed it, he dumped the entire bowl right on top of Mom's head. She ended up wearing a turban for her evening out.

When Albert was eight, his family moved to Milwaukee, where they lived for the next six years. As a child in Milwaukee, Albert enjoyed playing hide and seek, capture the flag, kickball and other games with his neighborhood friends. A highlight of each summer was the annual trip to Grandma Gustainis' beach house on Lake Michigan. Going from the house to the beach on the wooden stairs seemed like one thousand steps. Albert, Elaine and I enjoyed the lake, fishing, building sand castles, bonfires, roasting marshmallows, hikes in the woods, and picking blackberries.

His love for music was kindled early in life. There are pictures of him sitting at the piano or playing a toy guitar. At St. Robert's elementary school in Milwaukee, he picked up the clarinet to play in the school band. Clarinet led to guitar and bass guitar. He and his friends formed a band, Revolution. The group's signature song of course was the Beatle's Revolution. They also covered Iron Butterfly's "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida" and other rock songs of the era. In 1971 when Albert was fourteen years old, his family moved to Houston. In his new home, he continued his favorite pastime, which was annoying his younger sisters. He also continued his musical pursuits. He had oodles of natural talent. He could pick up an unfamiliar instrument and play it. Such was the case in high school. He wasn't in the orchestra, but was approached by the orchestra director who asked, "Can you play upright bass?" Albert said, "Sure". In truth, he had never touched one in his life, but he played it. And so, he joined the orchestra. During his high school years, he also played bass guitar in a more rock bands. They practiced at the Gustainis house upstairs in the game room. They played so loud that glasses in the bar downstairs rattled off the shelf and ended up in pieces on the floor.

Albert graduated from Houston's Memorial High School in 1975 then majored in music at the University of Houston, where his musical insights rivaled that of his professors (according to him). And while he loved music, he never let it become a job. His livelihood was varied. Perhaps his favorite job was being a nanny. Long-time family friends, Dorann and Nat Mitchel, gave Albert their highest recommendation and trust when they hired him to care for their children. He spent several years living with and working for the family in New Jersey.

Albert moved to the tiny town of Burns Kanas around 1984 where he lived for the next two decades. There he initially worked at a dulcimer factory, then spent time as a librarian and a waiter. Albert was not the least bit interested in fortune or fame. He was perfectly happy, maybe even relished the roll of a starving artist. Music flowed through Albert and he put down much of it in compositions.

During his Kansas years, Albert picked up more siblings. One was Brian Custer who joined the family as a teenager. Rachel became family a couple of decades later.

Children loved Albert. When he visited his sister with young children in Arizona. His nieces and nephews loved him. The neighborhood kids loved him. This was no more apparent than when six-year-old Josh Watt knocked on the door early one morning and asked, "Can Uncle Albert play?"

When his nieces and nephews were younger, they would sit on a chair or their bike and Uncle Albert would delight them when he lifted them up with one hand.

Albert was a sports fan and loved the Kansas City Chiefs. He followed the NFL draft and researched all the promising new college graduates. (He also claimed he had better insight than the professionals actually making the choices.) Finally, he loved classic movies.

Albert had a deep love for his mom. When she and her husband John were advanced in years, he left Kansas to care for them. He devoted the rest of his

life to caring for his mother.

When his mother developed Alzheimer's, he became her caregiver and devoted the remainder of his life to her, making her comfortable and taking care of her needs.

Albert had a very dry sense of humor. He often thought in musical terms that was accentuated with his dry wit. For example, in a text to one of his nephews, he described his mother's singing:

"During Hendrix's Wild thing, she started chanting a Dorian counter-time dirge in 5 under 4 till Jimi started whipping up the feedback, then woke like she had been talking all the time. Kept going in & out of sleep till the middle of Ravi Shankar when she switched to Hypo-Phrygian mode. Once again in perfect counter rhythm and key till she fell back to sleep. The best sleep singer I know. The crowd gave her a standing O."

The greatest music in Albert's life was his family and he will be greatly missed by him.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL 3. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Carbonara Funeral Home
1515 N 25th Ave
Melrose Park, IL 60160
(708) 343-6161
<https://carbonarafuneraldirectors.com/>

Tribute Wall



“ *Mr Albert Richard Gustainis Jr*

October 05, 2023 at 03:04 AM



“ *Mr Albert Richard Gustainis Jr*

September 08, 2022 at 03:08 AM



“ *What a caring and unique soul Albert was! He was dearly loved by my children when he lived with us and helped me take care of them! I have many fond, fond memories of him, and always appreciated his even temper and unique take on life. We shall miss him greatly.
Dorann Mitchell and family*

Dorann C Mitchell - July 06, 2021 at 08:36 PM



Albert was incredibly caring and conscientious. We loved having him around. He and his books introduced me to one of my favorite movies, "The Quiet aMan."

Nat Mitchell - July 16, 2021 at 04:48 PM