



Franklin Donald Henkels

December 8, 2025

Franklin D Henkels passed away on December 8, 2025. Frank was born in Heron Lake, Minnesota, to Herman Paul and Mary Agnes (Schaffer) Henkels. As the seventh of nine children, Frank grew up in a big, lively family where he was known for his gentle nature, quick mind, and quiet kindness. He was baptized, confirmed, and later married at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Heron Lake - a place that remained close to his heart throughout his life. Frank attended Sacred Heart Catholic School and graduated from Heron Lake High School with the Class of 1950. On September 18, 1956, Frank married his beloved Donna. The two shared 67 years filled with love, steady companionship, and a deep devotion to one another.

Frank proudly served in the Navy Air Corps and was stationed in Japan during the Korean War. It was there that he first discovered his love of flying - a passion that shaped the rest of his life. Aviation connected him with lifelong friends and led to a distinguished 37-year career spanning the Navy, the FAA, and the airlines. After 25 years in commercial aviation, Frank retired from Northwest Airlines in 1992.

Outside the cockpit, Frank was happiest outdoors. He was an avid hunter, always accompanied by his loyal black labs - Jill, Brooke, and Pepper. He loved to fish, enjoyed many rounds of golf, and approached every hobby with the same quiet enthusiasm that defined him. His faith also guided him deeply,

and he was a long-time member of Pax Christi Catholic Community in Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

Frank is survived by his sister, Beatrice (George) Pluard of Munster, Indiana, along with many nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews and many friends who will remember him for his wisdom, steady presence, and gentle spirit.

He is preceded in death by his parents; his beloved wife, Donna; his brothers Charles, Bernard, John, and Gregory Henkels; and his sisters Margaret Henkels, Bernadine Iverson and Lucy Ferguson. The family would like to thank Seniors Helping Seniors, Plymouth, Minnesota for their care and kindness during this last year. With their assistance, Frank was able to continue to enjoy living at home.

In lieu of flowers, please consider honoring Frank's memory by performing a random act of kindness.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held 11am, Monday, Dec 15 at Pax Christi Catholic Church, 12100 Pioneer Trail, Eden Prairie, MN 55347, with visitation one hour prior. Interment will follow at Dawn Valley Memorial Park.

Washburn-McReavy.com

Dawn Valley 952-941-7686

Cemetery Details

Dawn Valley Memorial Park (Bloomington)

9940 Bush Lake Road
Bloomington, MN 55438

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 15. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Pax Christi Catholic Church
12100 Pioneer Trail
Eden Prairie, MN 55347

Mass of Christian Burial

DEC 15. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Pax Christi Catholic Church
12100 Pioneer Trail
Eden Prairie, MN 55347

Tribute Wall



“ Washburn-McReavy Funeral Chapels created a Mass of Christian Burial for Franklin Donald Henkels in memory of Franklin Donald Henkels



Washburn-McReavy - December 11, 2025 at 02:02 PM

KK

I also grew up in Heron Lake and spent many years working for the same airline. It was such a pleasure to be on a crew with Frank and I have great memories of trips together. I also enjoyed knowing his wife Donna, and seeing them at social occasions. He was already in the flying business by the time I met them, but it was fun to connect with him over "home-town" stories.

Kathy Kohrer - December 13, 2025 at 10:35 AM

TH

“ Frank was a man of deep faith and inspiration. I took communion to him on a weekly basis for nearly a year until his passing. Always pleasant, always happy to see me, and always very happy to receive the Body of Christ. I will miss him very much. He will live in my memory as a man of great faith.
Tom Haller

Tom Haller - December 18, 2025 at 07:07 PM

JW

Thank you Tom for your visits. Frank looked forward to seeing you.

Jan Wernstrum - January 18 at 01:30 PM

“ I first met Frank in my late teens when I was learning to fly. My father joined the 'Yellow Cub Incorporated' flying club, in which Frank was a member and of course chief maintenance man. One day I received a call from one of the other members who asked if I would run down to Pete Petits' farm and help Frank do some paint masking on the club's new Cessna 170. When I arrived I was met by a soft spoken, jovial individual that I thoroughly enjoyed working with. We worked a little bit, talking continuously about flying. After a while he stopped and said "it's time to fly a sortie", so we roared off the farm in the Piper Cub, taking turns flying around the country side. When we came back, he said it was time for lunch, so we had hot dogs and beer, then went back to work on the 170. Not a whole lot later, Frank said, "you know, it's time to fly another sortie", so off we went again in the Cub. One of the most fun days I ever experienced in my aviation career! I couldn't help thinking that he is probably the nicest person I have ever come across. As luck would have it, we met again many times in the cockpit of an NCA CV580, he of course the Captain, and I the green rookie copilot. I remember one sunny day we were heading to Brainerd from Bemidji, Frank at the controls. We were chatting and site seeing, and I noticed we were getting awfully close to Brainerd, but still roaring along at altitude. I started thinking that if I was captain, I probably would be descending by now. Being a new guy still on probation, I was reluctant to say anything. When I saw Brainerd start to disappear under the nose, I decided I better do something. I calmly said to Frank "ah, hey skipper, are we going to land at Brainerd?" He looked at me with a calm smile, laughed and said "your right!" He smoothly retarded the power levers and will glided to earth, no one being the wiser. I never flew with a more easy going skipper, and I never knew working could be so much fun. He had an indelible effect on how I approached being a captain, and was a role model throughout my entire career. As our lives diverged with our careers, I did not see him much after the Convairs left. I cherish the memories I have of the time I spent with this wonderful aviator, and will remember him always. Rick Worringer

Richard G Worringer - December 16, 2025 at 02:35 PM

JW

Ahh, thanks for this wonderful story and tribute to my Uncle. He loved life and helped others do the same!

Jan Wernstrum - January 18 at 01:35 PM