

# Raymond **Bronk**

August 31, 1948 - May 3, 2015



## Ray's Life Story



If a man's wealth were measured in hearts touched, then Raymond J. Bronk would have riches beyond measure. He was a devoted family man, and although he loved being a father, he was adamant that becoming a grandfather was his true reward. Ray was known for his strong work ethic and he never slowed down throughout his entire life's journey. An avid farmer to his core, he truly loved working in the vegetable fields with his whole family right along side him. Ray could do just about anything, yet it was his incredibly kind heart that made him the man people were proud to know. Taken from his loved ones too soon, Ray will be deeply missed and forever remembered by his many friends and beloved family.

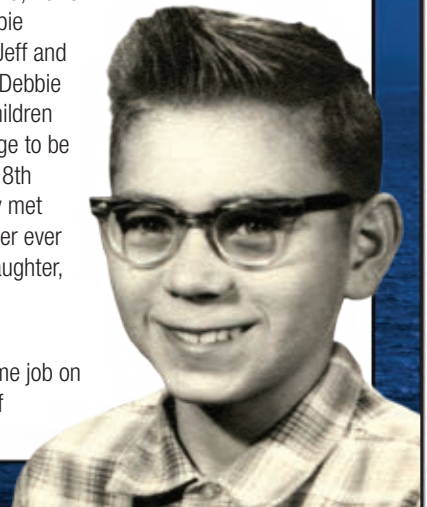
Ray was born on August 31, 1948, in Winona, Minnesota, to his parents, Edward and Mary (Graff) Bronk. The Bronks were a large, close-knit Catholic family, and Ray grew up with thirteen siblings, which included seven brothers and six sisters. He attended the area schools and after graduating from Winona

Senior High in 1967, he went on to attend the Winona Area Vocational Technical School, where he received a degree in Welding in 1968. Shortly after, Ray enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1969. He proudly served his country during the Vietnam War, and was awarded 2 purple hearts for his courage under fire, though Ray never wanted recognition for his actions. He was honorably discharged from the military in 1971, and seldom talked of his time in the service again.

After returning home Ray met Debra Kay Lehnertz (Debbie) and they began dating. Their love grew and the two were married in the Holy Trinity Catholic Church on August 25, 1973.

It wasn't long before Ray and Debbie welcomed two beautiful children, Jeff and Lori, into their lives. Unfortunately, Debbie died in 1981, leaving Ray to raise his children on his own. Ray considered this challenge to be a great honor. It wasn't until Jeff was in 8th grade and Lori in the 6th grade that Ray met Sandy Moger, and they had been together ever since. Ray even helped raise Sandy's daughter, Shannon, and they became one family.

Saying that Ray worked hard was an understatement. He always had a full time job on top of working in the fields. His secret of







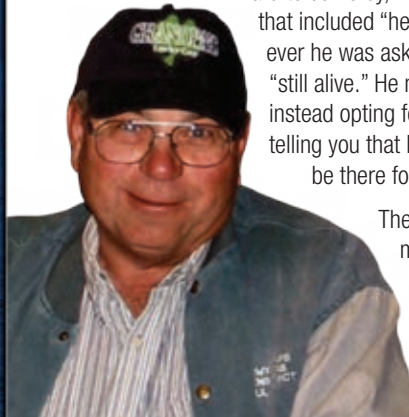
keeping up was to take quick naps during the day, often pulling off on the side of the road to do it. His children remember how he would rush home from work on Sundays to bring them to mass. Worn out, he would sometimes take this opportunity to rest his eyes while Lori and Jeff were already sitting still. One particular Sunday, the exhaustion was too much and the entire congregation heard a loud thud as Ray fell asleep standing up, quickly crashing down on a kneeler.

Although farming was in his blood, Ray had gone back to school in 1974, getting a degree in autobody. He put that degree to good use working for Warner & Swasey in Winona as well as with the Army Corp of Engineers.

After retiring in 2008, Ray could spend all his time farming vegetables with his son, Jeff – right where he wanted to be! That didn't keep Ray from working in his new "shop", where he loved building and inventing just about anything that would make life easier. In fact, he just built a new "pepper picker" for the farm. It goes without saying that Ray was a proud supporter of the FFA.

Yes, the farm kept Ray busy, but he had a plethora of things he also loved, like going to parades, taking a drive to nowhere in particular, cooking chicken and going deer and mushroom hunting with his family. Being an early riser, he often called his family at 5 a.m. only to realize they weren't early birds (at least not THAT early!). However, when it was your birthday, he called that early just to sing you "Happy Birthday." Being frugal minded, Ray loved to hang clothes outside on the line to dry to save energy, even when it was too cold outside and the clothes froze. Additionally, he had a line hung in the basement, which eliminated the need for a humidifier. Ray was generous to a fault and "no" was not in his vocabulary. He was the first to always lend a helping hand, and the first to pick up the check at dinner. Those close to Ray knew how much they meant to him, not so much by his words, but by his actions of love and devotion.

His actions spoke volumes of his character! Although endearing words were hard to come by, Ray was notorious for his one-liners that included "hey, hey hey" and "Whatcha know?" If ever he was asked how he was doing, Ray replied "still alive." He never said the words "I love you," instead opting for "have fun!" This was his way of telling you that he cared and that he would always be there for you.



There wasn't anything in the world that made Ray happier than spending time with his grandchildren, who he adored. A typical Grandpa, he would feed them lots of sugar



and donuts, and when they were sick and couldn't go to school, he would take care of them. In fact, they were pretty sure some of the grandkids pretended to be sick just to spend the day with Grandpa and do activities that "sick" kids wouldn't do. They were truly his everything! Although Ray will be deeply missed, his legacy of love and dedication leaves his loved ones with wonderful memories and a strong foundation to look to for comfort.

Raymond Joseph Bronk, age 66, of Winona, Minnesota, died suddenly on Sunday, May 3, 2015. He is survived by his sweetheart of 25 years, Sandy Moger; children, Jeff (Jean) Bronk of Winona, Lori (Lance) Miller of Edgar, WI and Shannon (Terry) Schell of Rollingstone; seven grandchildren, Carter, Chloe "Princess" and Cooper Bronk, Liam "Leelum" and Layla "Princess" Miller and Elliot and Isaac Schell; brothers and sisters, Bernie (Peggy) Bronk, Winona; Tony (Mary) Bronk, Minnesota City; Mary Ann Richter, Inver Grove Heights, MN; Tom (Diane) Bronk, Winona; Patty Persons, Minneapolis, MN; James (Karen) Bronk, Prescott, WI; Rita (Kirk) Leafstedt, Mason City, IA; Joseph (Linda Jensen) Bronk, Farmington, MN; Janice Bronk, Winona; Susan (Jack) LaValla, St. Charles; Mike Bronk, Minnesota City; and Donald Bronk, Minnesota City; and many nieces and nephews. Ray was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Debra; infant twin grandchildren, Joseph and Brianna Bronk; and one sister, Dorothy "DJ" Bronk. Ray will forever be remembered for his love of cooking chicken, his one-liners, his smile and huge heart. Have fun, Ray!



Memorial Mass will be at 11 a.m. on Thursday, May 7, 2015, at Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Rollingstone with the Reverend William Kulas officiating. Visitation will be from 4 – 8 p.m. on Wednesday, May 6, at Hoff Celebration of Life Center in Goodview with a Prayer Service at 8 p.m. Visitation will continue one hour prior to mass at the church. He will be laid to rest at St. Mary's Cemetery in Winona, where the American Legion Leon J. Wetzel Post #9 will perform Full Military Honors. As Ray would say, "The sun will shine again!" Please share a memory of Ray, sign his online guestbook and view his video tribute and complete life story when they become available at [www.hofffuneral.com](http://www.hofffuneral.com).

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