



## Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala

November 10, 1969 - June 8, 2025

Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala, age 56, of Rensselaer, Indiana, passed away on June 8, 2025, at his residence. He was born on November 10, 1968, to the late Matthew and Nancy (Flinn) Gembala.

A proud graduate of Rensselaer Central High School, Class of 1987, Joe later went on to earn an associate's degree in business management from Karl Sandberg College. He spent much of his career working as a car salesman where many in the community trusted him enough to buy a car or 3 from him and more recently served as a dedicated groundskeeper. A passionate fan of the Chicago Cubs and Bears, Joe brought the same enthusiasm to everything he did.

Joe was a longstanding and devoted member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles #2548, where he served as Past President, as well as a member of VFW Post #1279 and American Legion Post #29. His commitment to his community was evident through his generosity, leadership, and warm-hearted spirit.

Known affectionately as "Popo" to his grandchildren, Joe was a true family man who loved his children and grandchildren above all else. He was a vibrant presence in the community, always quick with a joke or compliment, eager to lend a hand, and never met a stranger. He enjoyed sports of all kinds, especially watching his granddaughter Brooklyn play softball where he

took pride in being the loudest cheerleader in the stands for her, watching granddaughter Aliyah in her summer plays, playing cards and darts with friends, and especially loved donning the red suit to play Santa for countless children over the years. There are simply not enough words to describe the positive impact that Big Joe had on all of those around him and he has left a wonderful legacy for his children and grandchildren. He will be dearly missed.

Joe is survived by his loving daughters, Holli (Desmond) Gembala and Shelby (Corey) Staddon, both of Rensselaer; grandchildren, Brooklyn, Aliyah, Quinton, and Norah; beloved dog Cletus and grand-dog Randall; siblings, Deborah Gembala of Rensselaer, Christine (Matthew) Louck of Brownsburg, IN, and Andrew Gembala of Lafayette, IN; nephew, Nathan Louck; and many other nieces and nephews who still considered him uncle Joe. His first wife and the mother of his children, Elaine Reyes-Gembala, god daughter Ava Wanda and best friend Dez Wanda.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Matthew and Nancy Gembala who his family knows were waiting for him with arms wide open.

Visitation will be held on Thursday, June 12, 2025, from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM CT at Jackson Funeral Chapel of Rensselaer. Funeral services will be held on Friday, June 13, 2025, at 10:00 AM CT at the funeral chapel. Interment will follow at Mt. Calvary Cemetery.

In honor of Joe's love for his teams and casual spirit, the family kindly requests guests wear Chicago Cubs or casual attire. Memorial contributions may be made to the family.

Joe will be remembered as a loyal friend, devoted father and grandfather, and a joyful spirit whose impact on the community will not be forgotten.



# Cemetery Details

## Mt. Calvary Cemetery - Rensselaer

Mt. Calvary Cemetery  
Rensselaer, IN 47978

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**JUN 12.** 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Jackson Funeral Chapel of Rensselaer  
250 N. McKinley Avenue  
P.O. Box 70  
Rensselaer, IN 47978  
(219) 866-5123  
info@jacksonfuneral.com  
<https://www.jacksonfuneral.com>

## Funeral Service

**JUN 13.** 10:00 AM (CT)

Jackson Funeral Chapel of Rensselaer  
250 N. McKinley Avenue  
P.O. Box 70  
Rensselaer, IN 47978  
(219) 866-5123  
info@jacksonfuneral.com  
<https://www.jacksonfuneral.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ Jackson Funeral Chapels created a Tribute Video in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Jackson Funeral Chapels - June 12, 2025 at 12:07 PM



Greg Dobson

“ Prayers and condolences to Big Joe's family and friends, what a great man that will forever be missed,he would check and ask if I needed anything when he was around.As busy as I knew he was he was always he took the time.



Greg Dobson - June 13, 2025 at 03:04 AM

GR

“ Dear Family.... I'm deeply saddened by the news of Joe's death. Our Community has lost a loving and caring man who knew everyone! It was my pleasure to know Joe as a child to a grown man... rest easy my friend:💔💔



Ginny Reames - June 12, 2025 at 09:10 PM



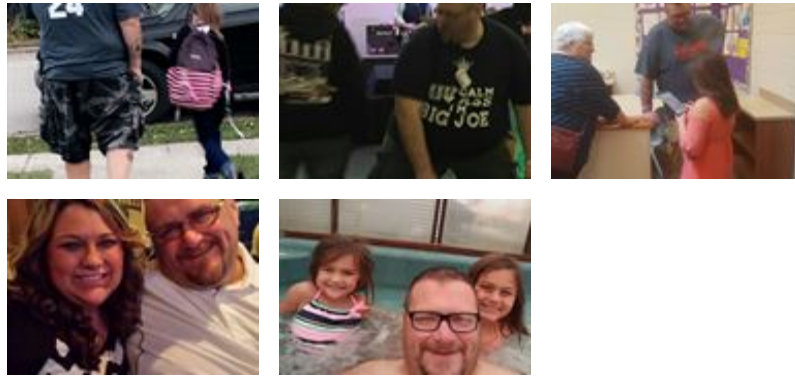
“ Marilyn Hackney lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Marilyn Hackney - June 12, 2025 at 03:50 PM



“ 148 files added to the album Life Tributes



Jackson Funeral Chapels - June 12, 2025 at 12:05 PM



“ Purdue Airport Team purchased the Florist Choice Bouquet for the family of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.



Purdue Airport Team - June 12, 2025 at 10:18 AM

DZ

“ Duwane & Rosie Zickefoose lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Duwane & Rosie Zickefoose - June 11, 2025 at 08:51 PM

DZ

Red for bieng Santa 🙏 we are glad to have known you we will miss you 😭 RIP big Joe

Duwane & Rosie Zickefoose - June 11, 2025 at 08:53 PM

YT

“ Your CPN Team purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.



Your CPN Team - June 11, 2025 at 06:36 PM

LI

“ Lisa lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Lisa - June 11, 2025 at 12:31 PM

ML

“ *Martha Langley lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*



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**Martha Langley** - June 11, 2025 at 10:24 AM

MH

“ *Mary Hassenger lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*



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**Mary Hassenger** - June 10, 2025 at 09:57 PM

LE

“ *Lois Evers lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*

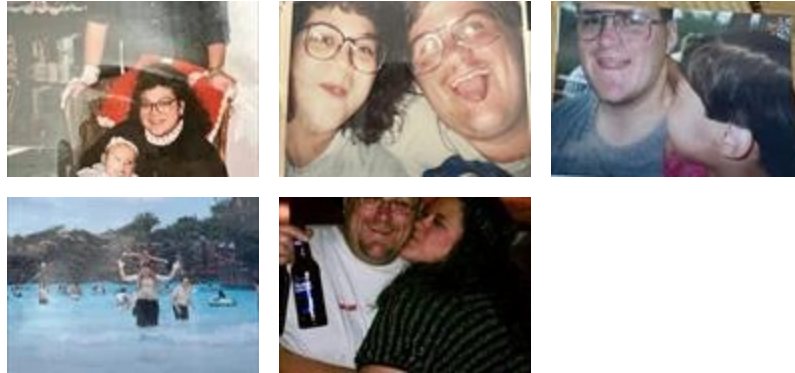


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**Lois Evers** - June 10, 2025 at 07:51 PM

EL

“ RIP Joey G. 💔🙏🙏🙏💙



Elaine - June 10, 2025 at 04:52 PM

LN

“ Lindsay N. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.

Lindsay N. - June 10, 2025 at 02:34 PM

LN

“ Lindsay N. purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.



Lindsay N. - June 10, 2025 at 02:34 PM

DW

“ Big joe.. where do I begin to say how much you meant to me and my family!!! I'm forever going to miss are talks are laughs and the trust I had for you was greatl y appreciated!! I could tell you anything 🍷 I will put all that love and support to your girls and grandchildren..the same as you showed me and mine!! And I will always be there for a cdog!! Don't worry I will take him on rides and tell him all our adventures lol 😊😊.. I love you my big joe.. see you on the other side my friend! 🍷🍷🍷 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

Desiree wanda - June 10, 2025 at 02:09 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.



June 10, 2025 at 10:30 AM

DE

“ In memory of Joe.



Deb Ellis - June 10, 2025 at 08:38 AM

ER

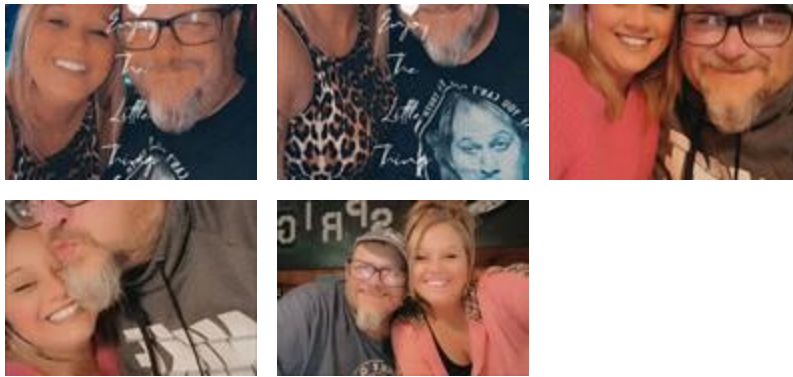
“ Love u Joe the memories were fun we had a lot of fun at that wedding man it's sad only 56 way to early but rest heavenly Joe ❤️🕊️



Elijah reyes - June 10, 2025 at 08:32 AM

NH

“ I love you friend, thank you for always being there. I miss you so much and your jokes. Until we meet again, love you Joe!



nicole hammond - June 10, 2025 at 07:02 AM

SB

“ Love you my dear friend. You will be forever in my heart. Till we meet again ❤️



sharon boots - June 09, 2025 at 11:41 PM

EL

“ RIP Big Joe, your girls miss you dearly already. 🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡💔💔🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡  
🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡🧡E!



Elaine - June 09, 2025 at 10:26 PM



“ Always so friendly and yes always had a hi or funny joke to tell when coming into the store to shop. Will be deeply missed!! Fly High!!!

Holly Ziemer Watkins - June 09, 2025 at 08:48 PM

BF

“ Bethel Ford lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



bethel ford - June 09, 2025 at 07:55 PM

DS

“ Fly high friend and classmate. Sending prayers for all..



Donna Sullivan - June 09, 2025 at 07:31 PM

LA

“ *Lisa Lefler Althoff lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*



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**Lisa Lefler Althoff** - June 09, 2025 at 07:13 PM

LE

“ *Sending love and prayers*



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**Lynda Edwards** - June 09, 2025 at 05:58 PM

FM

“ *Fr Joseph Gembala and Dr Joseph and Mary planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.*

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**Fr Joseph Gembala and Dr Joseph and Mary** - June 09, 2025 at 05:55 PM

FM

“ *Fr Joseph Gembala and Dr Joseph and Mary purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala.*



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**Fr Joseph Gembala and Dr Joseph and Mary** - June 09, 2025 at 05:55 PM

JB

“ Judy Burvan lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Judy Burvan - June 09, 2025 at 05:50 PM

HK

“ Hugs And Prayers For The Family. Kellie lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Hugs and prayers for the family. Kellie - June 09, 2025 at 05:46 PM

KE

“ Kendra lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Kendra - June 09, 2025 at 05:40 PM

AN

“ Condolences to the family. Joe was such a great guy and friend to all. He will truly be missed. ❤️



Ann - June 09, 2025 at 04:50 PM

Sandra  
Sellers  
McInerny

“ Prayers to the family, for comfort, and peace  
at this time.



Sandra Sellers McInerny - June 09, 2025 at 04:39 PM

MS

“ Martha Smith lit a candle in memory of  
Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



martha smith - June 09, 2025 at 03:31 PM

NH

“ My condolences to the family. He will be missed by many.

Nancy Hoaks-Eveland - June 09, 2025 at 03:30 PM

DW

“ Doug&Kathy Wilcox lit a candle in memory of  
Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala



Doug&Kathy Wilcox - June 09, 2025 at 03:22 PM

KB

“ *Kristina Byram lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*



Kristina Byram - June 09, 2025 at 03:20 PM

LM

“ *Lori Prohosky Mattos lit a candle in memory of Joseph "Big Joe" M. Gembala*



Lori Prohosky Mattos - June 09, 2025 at 03:08 PM

AU

“ *I'll never forget (or live down from coworkers) the 3 separate times Joe jump scared me as Santa while I'd walk to work early in the morning. Popping out of a building in full suit, honking and stopping to shout hohoho at my pup, and his wonderful charismatic character. Joe seemed like such an amazing person and I'm so sorry to his family for this loss. 😞❤️*



autumn - June 09, 2025 at 03:06 PM

JO

“ *Ohanis family*



John Ohanis - June 09, 2025 at 03:05 PM