



## Ralph W. Ravenschlag

July 25, 1938 - May 20, 2019

On July 25, 1938, Ralph was born in Hinsdale, Illinois, to German immigrants, Alfred G. Ravenschlag and Wilhelmine Mietenkotte Ravenschlag. He attended school in Downer's Grove, Illinois. These years were filled with mischief, shenanigans, lifelong friends and adventures that could only come from growing up in that era. Ralph's older brother, Gerhard, was his best friend, tormentor, confidant and biggest fan. Gerhard was instrumental in Ralph's life, providing love and support that he was forever grateful for and someone Ralph would want recognized for his kindness and selflessness.

During high school, Ralph was a member of the Aqua Maniacs, a diving club that helped local authorities with underwater search and rescue. Ralph loved sharing this time in his life.

After graduation from Downers Grove North High School in 1957, he attended Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois. He met the love of his life, Cheryl Wright, while attending WIU. The two met in a speech class, where Cheryl had given a speech on how to shoe a horse. Ralph was in love from that moment on, but took several years to garner the courage to ask her on a date. On June 8, 1963, the two were married, leading to 55 years of adventures, children and grandchildren.

Ralph graduated with a double major in Physical Education and Social Studies in 1963. That fall he began teaching 8th grade and coaching all boys' sports at Colchester, Illinois. After two years there he enrolled at Colorado State University to pursue a Master's Degree in Physical Education. Following his studies, he took a job with Poudre School District teaching physical education in the mountain schools of Larimer County. During the school year he could be seen traveling between the far-flung schools in his robin's egg blue VW Bug, tumbling mats strapped to the roof and boxes of playground balls stowed in the back seat. During his years in the District he also taught physical education at Washington Elementary, Laporte Ave. Elementary (later known as Juan Fullana), Mountain View, and Riffenburgh Elementary.

He entered administration as Director of Physical Activities for Poudre School District. After two years, he missed teaching so much that he returned to the classroom, this time as a 5th grade teacher at Bauder Elementary until Johnson Elementary opened. He moved to Johnson, also as a 5th grade teacher, and taught there until retirement in 1994

after 30 years of teaching.

Ralph's passion for teaching and his students showed every day of his career, bringing his classroom to life with his imagination, humor and ability to connect with his students.

Ralph was rewarded regularly with past students staying in touch and sharing their memories and appreciation for the inspiration he provided them as a teacher and friend. In the late 1960's he and his wife built a house in Stratton Park in Rist Canyon and lived there for six years before moving back into Ft. Collins. These years were some of his fondest and allowed him to fulfill his childhood dream of living on a ranch with cattle and horses.

During their 54 years in Colorado, Ralph and Cheryl climbed 25 of the 50 fourteen-thousand-foot peaks in Colorado and Mt. Whitney in California. Ralph always enjoyed cold Colorado brewed beer and made sure to celebrate each summit with one.

Upon retirement Ralph and Cheryl built a cabin in Buckhorn Canyon. This project consumed three years and provided many adventures.

For the last ten years Ralph and Cheryl spent winters in Rio Verde, AZ enjoying many outdoor activities like biking, hiking, pickleball, bocce and the desert terrain around the Verde Valley. Being a former Physical Education teacher, he continued his physical fitness by lifting weights and cycling 30 miles a day into his 80th year.

Ralph passed from this life on May 20, 2019. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Cheryl; son, Eric, wife Lynn, children, Eva, Olivia, and Cole; daughter, Gretchen, husband Matt Smith, children, Ellie and Katrin; son, Kurt, wife Phoebe, children, Josie, Willy and Nori.

He was preceded in death by his parents and his older brother, Gerhard Ravenschlag. In lieu of flowers, consider a donation to St Jude Children's Research Hospital. A private graveside service will be held for immediate family only. A Celebration of Life open house will be held July 10, 4pm – 7pm in the Agave Room above the Rio Grande Restaurant, 149 W. Mountain Ave, Fort Collins.

# Comments

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“ I worked at Bauder in the media and will never forget the "Boston Tea Party" that he worked on with the students. He was a teacher that students will always remember!!  
Irene Mason

**Irene Mason** - July 22, 2019 at 11:26 AM

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“ Mr Ravenshlag was an amazing 5th grade teacher. I was in his class in 1978 and oh fun that was. He had us run a school supply store selling candy, note books, pencils, toys. It was called R and R school supply (R and R stood for Ralph Ravenshlag). I remember the large comfy chair behind his desk. So sorry for you loss, he will be truly missed.

**Jack Hegdal** - July 12, 2019 at 03:10 PM

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“ Dear Cheryl and family,  
I am thinking of you today as you honor your husband and father by gathering with a lifetime of friends. Because you chose him and loved him all these years, Cheryl, I am sure he was one of the best. Without knowing him personally, I honor him and your family as you grieve for him together. I send my love and support. Your life tribute to Ralph speaks to the wonderful gift he was.  
Love,  
Katrina Graydon

**Katrina Graydon** - July 10, 2019 at 11:46 AM

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“ Dear Ravenshlag family,

I can't possibly imagine how difficult this loss is for those who were close to him. I was also in the same class as previous posts with Shayna and Ms. Pipkin's son Chris, the year before Mr. Ravenshlag retired. It was one of the most memorable years of my entire childhood.

Shayna is correct, we were a challenging bunch indeed! He handled it all intuitively, with a keen sense of balance and compassion. I also agree with Terry. He was not only an excellent teacher of knowledge and skills, but taught true friendship by example, to all his students.

I imagine you've heard plenty of stories and experienced yourselves his phenomenal sense of humor, tireless passion for adventure, and enthusiasm for creativity. One of my favorite qualities he shared with us though was the depth of his honesty and realism. It's few and far between as a child to encounter adults who will be both realistic and encouraging, in regard to how challenging life can be. Mr. Ravenshlag opened up to us about how he overcame challenges, and endured struggles to build the life he wanted and to become the person we all knew and loved. Those insights continue to inspire me in my daily life now, all these years later.

He truly made this world a better place for all of us who were so fortunate to have him in our lives. I wish I'd had an opportunity as an adult to express that to him. I'm grateful though to be able to pass it along to you. I hope perhaps there is some comfort in the fact that although he's no longer with us in life, he does live on in so many lives he influenced profoundly, and genuinely.

With heartfelt condolences,  
Andra Axelson



**Andra** - May 29, 2019 at 11:16 PM



“ Oh dear, I didn't know that photo would be so big! I thought it was just going to be a thumbnail next to my name.

**Andra** - May 29, 2019 at 11:21 PM

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“ Dear Cheryl,  
Mr Ravenschlag was an incredible teacher, here I am 25 years after having him in 5th grade at Johnson and I have so many fond memories of him. I repelled off a cliff for the first and only time ever on your property, we made bird boxes and got \$20 if they became a home and I used saws to make holiday gifts. Poor Mr Ravenschlag had such a tough group of us girls in 1993, but he did so well with us and knew how to get our attention. My mom shared with me that he passed and when I read his obituary and saw your name I smiled because he would say you had to jump around in the shower to get wet.

I am so terribly sorry for the loss you and your family are experiencing. Please know that Mr Ravenschlag will live long with many of his students as well. Hugs & Love to you.

Sincerely,  
Shayna Phipps-Holman

Shayna Phipps Holman - May 28, 2019 at 06:16 PM



“ I just told my 8-year-old daughter a week ago that Ralph Ravenschlag was my favorite elementary school teacher ever. It was Bauder in 1987. My brother agrees. Such a great man — what an awesome obituary. Never knew most of those details. Forever thankful for him.

- Joel Burns

Joel - July 10, 2019 at 10:54 PM



“ Cheryl and family,  
I am so sorry for your loss. Ralph was such a wonderful teacher and friend. We worked at Johnson together and he also was my son's teacher. He was there for Chris and Tony when they needed a friend! They still talk about the time he took them out shooting after their dad passed away! He will never be forgotten! Sending warm thoughts and prayers.  
Terry Pipkin

Terry Pipkin - May 28, 2019 at 09:28 AM



“ I taught with Ralph at Bauder for many years. He was an excellent teacher, inspiring students to achieve at a high level. He was a jokester, for sure. He and another teacher had an over-the-top fear of snakes. They used to plant rubber snakes in unlikely places to scare the other guy. Heard yells from one teacher or the other many times over the years when the snakes were discovered in their concealed hides.

He had a teaching element in his US history class to get the students interested in the birth of our country. I played King George in our activity that went on for several weeks. Students I talked to in their later years told me how they got interested in our countries' history do to Ralph's creative teaching methods.

I have fond memories of Ralph in so many ways. We had so much fun. Ralph was a standout guy. His family proud of him I am sure.

**Bill Martin** - May 26, 2019 at 11:27 PM

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“ Ralph was one of my all time favorite people. I recall how he welcomed me into his home as a high school student and a friend of Eric. I always remember his pull up challenge in the basement, and his massive biceps. I remember him as one of the first PE teachers to organize the district elementary track meet, which has grown into a shining event for current elementary students. Recently I recall visiting with them in the parking lot at Ace as they were leaving for Arizona. This world is a better place because if Ralph's kind gentle spirt. To the family I'm very sorry for your loss, and my thoughts and prayers will be with you all.  
Joe Ahlbrandt

**Joe Ahlbrandt** - May 26, 2019 at 08:16 PM

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“ Ravenschlag family,

I am so sorry for your loss. Your dad and family are in most of my childhood memories. I loved running into your dad occasionally and catching up with life's adventures. He was always so excited to see me and hear what my family was up to. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. I love and miss you all.

Amy (Richardson) Arnott

**Amy Arnottt** - May 26, 2019 at 11:49 AM