



## David William Finstad

August 1, 1953 - November 12, 2024

David William Finstad, aged 71, passed away on November 12, 2024, at the Medical Suites of Oak Creek. Born on August 1, 1953 in Sioux City, IA, David, affectionately known as Dave, was a cherished member of the community and a beacon of kindness and friendship. He married Dianne Marie Lueke on March 27, 2004 at St. Michael's Episcopal Church, Racine.

Dave's early exposure to aviation through his stepfather, Keith Hansen, ignited a lifelong passion for flying. This passion culminated in the founding of Centurion Aviation Services in Racine, a reputable flight school that continues to help many achieve their dreams of flying. His dedication to aviation was recognized with the prestigious Wright Brothers Master Pilot Award, a testament to his safe flying practices and commitment to the aviation community.

Alongside his aviation career, Dave held various positions in retail truck stop management and manufacturing operations. His genuine ability to connect with people from all walks of life made him a beloved figure in every professional circle he was part of.

Dave's commitment to his faith was profound. He was actively involved in Stand On His Word Ministry, Zion (IL) Healing Rooms, Racine Co. Jail ministry and others in the area. Dave also enjoyed attending healing conferences across the country. When not flying, he dedicated his time to ministering to

and praying for others, embodying the love of Jesus through both his actions and words.

Dave is survived by his wife, Dianne; Dave's children, Katrina (Cory) Huie, Daniel and Danae Finstad; grandchildren, Christian and Damien Wilson, and Bruce Lee Burriell; sister, Julee (Tom) Abrahamson; brother, Kevin (Annelle) Finstad; and other family and friends. He was preceded in death by his father, Neil Finstad, mother, Dorothy (Johns) Hansen, stepfather, Keith Hansen, and stepbrother, David Hansen.

A gathering and service to celebrate Dave's life will be held at Sturino Funeral Home, Thursday, December 5 at 12 noon. Visitation will be held from 10:00 a.m. until time of service.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Experimental Aircraft Association, Chapter 838 Young Eagles Program, a cause close to Dave's heart.

Dave's legacy will be remembered through the countless lives he touched, both in the skies and on the ground. His spirit, characterized by boundless enthusiasm for aviation and deep-rooted faith, will continue to inspire those who knew him.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 5. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Sturino Funeral Home  
3014 Northwestern Avenue  
Racine, WI 53404  
(262) 632-4479  
info@sturinofuneralhome.com

## Service

DEC 5. 12:00 PM (CT)

Sturino Funeral Home  
3014 Northwestern Avenue  
Racine, WI 53404  
(262) 632-4479  
info@sturinofuneralhome.com

# Tribute Wall



“ I first met Dave in 2016 as a student pilot training for light sport. He quickly convinced me to switch to private pilot training. Boy was he right as he always was. Training with Dave was a blessing and I couldn't be prouder to have been his student. Dave was a model instructor and human being. Dave was always thoughtful, compassionate and understanding. I'm sure I frustrated him sometimes, but he never let it show and was a constant professional. Though he was instructing, we often had conversations about life, people, philosophy, and current events. He was more than my instructor; he was someone I would call my friend. So sorry Dianne and all of his surviving family for this tremendous loss. He will be deeply missed and thought of with great respect and admiration. My God bless and keep him safe.

*Forever grateful, Adam H*

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**Adam Hammerstad** - December 05, 2024 at 11:57 AM

SS

“ Very sad day today at the Finstad home. Carrie and I will miss our friend Dave and we wish Diane peace and a quick recovery from this. Dave is in a better place and we miss him terribly.

*Scott and Carrie Sherer*

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**Scott Sherer** - December 05, 2024 at 10:12 AM

MS

“ Dave was our son Vitor's first flight instructor when he was just 12 years old. When I called to inquire about flying lessons, Dave's kindness and genuine care stood out, and it was because of him that we chose the school for our son. Dave was an incredibly inspiring soul, whose passion and dedication left a lasting impact on us. We feel truly honored to have known him. Our heartfelt condolences go out to his family and the aviation community that he cherished so much. His presence will be deeply missed. ~ The Silva family

Marcia Silva - December 05, 2024 at 12:23 AM



“ Sweet Liberty was purchased for the family of David William Finstad.



December 05, 2024 at 12:13 AM



“ Lily and Rose Tribute Spray was purchased for the family of David William Finstad.



December 04, 2024 at 02:10 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of David William Finstad.

December 04, 2024 at 02:10 PM

JH

“ I met Dave when I was 13 years old in 1994 when I started to take flying lessons with him at Sylvania Airport. I had to sit on 2 phone books or a few pillows to see over the instrument panel back then! While my family didn't have a lot of money to pay for frequent lessons, Dave was understanding, patient and the perfect instructor for my situation. After being endorsed to solo, I flew by myself in a Piper Cherokee at Sylvania Airport before I could drive a car.

Dave was almost like a family member back in the 90s even attending my high school graduation party. While I couldn't consistently take lessons to get proficient enough to take my Private Pilot check-ride before I moved away for college, the seed had been planted. I cannot overstate Dave's influence on my life, flying with him in my formative years paved the way for where my life would lead to today.

Because of Dave, one of the most important traditions my family participates in each year began in 1994, attending Airventure (EAA Fly-In Convention back then) he told me and my parents we could get into the flightline just by bringing my logbook and showing them I was a student pilot, he was right!

Because of Dave, I knew that after college I wanted to be a professional pilot. I continued my flight training eventually becoming a certified flight instructor myself and flying corporate for a while. Because of Dave, my passion for aviation has led to a career in aviation and aviation safety that I still enjoy to this day.

After I left college we lost contact and life got in the way as it does, but through a chance meeting when I saw Dave at a FIRC in 2015, I began to keep in touch with him a bit over the next several years. In early 2021 things came full circle when Dave and I flew together for the first time since 1999, when he gave me a flight review out of Racine and I flew with him a few more times over the next couple years. He even got to meet my wife and son before I took them for an airplane ride at Centurion Aviation Services, my son only 4 at the time on his first flight in an airplane.

*I'm heartbroken to hear of his passing and wish I could have told him more directly how important he was/is to me, though, when we flew together the last couple years, I think he could tell. I hope he was proud.*

*Justin Hetland*



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**Justin Hetland** - December 02, 2024 at 03:39 PM

TC

“ *May the skies be CAVU as you fly west Dave.*

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**Tom Christensen** - December 02, 2024 at 12:42 PM

JB

“ *Dave was a committed aviator and a gentle soul, who always had time to listen and pass on his knowledge of aviation. You will be missed by many, rest in peace my friend.*

*Jon Brocksopp*

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**Jon P Brocksopp** - December 01, 2024 at 02:57 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of David William Finstad.*

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December 01, 2024 at 11:00 AM

JS

“ After my retirement as an airline pilot, I had joined High Wingers Flying Group in Racine In 2009. Soon afterwards, I met Dave through a mutual friend who was a member at HighWingers. After becoming acquainted with Dave, it progressed into a friendship, and it solidified furthermore after I joined Centurion Aviation as a renter. Centurion Aviation was not only Dave’s passion for aviation, but it was Dave’s own way to give back to inspiring aviators and aviation.

*Dave was a genteel and a kind man, a thorough gentleman, a man of highest integrity and honesty, and of uncompromising principles, especially when it came to maintaining standards of Aviation Training and Safety.*

*I shall miss you my dear friend, sleep with angels and shine upon us from far above. I shall always think of you when I fly N734FE at KRAC and shall rock my wings in your honor.*

*With much brotherly love and fond memories,*

*Javed Sheikh  
Chicago*

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**Javed B. Sheikh** - November 30, 2024 at 12:39 PM

LS

“ I trained Dave; Dave trained me, we trained a squadron or two how to fly. We never had to get angry with either one . . .We both shared our love of the Lord.

*I will always have him in my mind “until we meet again”.  
Larry Stys, CFI/I*

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**Larry Stys** - November 29, 2024 at 05:08 PM



TR

“ He had a unique gift and shared it... well done.  
Tom Ryan

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**Tom Ryan** - November 28, 2024 at 12:45 PM

 Robert Demski

“ Dave was one of my first flight instructors at Sylvania Airport. This was back in the 80s and 90s. A truly excellent pilot and Person. My condolences to the Family and the Aviation community that he loved. He will be missed.  
R.I.P. Dave and fly with the Angels.  
Bob Demski

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**Robert Demski** - November 28, 2024 at 12:50 AM

CW

“ I'm glad I got to cross paths with Dave, I met him when I was a new flight instructor in 2019. He let me teach some of my students in his airplanes. He has always been very supportive and kind to me while I navigated the early stages of my career. He helped me in a time of when I needed a mentor. Now I'm flying for United in the Boeing 737 out of Chicago. Parts of his lessons and wisdom will carry on through me and the rest of my career. Godspeed. -Clay



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**Clay West** - November 27, 2024 at 12:12 AM

TM

“ Dave often sat across the table from me at Chapter 838 Board Meetings. While he did not say a lot, when he did what he said was impactful. He had a wicked sense of humor, but with a kind heart. He will be missed.

Tracy Miller - November 26, 2024 at 09:07 PM

JB

“ Being the aviators that we are the story always begins with, “There I Was, or, You can’t make this up.” Truth is some of the stories one couldn’t make up.

Dear all day was a member of the ancient loyal and secret Society of the mystical knights of the Skies also known as the wizards. Known to solve every world problem known to man and could solve any problem except their own. They truly believed that most problems could be solved with a bottle of good ole Marvel Mystery Oil. God love you Dave rest in peace and save us a good seat.

Juan Ruth also known as airport bum - November 26, 2024 at 07:20 PM

DF

“ Rest in Peace Dad



Daniel Finstad - November 26, 2024 at 06:56 PM

LI

I'm sorry for your loss, Daniel. ❤️❤️❤️

liz - November 27, 2024 at 12:01 AM

JR

“ Sincere condolences to Dave’s family. He was a good friend and helped me get back into the cockpit after I took a hiatus from flying. I pray he’s at peace.

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**Jarrett Rathke** - November 26, 2024 at 06:39 PM