



James Otto Obituary

James R. Otto, 93, passed away peacefully on March 17, 2026, at the Jefferson Health Care Center, surrounded by the love of his family.

Born on September 10, 1932, in Rose Point, Pennsylvania, Jim was the son of Charles and Mae Belle (Hodge) Otto. A proud member of the New Lyme Deming High School Class of 1951, he built his life on hard work, loyalty, and love.

On April 13, 1951, Jim married his one true love, Shirley Lou Daniels, beginning a marriage that was truly blessed—with devotion, laughter, and a bond that lasted a lifetime. Together, they created a home filled with love and shared countless memories with their children and grandchildren, who were the center of Jim's world.

Jim worked tirelessly throughout his life, spending 30 years at RW Sidley, where he retired as plant manager in 1985. Even after retirement, his work ethic never slowed. He owned Otto Racing Stables and J & S Feed and Horse Transport, combining his love for animals and his dedication to making an honest living for his family.

His passion for horses was one of his greatest joys. For more than 50 years, Jim was deeply involved in the world of harness racing—as a racer, trainer, and proud owner. He participated in pony pulls, attended countless horse auctions, and owned more than 200 horses over his lifetime. Among his many favorites were “Fly Jessie Fly,” “Roan Magic,” and “Diesel Duke.” Those who knew him could always see the spark in his eye when he talked about a good horse or a day at the track.

Jim's interests extended beyond the stables—he raced stock cars, collected maple syrup and wooden ducks, and cheered passionately for Cleveland's sports teams, especially the Cavaliers. Above all was the love and pride he had for his family.

A proud and active member of the community, Jim served for more than 20 years on the Ashtabula County Fair Board. He was also a member of Teamsters Local #377, the USTA, and the OHHA.

Jim is survived by his loving children: Carlie (J.J. Guardado) Otto, Ronald Otto, and Linda (Gerald) Licate; his cherished grandchildren: Jamie (Kevin) Torres, Michael Otto, Gerald (Jennifer) Licate, Gennifer (John) Dzura, and Lisa Fetters; his great-grandchildren: Sophia, Shelby, Sierra, Carter, Gabriella, Moseley, Natalie, Amber, and Sophia; six great-great-grandchildren; and his sisters Martha (Greg) Fortney and Patty Otto.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife, Shirley; his children, Gary Otto and LuAnn Otto; and his siblings, Gale Otto, Dorothy Keel, Della Lane, Donald Otto, and Dale Otto.

Calling hours will be held on Monday evening March 23, 2026 from 4:00–6:00 p.m. at Fleming-Billman Funeral Home, 49 W. Jefferson Street, with private family burial on Tuesday at Oakdale Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Jefferson Emergency Rescue, P.O. Box 294, Jefferson, OH 44047.

Jim will be remembered for his unwavering love for his family, his tireless work ethic, and his enduring passion for horses—a legacy that will live on in all who knew and loved him.