



## Philip Lee Gardner

September 4, 1940 - July 21, 2025

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Philip Lee Gardner of Versailles, Missouri, was born September 4, 1940 to Irene Gilson Gardner and Wallace Gardner at the home farm in Rush County, Indiana.

He joined sister Gwen and brother Lynn and later gained brothers Keith and Greg.

Phil was an active boy and worked with Lynn and Keith on the farm growing up.

He had many stories of childhood hijinks that ended in being taken “behind the woodshed.” His loving mother cultivated good relationships between the siblings.

He had special love for his youngest brother, Greg, who had severe cerebral palsy and was wheelchair bound. The siblings all bonded together to enhance Greg’s life. They built trails on which he could ride his motorized car and experience independence. Phil spent hours talking and listening to Greg while he was home and later during visits. Phil celebrated Greg’s accomplishments in bowling and writing, and benefitted from Greg’s powerful prayer life.

As a child, Phil was motivated in church to make Gwen laugh during the service.

They were referred to as the “giggle twins” due to his skill at achieving this goal.

Phil and Lynn worked together to be repeat blue ribbon winners of the Fat Lamb

category at the Rush County Fair. This was a matter of immense pride. Phil and

his siblings loved both sets of grandparents and took turns spending the night with these elders as they became frail so that they were never alone.

Phil left Indiana for Joplin, Missouri, where he began school. Phil married his first

wife, Sue Steen, who supported him as he completed a degree from Ozark Christian College. Phil memorized a trove of scripture which became a resource

for him and others throughout his life.

He then began his first profession as a minister in Fairland, Oklahoma. From there,(having added Brent then Beth to the household) the family of 4 moved to

Cherokee, Iowa. While working as a minister in Fairland, Phil volunteered with the Civil Defense office and spent many nights outdoors watching for tornados and natural disasters. He began to own and breed coon hounds.

The small family then moved to Lamar, Missouri, where Phil was a minister at the

First Christian Church. He enjoyed the small acreage which led to feeding and butchering a calf each year to stock the freezer. He added a horse and two ponies to the household, as well.

Phil was a tenor and loved to sing. He joined a Barbershop Quartet group and

wore funny clothes. He owned a part share of a small plane and used his pilot's license to access the spark of adventure that he craved. He raced go-carts and was a fan of Indy cars, stock cars, funny cars - if it involved four wheels trying to get ahead of another set of four wheels on a closed track, he was interested. This occasionally influenced him to see his own driving in town as measured by the number of cars he could move ahead of between stop lights. He eventually stopped this activity after teaching his children to drive.

Phil was a life-long lover of hunting. He hunted raccoon, squirrel, deer, elk, dove and quail. One might open his freezer and find a small creature that was intended for taxidermy. Hunting went hand in hand with his constant search for the perfect dog. Mostly, the dogs were hunting dogs but through the years he owned and raised English Bulldogs, Beagles, English Setters and Pointers, Bullmastiffs, Coonhounds and more. He took his dogs to hunting trials and shows and won multiple grand championships.

Phil moved his family with Sue to Springfield, Illinois, where he was in ministry for one year. This was the time of the Poodle.

Phil then launched a brand new career in real estate in 1974 in Jefferson City, Missouri. He was the top salesperson in his very first year of sales. He opened

Gold Star Realty in 1976. Phil started a real estate licensing school in 1980, and then added a continued education school for realtors. The Phil Gardner School of Real Estate has taught over 27,000 students, comprising over 38,000 hours of teaching. He was known for his strong grasp of real estate law and on many occasions was asked by the legislature to provide his expert opinion. Phil helped craft many of the State of Missouri license laws, many of which are still in effect. Setters, Pointers, and English Bulldogs accompanied this season of life.

Phil's second marriage was to Brenda Burd. He fell in love with her toddler son, Cory and adopted him. Phil and Brenda worked together in real estate in the Jefferson City area and were successful in these endeavors. This was in Phil's Basset Hound and Bullmastiff era.

A third marriage took Phil to the Blackwater, Missouri area. He and his third wife, Sherri, both hunted raccoons by muleback. Despite that connection, the marriage did not last. Phil eventually settled into single life in Versailles, Missouri. These were the Beagle years. Phil became an auctioneer in his free time and then, of course, opened a school for that as well.

Phil liked a good joke. He loved a corny joke even more. He loved to bargain and barter. You might find him trading a hunting dog for a washing machine or new chair on any given day. He especially enjoyed folksy sayings and wrote a

small

book of his favorites. “That ol’ dog won’t hunt” is probably the “Phil-ism” that would most likely have been tattooed on his back if he had made those types of choices.

Phil was delighted to be a part of the lives of his students. They became his family and his congregation. He was available to marry them or bury them as they had need. He had an eye for folks who were capable but not confident.

He

loved to encourage them to thrive. Phil could not sit still. He was always moving, always exploring, always looking for something new in the environment. Phil’s passion for instruction drove him to self-publish several books to share his advice on marriage and raising children.

Phil was preceded in death by his parents, Irene and Wally Gardner; his siblings,

Gwen Gardner Stone, Lynn Gardner, Keith Gardner, and Greg Gardner. He is survived by three children, Brent, Beth, and Cory; three grandchildren, Tate, Clara, and Maggie; also two sisters-in-law, Barb and Alice, and numerous nephews and nieces who have shown love and care through the years.

The family feels deep gratitude to the staff of Compassus Hospice and Good Shepherd, neighbors Ken, Johnathan, and Tony, and long time mentee Jill for the

loving kindness shown to Phil.

Phil had a strong belief and personal connection to his God. He once stated that

even if he had started out as a big shining diamond that got chipped away by

life

mistakes made, he was still a diamond - though smaller - and could still shine

for

God. Shine on, Phil Gardner.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you to memorize a favorite passage of scripture, encourage someone with low confidence, or to donate to

Compassus

Hospice or Ozark Christian College.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 11:00 a.m., Monday, August 4th, at the Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home Versailles Chapel with Ed Warden officiating.

The family will receive friends from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., Monday, at the funeral home.

Arrangements are under the care and direction of Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home Versailles Chapel.

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# Previous Events

## Visitation

AUG 4. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home - Versailles Chapel  
207 North Monroe St.  
Versailles, MO 65084  
(573) 378-4655

## Celebration of Life

AUG 4. 11:00 AM (CT)

Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home - Versailles Chapel  
207 North Monroe St.  
Versailles, MO 65084  
(573) 378-4655

# Tribute Wall

SW

“ *\*Ding\*Dong\* the witch is dead, which old witch? The wicked witch!*

Steve Wilson - August 24, 2025 at 12:37 AM

AP

“ *Phil was a child abuser and a serial adulterer. He was a horrible person, y'all only know his facade.*

A victim of Phil - August 12, 2025 at 11:57 PM

EW

“ *I'm going to miss my friend. Praying for God's comfort and grace for Phil's family and friends.*

Ed Warden - August 03, 2025 at 06:38 PM

JB

“ *To Phil's family & friends:  
Please accept our deepest heartfelt sympathy for Phil's passing. I first met him in 1986 when he taught real estate school. He made it allot of fun. Several years ago I gave him a mule statue & told him do not pick it up by the ears. About a year later he called me us and said, "Joe, I did what you told him not to do". I had to laugh & fixed his mule. I never heard anyone that didn't like him. May he rest in God's loving arms forever. Phil Gardner was one of the "Good Guys". Semper Fidelis*

Joe & Aileen Bryan - July 26, 2025 at 12:01 PM

BE

*Thanks Joe and Aileen.*

beth - July 28, 2025 at 10:59 PM

BE

“ 43 files added to the album Phil Gardner



beth - July 24, 2025 at 09:44 AM

LW

*I enjoyed the CE classes he taught at the MPAA annual conferences. He was a blessing to many.*

Lance Walker - August 03, 2025 at 08:56 PM

BE

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



beth - July 24, 2025 at 09:43 AM