



## James "Jim" Wigger

January 19, 1931 - November 11, 2025

James O. (Jim) Wigger died Nov. 11, 2025. Husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, teacher, tree trimmer, and to many around the region he will always be known as Coach Wigger. Jim was born in Potosi, Missouri January 19, 1931, to Verba (Hoff) and Chester Wigger. Jim grew up in the region with five siblings. He served in the U.S. Navy four years, earned his bachelor's degree from Southeast Missouri State University and master's from Northeast Missouri State. In 1957 he married Emily Nell Simpson. They made their home in Alton, IL where Jim was employed by the Alton School system from 1957 to 1992. As a beloved coach he led teams in track and cross-country, including three state championships in track and field (1963, 1964, 1967). He initiated the annual River Road Run in 1958. The Jim Wigger Track on State Street was named in his honor in 1997, and he was inducted into the inaugural class of the Alton Sports Hall of Fame in 2011. His passion for running and coaching began at an early age, and he was also an accomplished athlete and a Missouri High School state champion.

As partners in life Jim and Emily raised three sons, served the community in multiple ways and were active members of First Presbyterian Church of Alton. Following retirement, Jim was a fixture on many of the local golf courses, together with an active and dedicated group of fellow golfers all chasing their goal of shooting their age. Jim and Emily also travelled extensively, with

annual pilgrimages/migrations to South Padre Island, TX in the winters, and to their family fishing cottage in Northwest Ontario in the summers. They developed deep and lasting friendships with countless neighbors, wherever they were.

Jim was preceded in death by Emily as well as his parents and siblings. He is survived by his sons Brad (Jane) of Louisville, KY; Steve (Ann) of Port Angeles, WA; and John (Kim) of Naperville, IL as well as six grandchildren David, Cora, Patrick, Lena, Adam and Jackson and two great-grandchildren Elly and Jacob.

As educators, Jim and Emily left their indelible mark on students and the region through their service, dedication and passion for teaching and learning. In lieu of flowers, gifts may be made to the newly formed Wigger Memorial Scholarship Fund in their memory. The scholarship is administered through the Alton Educational Foundation and donations may be sent through [www.altoned.org](http://www.altoned.org), to credit the Wigger Scholarship Fund.

A visitation will be held on February 27, 2026 from 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm, followed by a memorial service on February 28, 2026 at 10:00 am. Both will take place at First Presbyterian Church, Alton. A private burial will be at Alton City Cemetery. Additional information and online guestbook may be found at [www.gentfuneralhome.co](http://www.gentfuneralhome.co)

# Previous Events

## Visitation

FEB **27**. 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church  
4th & Alby Streets  
Alton, IL 62002

## Memorial Service

FEB **28**. 10:00 AM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church  
4th & Alby Streets  
Alton, IL 62002

# Tribute Wall



“ *Brad, Steve, and John just sending out love prayers, hugs and our condolences for your father. We wish we could be there, but know we are in spirit. God bless you and your families!*

*Martin and Kati ( Vaughn) Perez*

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**k perez** - February 26 at 09:16 AM