



Raymond Zabel

DEC 13, 1916 - JAN 15, 2013



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Raymond A. Zabel, 96, of Bloomington, IL, formerly of Decatur, IL, died peacefully Jan 15, 2013 at Meadows Mennonite Retirement Community, with his family by his side.

Raymond was born December 13, 1916 in Nemaha County, NE, the 5th of 11 children of Frederick and Wilhelmina Niemann Zabel. He was raised on a farm in Smith County, KS., where he attended a one room school house through 8th grade. After graduating from Athol High School, he worked on an uncle's ranch near Hayden, CO. In 1938 he was recruited to play basketball and run track for Iowa Wesleyan College, where he had an outstanding athletic career. He was a member of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity.

Ray proudly served his country during World War II as a Forward Observer and Officer in the 343rd Field Artillery, 90th Division in Europe. There he participated in the Normandy Invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, and was seriously wounded in Germany in March 1945. Although he thankfully never fired his gun, he was awarded a battlefield commission, the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Bronze Star. He was grateful to be chosen in 2011 for an Honor Flight to visit the WWII Memorial in Washington D.C.

Immediately upon discharge Ray married his college sweetheart, Frances Fansher, on March 8, 1946, in Mt. Pleasant, IA. He worked for several small newspapers in Iowa before moving to Decatur in the early 1950's. He was employed by the Decatur Herald and Review, missing only 2 days of work in 28 years.

Ray especially enjoyed travelling. Annual family tent camping trips to national parks and historic sites were always meticulously planned and the trunk of the Chevy expertly packed. In later years, he and his wife enjoyed organized bus tours and escaping Midwestern winters on the Gulf Coast. Ray was a good bridge player, a skilled woodworker, and avid reader, but his particular passion was sports. He was a



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lifelong fan of the Saint Louis Cardinals and possessed an almost encyclopedic knowledge of their players and team history. He also closely followed the University of Illinois basketball and football teams.

Ray is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years, Frances, of Meadows, IL; sisters Verna Flora, Westminster, CO, Arlene Higgins, Lincoln, NE, and Leola (Dale) Janssen, Syracuse, NE; daughters Ellen (Rex) Moore of Bloomington, IL and Lori (William Schenderlein) Zabel, Fort Collins, CO; grandchildren Cameron Sweeney, Normal, IL, Devon (Jason) Flammang, Bloomington, IL and John Schenderlein, Boulder, CO; Great Grandchildren Murphy and Jameson Sweeney, Drew and Macy Rae Flammang, and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, 4 brothers and 3 sisters.

The family wishes to thank the staff and residents at Luther Oaks Assisted Living, where Ray truly felt at home for the past 5 years. He was a gentle and gracious man who never took good fortune for granted and faced life's trials bravely and with dignity.

A private graveside service is planned.

In lieu of flowers memorial gifts may be made to Luther Oaks Building Fund, 601 Lutz Rd, Bloomington, IL 61704.



Tribute Wall

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LZ

Lori Zabel posted:

Thanks, Fred. You described our father very well! We miss him.

October 17 at 4:42 PM

FW

Fred Whobrey posted:

To the family of Ray Zabel. I worked with Ray at the Herald & Review from the time I started in June, 1963 until his retirement. Ray was always a dedicated linotype operator and also could set advertisements in all medal, upside down and backwards. He was very talented. Ray was the most loyal printer and worker that I had ever met. Ray easily made the transition from hot metal to computers in the late 1970s. He had a regiment at work and he followed it to the letter. He was always calm and cool and look the same from the beginning of the work day to the end. He always was well dressed and very quite. He was certainly a gentleman to everyone. I was Secretary-Treasurer of the printers union for over nine years and Ray was a supporter of his fellow workers and employer. I did not realize that Ray was awarded Medals during WWII, he never spoke about it and certainly never looked old enough to me to be in WWII. I am proud to have known such a wonderful person and an outstanding human being that you could always look upto. RIP Ray, we are a sad for your passing. God bless you.

January 24 at 5:13 PM

MC

Mary R. Comerford posted:

Dear Fran, Ellen and Lori, You have my sympathy and prayers on the loss of your special husband and father. I have very many special memories of all the times I spent at your house while I was growing up. Ray was always so kind to me. I will always be grateful to him and your family with sharing your faith with me and taking me to church every Sunday. Dee Ann said it all so well. May God bless and comfort all of you. Love and prayers, Mary Hodgson Comerford

January 21 at 6:23 AM



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DH

Dee Ann Gambrel Hopper posted:

Dear family, We wanted to send you our thoughts of Ray and our deepest sympathy for your loss. The obituary was wonderful and even though we knew Ray for over 50 years we learned a lot about his brave and admirable life. We always knew him to be the kind and gentle neighbor that you described so well in his obit. Fran and Ray were dear and trusted friends and we can look back on a lot of good times and some that were not so good, like the tornado!!! We remember our neighborhood "weiner roasts" and potlucks that were a lot of fun. We were so happy to read that Ray got to go on one of the Honor Flights. What a wonderful honor that was. He gave a lot to his country. It sounds like he was very happy and content these last years and that is a blessing to you all. Mom (Marge) sends her love and so do we three girls. We lost our Dad 3 years ago and understand the pain in your hearts. Death ends a life but not a relationship and you can be so proud of Ray and the loving husband, father, grandfather and brother that he was. Thinking of you, Dee Ann Gambrel Hopper Marge Gambrel Janet Shepherd Marsha Wells

January 19 at 7:47 AM

RR

Rebecca Rose posted:

I am so sorry for your loss. I remember when your Mom and Dad came to Estes Park and we were all doing crossword puzzles. I would say your Dad's encyclopedic knowledge went further than just sports! Becky, Jim and Kate

January 18 at 12:52 PM

LZ

Lori Zabel posted:

Thank you, Jim. I'm her daughter, Lori. I remember Mom talking about you! I think she was the only woman engineering technician in the department at the time, and she really appreciated your friendship and support. She suffers from memory loss now, but I will pass along your kind words.

January 17 at 2:27 PM

JF

Jim Foster posted:

Fran, my condolences to you and your family on the passing of your husband. You may not remember me. We sat beside each at Caterpillar when you were first hired in the seventies. I already knew most of Raymond's obit from having listened to you talk lovingly about him and your family. Those stories and you had a positive effect on my life. Jim Foster

January 17 at 6:28 AM



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David M. Freyling posted:

Lit a candle in memory of Raymond Zabel

January 17 at 6:17 AM



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Raymond by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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