

Pawnee City, NE

Ronald “Mike” Ganzel, 92, of Pawnee City, Nebraska, passed away February 27, 2018, at the Premier Estates in Pawnee City, Nebraska.

Mike was born to Lloyd and Genevieve Ganzel on December 3, 1925. Mike grew up on a small farm outside of Otoe, Nebraska. He graduated from Otoe High School in 1943 and as a senior he was selected as an All-State End in six man football. He then attended Nebraska Wesleyan University playing on the University’s basketball team. Mike was selected for the Navy V-5 Program to be trained as a Naval Aviator. Through the V-5 program he attended Doane College and the University of Iowa.

After his discharge from active duty he married Betty June Bock on August 11, 1946. He attended the University of Nebraska where he and Betty lived in a camper that his father built. They parked in the driveway of a relative’s house, used their facilities, and maintained the premises. Both Mike and Betty attended UNL the first year. Mike continued his education and graduated from UNL Ag College with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture in 1949. Mike then began his teaching career as a Vocational Agricultural Instructor in Allen, Nebraska. He later obtained his Master’s Degree from UNL in 1964. In 1951 Mike began teaching in Pawnee City, Nebraska where he taught until his retirement in 1987.

Mike was the Future Farmers of America Adviser for Pawnee City High School. Many of his former FFA members will remember the annual chicken barbecue FFA Banquet, fruit sales, soil judging teams, and FFA conventions. His former students will remember, Pigs-n-Posies, building bookcases and gun racks, and those who misbehaved in his class will surely remember scrubbing the stainless steel sink and cleaning shop windows. When he was growing up Mike had an Uncle that lived near Memorial Stadium in Lincoln and he would go to Cornhusker games sitting in the knothole section. While he was a student at UNL he told stories about being asked to sit in the card section so they would have enough people to hold up the cards. Mike supervised student teachers from UNL which allowed him to purchase faculty season football tickets. This allowed him to pass his lifelong Cornhusker fandom on to his family.

Mike was very involved in the community where he was the master of ceremonies for many years at the Pawnee County Fair, dyed Easter Eggs and helped with many community projects. He was a member of several organizations including the Pawnee Athletic Booster Club and the American Legion, and a charter member of the Rotary Club.

Mike was a member of the United Methodist Church in Pawnee City and Methodist Men’s Club and for many years served as church Treasured. Mike and Betty taught Adult Sunday School for many years. Mike served in various leadership positions within the Church, and was actively involved in any and all construction projects associated with the church. In memory of his father, Mike with the assistance Bob Fink, built the walnut alter in the United Methodist Church out of wood milled from the farm where Mike grew up.

Ever the builder, Mike built a pick-up overhead camper and loaded the family in it for family vacations. He built canoes, sailboats and a barge that the Ganzels, Sawyers, and Metzgers enjoyed at Burchard Lake. For his grandchildren Mike built rocking horses, doll houses, pedal airplanes, book shelves and many, many other things.

Upon his retirement from teaching Mike fulfilled a life long dream and purchased a 19 foot motor boat. Then he, Betty and their 14 year old grandson, Michael Krondak, set off from Rulo Nebraska, traveling down the Missouri River then down the Mississippi River to the Ohio River, and then up the Ohio River to Louisville, Kentucky where his son, Brian, and his family reside. It has been debated among his children as to why Betty accompanied Mike. They were not sure it was because if the boat sunk she wanted to go down with him or if he drowned she wanted to witness to it.

As a member of the Rotary Club, Mike and Betty opened their home to foreign exchange students. They formed a close bond with one particular student, Jose Rodriguez, whom they traveled to Spain to visit. Jose continues to maintain contact with the Ganzel family.

Mike was also known for rope making exhibitions at the Pawnee Historical Society, area schools, scout groups and the Homestead National Monument. He was an avid member of the 9:00 a.m. morning coffee group and kept track of who had to pay for the day's coffee, determining the end of year, winners or losers.

Mike and Betty found their perfect traveling companions in Lyle and Wilma Droge who enjoyed Mike's unique style of travel. Mike habitually avoided interstates and traveled the highways which allowed them to stop and explore construction projects, and any other interesting sites such as the World's Largest Ball of String. Mike and Betty also traveled to the Philippines, Spain, Hawaii, Alaska and Canada.

Mike, along with his wife Betty, inspired family and community members to achieve higher education. Their children earned post graduate degrees, and their grandchildren either have or are currently working on degrees. Many of Mike's students went on to further their education as well. Though suffering from dementia in his later years, Mike always enjoyed talking to former students and it brightened his day to hear of the impact he had on their life through his teaching.

Mike was preceded in death by his wife of 71 years, Betty June, an infant son, Michael Ganzel and older sister, Wanda June, at the age of 7.

He is survived by: daughter, Anita and husband William Krondak; sons, Dr. Brian Ganzel and his wife, Dr. Toni Ganzel; Terry Ganzel, CAPT, JAGC, USN, (Ret) and his wife, Rhoda Ganzel, CDR, JAGC, USN, (Ret); seven grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren.

Services 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 3, 2018 at the United Methodist Church in Pawnee City, Nebraska. Officiating Pastor Sherry Sklenar. Visitation on Friday, March 2, 2018 from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. with family greeting friends from 6-8 p.m. at Wherry Mortuary, 919 G Street, Pawnee City, Nebraska. Private interment at the Otoe Cemetery, rural Otoe, Nebraska.

Memorials to the United Methodist Church, Pawnee City, and/or Pawnee City Public School-FFA. Memorials can be left at www.wherrymortuary.com