



Virgil Ralph Franz

December 27, 1928 - January 18, 2026

Virgil Ralph Franz Obituary
12-27-1928 to 1-18-2026

Virgil Ralph Franz left this world at the age of ninety-seven to join his heavenly family on the evening of Sunday, January 18, 2026. Virgil was born in Rozel, Kansas, on December 27, 1928.

Virgil grew up on a farm in Burdett, Kansas, where his father, Ralph Franz —“Grandpa Ralph” to many of us—was a wheat farmer. He spent many harvest seasons helping his father harvest the wheat. Virgil rode the combine, and his dad drove the truck that collected the grain. His stepmother, Myrtle, would then drive the truck to the grain elevator. It was a family affair!

Virgil learned to fly a plane as a teenager while crop-dusting area farms. Virgil was a passionate private pilot throughout his life. In 1995, he received a certificate from the National Aeronautic Society for his participation in the Largest General Aviation Formation, a 132-plane flight between Rockford, Illinois, and Oshkosh, Wisconsin—an accomplishment of which he was very proud.

He later moved to Larned, Kansas, where he married Betty Lucille Deering Franz in 1949 and worked as a linesman, volunteer firefighter, and salesman

for Weddell Electric. One of his duties as a volunteer firefighter was to set off the annual fireworks display at Moffett Stadium in Larned, a task he always enjoyed.

Virgil and Betty raised their three children (Julene, Mark, and Lori) in Larned until the early 1960s. Virgil's work with Motorola required him to live in several cities throughout his career. He and his family lived in Wichita, KS; Lake Quivira (Kansas City), KS; New Orleans, LA; and Dallas, TX. Virgil went on to have a successful career with Motorola Communications until his retirement.

One of the sporting events Virgil and his father, Ralph, hosted for many years—and greatly enjoyed—was the annual pheasant hunt at his father's farm. Family and friends gathered from near and far at a warm, dry farmhouse on the open prairie, where a group of city boys came to hunt, eat, sleep, gamble—then emerged three days later looking like hairy prairie dogs. These times of camaraderie created treasured memories for everyone involved, especially his son, Mark; son-in-law, Ron; and his two lifelong best friends, Roger Caudill (Hideaway, TX) and Larry Showalter (Kansas City, KS).

Virgil later married Barbara Franz, his wife of forty-six years. Virgil and Barbara spent many happy years living at Hideaway Lake in Tyler, Texas, where he continued to enjoy golf, boating on the lake, playing cards with friends, and relaxing in retirement. In 2010, Virgil's name was published in the Tyler Morning Telegraph for making a hole-in-one at the Hideaway Lake Club's golf course. Virgil and Barbara shared an active church life at the Hideaway Lake Community Church. Virgil loved watching sports—especially Dallas Cowboys and Kansas City Chiefs football games—and professional golf tournaments.

Virgil is survived by his wife, Barbara Ann Franz; daughter and son-in-law, Julene Franz Reed and Ron Reed (Memphis, TN); son and daughter-in-law,

Mark LaVern Franz and Alla Chavdarova and her daughter, Sasha (Austin, TX); daughter and son-in-law, Lori Jean Franz and John Coll (Kempner, TX); and his three stepchildren, Kathy Johnson, Cynthia Short, and James Arledge, and their spouses.

He is also survived by his two granddaughters and their husbands, Angela Lynné Reed Tull and Benjamin Tull (Memphis, TN), and Amanda Nicole Reed Ferguson and Marvin Ferguson (Chicago, IL). “Grandpa Virgil” was dearly loved by his four great-grandchildren—Bailey Grace Ferguson (Chicago, IL), Riley Grace Tull (Memphis, TN), Reed Marvin Ferguson (Chicago, IL), and Amelia Catherine Tull (Memphis, TN).

Virgil was a wonderful uncle and surrogate father to his nieces, Janice Mann Bogle (and husband Ron), and Shela Mann Shank. He was a second “father” to them as well as their uncle, and their mutual love for one another was a gift to all. He took great joy and pride in all they did.

Virgil was predeceased by his father, Ralph Mark Franz, and stepmother, Myrtle E. Franz (Larned, KS); his mother, Elsie Viola Jones (Bertrand, NE); his sister, Delores Franz (Burdett, KS); his stepsister, Ruth Felder (Rush City, KS); his sister-in-law Arlene Mann Yeager (Larned, KS); and his former wife, Betty Lucille Deering Franz (Memphis, TN).

A celebration of life is planned at the Larned United Methodist Church in Larned, KS, at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, February 4th, followed by a short reception at the church. After the reception, a graveside service will be held at Larned Cemetery, where he will be laid to rest next to other members of his beloved family.

The family requests that any donations be given to either the Alzheimer’s

Association or
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Tribute Wall



“ Praying for Barbara his devoted wife and his children Gods comfort



Joan Margaret Mullen - February 06 at 11:40 AM