



Ken Gnadt

October 18, 1932 - September 13, 2018

Ken Gnadt, 85, of Grand Island passed away on Thursday, September 13, 2018, at CHI Health Saint Francis.

Service and celebration of Ken's life will be at 3:00 p.m. Monday at St. Pauls Lutheran Church. Reverends Edgar Schambach Jr. and William Pavuk will officiate. To honor Ken's wishes, cremation will take place following the service. Private family burial of ashes will be in the Grand Island Cemetery. Visitation will be from 4-6 p.m. Sunday at All Faiths Funeral Home.

Born October 18, 1932 on a small farm near Alma, Kansas, the son of Clarence and Edna (Arand) Gnadt. Ken graduated from Kansas State University with a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Animal Science and obtained a graduate degree in banking from the University of Wisconsin.

Ken married his college sweetheart, Bonnie (Bonita) Brannagan, and the two of them raised five children.

Ken has been an active force in Central Nebraska for many years. His career has stretched from agricultural trade and commerce to local government. He worked on the family farm with his father, which led to working for Farmland Industries in agricultural sales. Later on, he became an agricultural loan officer for First National Bank in Alma, Kansas and then spent a number of years with Nutrena Feeds in Fort Worth TX, Sioux City IA, and Grand Island. During his business career, Ken spent almost seven years in Taiwan where he saw first-hand the importance of Nebraska's economic partnership with Taiwan. A community leader and advocate for philanthropy in the community, Ken

served as Mayor of Grand Island from 1994 to 2002 and was instrumental in securing the I-80 South Locust Interchange, the Wood River Flood Control Project, launching the first “Hike and Bike Trails” in the area, and promoting the building of the Heartland Event Center. As a Rotarian for 54 years, Ken has been honored by Rotary International, Nebraska Diplomats, Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, Grand Island International Visitors and Nebraska Children’s Groundwater Festival. In 2012 Ken was named the Distinguished NEBRASKAlander for his contributions to agriculture and agribusiness, service to his community, and service to the state at large. Ken joined the Grand Island Community Foundation Board of Trustees in January 2014. Ken has been an active volunteer in numerous organizations. He served as a Charter Board Member for Husker Harvest Days for 41 years. Also, Nebraska Nature and Visitor Center, Saint Francis Medical Center Foundation, School Advisory for the Grand Island Public Schools Superintendent, The Grand Island Independent, Stuhr Museum, Children’s Groundwater Festival and Groundwater Guardians. He was part of the group that started the first Husker Harvest Days, which has been going on for 38 years and attracts visitors from all over the world. Ken is an active member of St. Pauls Lutheran Church and active with the Hall County Historical Society, the oldest historical society in Nebraska.

Those left to cherish his memory include his children, Jim (Christi) Gnad of Grand Island, John (Jayne) Gnad of Highlands Ranch, CO, Jerry (Amy) Gnad of Aurora, CO, Janet (Chris) Ringel of Arlington, TX, and Jeff Gnad of Aurora, CO; four grandchildren, Brittany (Nate) Walton, Jordon Ringel, Eli (Lauren) Ringel, and Chelsea (Bryan) Cox; and five great-grandchildren, Heidi Cox, Henry Walton, Catherine Walton, Allie Ringel and Camille Cox.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Bonnie, who passed in 2009; and his parents.

In lieu of flowers memorials are suggested to Stuhr Museum Foundation, Saint Francis Foundation or St. Pauls Lutheran Church.

Cemetery Details

Grand Island City Cemetery

Grand Island, NE

Tribute Wall



“ *Ken Gnadt*

October 08, 2023 at 11:02 PM



“ *To the extended families of Ken, we are saddened by his passing, but know that he had a very full life that impacted people, communities, and made a difference in the world. You all should be very proud of what Ken accomplished while on this earth. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and we hope you have found peace and strength during this difficult time. May God bless you and cherish all the memories that you have of Ken as they will last a lifetime.*

*Dick and Conni Bales
Omaha, NE*

Dick and Conni Bales - September 19, 2018 at 01:58 PM

JL

“ From Melody Dobson & Jody L. Lamp, Co-Founders of the American Doorstop Project and authors of "A History of Nebraska Agriculture: A Life Worth Living"

To the Ken Gnadt family, his dear friends, community of Grand Island and Hall County, Nebraska.

Our deepest condolences to everyone who knew and love Ken Gnadt. Our hearts our sad, but we stand in the shadow of a great man who inspired us to be more, do more, and give more of our time, talent and treasures.

In 2013, when we asked the then president Michael Smith of the Nebraska State Historical Society, who we should talk to you in Grand Island about the Horse and Mule Markets, he emphatically answered: "If you want to know anything about Grand Island, call Ken Gnadt.

And so we did! And for nearly five years we had a genuine friendship with this great man who had so much passion and purpose for the city he served as mayor and for the agriculture and history we wanted to share with others that was founded in Hall County, Nebraska.

We can't recall a time in the last five years that when we stopped in Grand Island, Ken Gnadt wasn't there for us -- Breakfast, lunch, dinner, dinner parties, meetings, Husker Harvest Days, the Grand Theater, the Burlington Station, the Chicken Coop, the Stuhr Museum, opening day at Fonner Park, Rotary Club, our Book Launch, our Film Launch, Press Conferences...the list goes on and on.

We will never be able to travel to or through Grand Island without thinking of Mr. Gnadt. The last time we saw him in person, he had just gotten back from Texas and said that he was already making plans to go sky diving on his 90th Birthday with his grandson!

*When we recently shared the news about receiving a Letter of Support from the Breeders' Cup, here's the response he sent to us:
HELLO YOU TWO HERO'S, KEEP ON KEEPING ON, KEN
GNADT*

What a gentleman. May he always provide us inspiration to keep pressing on with his tremendous energy and optimism.

Our world is richer because we had the chance to spend quality time with him!

Thank you Mr. Gnadt!! You will be dearly missed!!

With heartfelt admiration,

*Jody L. Lamp and Family
Melody Dobson and Family*



Jody L. Lamp - September 17, 2018 at 02:46 PM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Ken Gnadt.*



September 17, 2018 at 12:13 PM

MH

“ We are thinking of you and praying for your comfort. Your Dad/Grandpa was one of a kind and he leaves a legacy of love and service. Mitch and Tami Holthus

Mitch and Tami Holthus - September 17, 2018 at 10:22 AM

BH

“ Ken was a wonderful man and he did so much for so many.. Always thinking of others and making a difference. Truly one of the greatest men I have ever meant and worked with.. His legacy will be felt for many years. God Bless you Ken.

Brian Hamilton - September 16, 2018 at 10:36 PM

JG

“ Julie, Barb, Phoenix and Griffin purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Ken Gnad.



Julie, Barb, Phoenix and Griffin - September 16, 2018 at 08:11 PM

MH

“ Uncle Kenny was a great guy, funny, hard working, great family man, fraternity brother. I have fond memories playing with the Gnad cousins in Alma and Dodge City. He was a fine, Christian man, who will be much missed. Go with God, Uncle Ken.

Michael Holthus - September 16, 2018 at 02:42 PM

MG

“ To all the Family of Ken Gnadt :

I first met Ken back in the 70's when I became friends with his sons, Jim and John.

Immediately, I liked the positive and outgoing personality of Ken. He always made me feel very welcome in his home and I remember his keen sense of humor.

To my friends Jim and John.....I am so sorry for your personal loss and that of all your family. Your Father was a very good man with a great deal of integrity and compassion for others. Many will miss him dearly.

May God bless you and comfort you all in your sorrow.

Mark Gallagher

Mark Gallagher - September 15, 2018 at 07:40 PM

RN

“ *I have Ken and family in my thoughts and prayers. Sorry for your loss.*

Rocky Newman - September 15, 2018 at 12:54 PM

LW

“ *Our Deepest Condolences to Ken's family. What an awesome, kind & a generous man Ken was. Always a greeted U with a smile. Ken will b greatly missed.*

John & Linda Willman

Linda Willman - September 15, 2018 at 11:54 AM

BH

“ *What a wonderful man , his smile was contagious. Whenever I saw him ; he'd say " where's my hug ?"*
If was an honor to volunteer with him at several city functions. He will be missed
Thoughts and prayers to his family

Billie Herron - September 15, 2018 at 08:41 AM

TC

“ *Ken and I met at Rotary and became friends. He often credited himself with my marriage. He would say he told me to ask Ashlee out - couldn't go wrong with a good Kansas girl. Ken you will be missed. I am sure the Good Lord has heard from Ken and listened to some of the advice he has to share. God Bless.*

Todd Crawford - September 14, 2018 at 04:33 PM

JS

“ *Ken and I changed home towns. I was from Grand Island , while he was from Here, Alma K.S he came to our church when in town.....The many times we visited here and us at his home in GI he took us to the Race Track a couple years ago . We also were longer friends of one of Kens friends Jack Cory.....when i read it in the on line GI paper, i was floored.My goodness..... Rest in Heaven, Ken's wife and he n o w will be buried in the same cemetery as my parents.....in GI.....Ken you were a great help to GI and we will miss seeing your face in Alma..... Our Sympathy to each one of you , his kids, and grand kids..... Isaiah 40;31. You're in a better place.....In Sympathy and Friendship, Julie (Pulliam) and cleo Schultz Alma KS*

Julie Schultz - September 14, 2018 at 03:56 PM

RP

*What a great man he was to serve with on city council from 94to 2000, have always considered as a friend since I met him thru our kids with mutual actions of our kids, then association of city functions. i was able to talk with him when back in GI in Aug., He said that he had one item let in his bucket list to do on his 90th, and that was to jump from an air plane, he said Bush could do it, so could he! He made the big jump to Heaven and will be greatly missed here on earth!!! GOD BLESS HIM.
Dick & Jean Preisendorf*

Richard Preisendorf - September 15, 2018 at 09:47 AM

JS

Ken, As my God Parent, I was always so proud of you and how you influenced me to form my professional life. Much like you I Studied agriculture and went out in the world to make my career and life. I still remember visiting my grandmother and eating the mulberries at your parents lane in the summers in Alma, and visiting your house south of town, great times. God bless, will miss you greatly. Jon Stuewe and family, Puerto Rico

Jon Stuewe - September 15, 2018 at 02:16 PM

SS

An untimely death of a great man...a great philanthropist and a very caring and intelligent man. When I first came to Grand Island in 2001, and took the job of the ED of the Health Department, Ken was there assisting me in learning the culture of the area and assisted myself and team to find the best building for the Health Department. Ken was a supporter of many community events...too numerous to name but you can be assured Ken was there...always with a smile and listening ear. He will be greatly missed.

Sonja Simpson

sonja simpson - September 15, 2018 at 05:22 PM