



Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow

October 24, 1944 - June 18, 2025

Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow, 80, resident of Hampshire, Illinois, passed away June 18, 2025, at home surrounded by his family.

Fred was born in Chicago, Illinois, on October 24, 1944, son of Clifford and Esther (Erickson) Rackow. Fred married Linda Vogt on August 21, 1976, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Plato Center.

Fred grew up in Bedford Park, IL, and graduated from Argo Community High School in Summit, IL. After earning his bachelor's degree from Northern Illinois University he accepted a position at Hampshire Middle & High School, where he began as a history teacher and went on to serve as a guidance counselor for more than 30 years. As many educators do, Fred wore many hats during his career, including coaching the school's baseball and softball teams, announcing football games, serving as cheerleading sponsor, class sponsor, National Honor Society sponsor, and his famed lunchroom supervision duty.

Outside of school, Fred was equally invested in the Hampshire community. He served as president of the Hampshire Park District for many years and helped lead efforts to establish the Little People Playtime preschool and add lights to the baseball field at Bruce Ream Park, to name a few. His lasting impact led to the dedication of Rackow Park in his honor in the summer of 2022. He spent countless hours volunteering his time with the Hampshire Lions Club and could frequently be found assisting at their annual golf outing and other events around the area.

Fred did not take well to retirement after leaving Hampshire High School in 2003. He took a part-time guidance position at Huntley High School, served as president of the congregation at St. Peter's Lutheran Church and as a member of the Hampshire Cemetery Board. After he was asked by his great-niece, he became ordained to serve as a wedding officiant and performed several (so far) successful marriages for family and friends.

But more than anything, Fred was a devoted husband, father and friend. Despite his busy schedule, he never missed a game, concert, school play or Bears game. He found great joy in coaching one of his daughters in softball and enjoyed the other's perks from her job with the Chicago Bears. He and his wife, Linda, loved traveling with family and friends and especially spending time together at The Farm.

Fred is survived by his wife, Linda; his children, Kate Rackow and Kerri Rackow; his sister Carolyn (Robert) Hauser; his brother Richard (Egidia) Rackow; and many nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his parents.

Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, July 12th at The Family Farm (17N860 Harmony Road) in Hampshire, IL, from 1-5 pm. Burial will be in Hampshire Center Cemetery at a later date.

The family requests no flowers, memorials may be made in Fred's name to Hampshire Park District, Hampshire Lions Club, or St. Peter's Little Saints Preschool.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JUL 12. 1:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Family Farm
17N860 Harmony Road
Hampshire, IL 60140

Tribute Wall

“ I met Mr. Rackow on the first day of school my 8th grade year. Although the Blazier’s had been in Hampshire for many years, my family had just moved there and we were the new kids in school.

Mr. Rackow made the school schedules for my brother Richard and me, then took us around the school to locate our classes. It was the first of many times throughout high school he offered me guidance and encouragement.

Those who knew him probably also knew he wasn’t afraid to pull kids aside, myself included, to let us know we were “messaging up” (though I’m pretty sure his language was a little more colorful.)

Mr. Rackow was also my baseball coach. (And no, I wasn’t in the trunk of the Plymouth going to Central High School).

I played catcher and so had Mr. Rackow when he was younger. I think that’s created a bond between us. I remember all the time he spent throwing balls in the dirt to help me learn how to block, and the afternoons he worked with me on throwing a quicker release to second and third base.

After I graduated from high school, he became a friend. Eventually, we were even neighbors. We talked often while working on our lawns and cleaning up the yard.

My wife, Carol, and I had Fred and his wife, Linda, over for dinner one evening before we moved to Arizona. During the meal, our pet German Shepard decided that she also wanted be included in the dinner. Much to our embarrassment, the dog stood up on her hind legs and placed her paws on the table. But of course, there was nothing to be embarrassed about. We all laughed and laughed.

Whenever I came back to Hampshire to visit, I made sure to stop by Fred and Linda’s to catch up on what was new, and reminisce over old stories.

Carol and I have watched the Fred Rackow and Tom Getzelman YouTube video and have laughed, sharing countless memories of “Mr. Rackow”, or Fred, as we knew him.

Watching the video reminded me of the ways he touched my life. But in reading the memories posted by others, I realized I’m not the only one. He impacted so many others, and those are memories that I hope will always live on.

Well done, my friend. R.I.P.

My wife, Carol, and I would also like to extend our deepest condolences to Linda, Katlin and Kerri. Thank you for sharing Fred with us, and so many others.

Larry Blazier

Larry Blazier - July 12, 2025 at 02:44 PM

JB

Larry, Hats-off!! You could not have put it, anymore Perfect. Fred, Rest in Peace My Friend.

John W. Bizzak - August 19, 2025 at 09:09 AM

TW

“ *Tanesha Wade purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.*



Tanesha Wade - July 11, 2025 at 01:15 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.*



July 10, 2025 at 12:24 PM

“ (Continued from above)

The painting company provided decent money for a young man just out of high school, and I could work as many hours as I wanted. In the summer of 1981, I made \$4,300 working 55-hour weeks for 16 weeks. (That’s about \$16,000 in today’s money.) That money, combined with the scholarship, made it possible for me to attend and graduate from Northwestern University. At the time, I didn’t recognize how unusual it was that Fred would start a painting company only to quickly hand it off to me. Looking back, I have to wonder – was Fred’s creation of that painting company really just an “amazing coincidence”, or did Fred know exactly what he was doing all along?

Fred and I closed R & R Painting Company in 1984 when I received my B.A. and M.A. from Northwestern and began teaching at the University to fund my remaining years of graduate study. R & R had served its purpose – and then some. It also provided jobs to four other young men who were determined to pay for college. Unsurprisingly, I followed Fred’s and my father’s examples, spending four years as a volunteer youth coach for the Hampshire Youth Athletic Association, and later over a decade coaching youth baseball in Phoenix. Mentors shape us in ways we may not realize at the time.

Upon my graduation from Northwestern Law School, Fred presented me with the plaque pictured above. His mentoring role is evident in the words:

“PREPARATION IS STILL THE KEY.” His wit and friendship come through as well: “ILLEGITIMI NON-CARBORUNDUM.” I found solace in that advice many times. His recognition of our painting company’s role in my life is also evident: in the center is one of our paint scrapers used to prepare the surface before painting. Once again, it seems Fred knew exactly what he was doing.

Fred’s plaque has hung in my law office above my coat hook every day of my 36-year career as an attorney. I placed it purposefully so I’d see it each morning when I begin work and again as I head home. I see it before I go to court, and again when I return.

Fred was a blessing in my life. I was lucky to have him as a mentor. I am confident he had a similar impact on many others. That’s what Fred wanted when he became a guidance counselor, a youth baseball coach, and a community volunteer. Fred knew exactly what he was doing.



Ronald J. Ellett - July 09, 2025 at 03:40 PM

“ A Mentor to Remember

My earliest memory of Fred is playing checkers when I was no more than five or six. He had joined our family for spring break. Fred was a year younger than my father, and the two of them would go on to teach and coach baseball together for almost 20 years. Fred volunteered extensively – whether for youth baseball, his church, or the park district. You probably know they named one of the local parks after Fred – deservedly so. What you probably don't know is how exceptional Fred was as a coach. Allow me to give you a couple of examples.

In 1975, when Fred began coaching our class, there was nothing remarkable about our baseball performance. The previous two years, we were winless as Little League all-stars and clearly behind the other nearby teams. Yet something changed under Fred's leadership. He drilled us relentlessly, encouraged us constantly, and critiqued us with his biting humor. Fred was uniquely witty. He could critique every player on the team while having us all in stitches and hanging on his every word.

We started winning – a lot. By 1977, five freshmen had become starters on Hampshire's varsity baseball team after just two years under Fred Rackow (Jeff Burke, Pat Smith, Art Hartman, Dennis Geyer, and myself). That team won the conference and became Hampshire's first team to ever win the State District tournament. (There was no class system in 1977, so to win the District, you had to beat the large schools in Elgin and Dundee.) In just two years, Fred had transformed us from players who lost to boys our own age in neighboring towns into players who could consistently beat their older brothers.

Let me share one more example of Fred's coaching. In 1978, I overheard a conversation where my dad told Fred about a player a year behind my class: "Fred, I think you may be wasting your time trying to turn that young man into a pitcher. He has little technique and poor arm strength." Fred didn't argue. He just said, "I know, but I'd like to try." Fred worked with that young man for two years – and once again, he was successful. That young man became a starting varsity pitcher as a junior and, by his senior year, the team's ace. Needless to say, Fred had significantly improved both his technique and arm strength. Fred knew exactly what he was doing.

Fred was also my high school guidance counselor and our National Honor Society sponsor. As my guidance counselor, he knew I was a National Merit Scholar and had earned an academic scholarship to Northwestern University, but that I lacked the remaining funds to attend. In the late spring of 1979, he called me into his office for a conversation that would have a lasting impact on my life. Fred told me that he had decided to start a small painting company and invited me to be his junior partner. I readily agreed and walked away thinking, "Wow! What an amazing coincidence. Now I can make and save the rest of the money I need to go to Northwestern."

That's exactly what R & R Painting turned out to be for me. The good people of Hampshire and Elgin provided ample work for the next five summers. Fred was very involved for the first six weeks, teaching me everything – bidding, customer interaction, and all aspects of the trade. I still don't know if that was just the teacher in him, or if he was on a mission to teach his 17-year-old junior partner

how to run a business as quickly as possible. Fred worked only a little during the second half of that summer at painting – he had a better-paying job at school. The next summer, he worked even less, enjoying some time off like most teachers – playing golf and fishing with his buddies. (Continued below)



Ronald J. Ellett - July 09, 2025 at 03:39 PM

CH

“ Carolyn H. purchased the Heavenly Grace Spray for the family of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.



Carolyn H. - July 08, 2025 at 06:19 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.



July 07, 2025 at 09:42 AM

AR

“ 3 files added to the album Miller Park Rackow Reunion 2017;



Anne Rackow - July 03, 2025 at 05:43 PM

BK

“ To say Fred Rackow affected, guided, influenced, and helped 1000s of people would be understating his contributions and impact on those who were privileged to be his student, his player, his colleague, or a member of the organizations that Fred led and served, a friend, or a fishing buddy.

Fred was a “transplant” to Hampshire from Argo, IL via NIU and the many places he lived with other former “bachelor teachers” through the years. But make no mistake, Fred was a Hampshire citizen and Whippur, through and through, to all those who knew him.

Fred and I had 50+ years of deep friendship, too many fishing trips to number, laughs, and everything else imaginable that could happen in 50+ years. And other than a few “disagreements” on our preferred political candidates, never a cross word between us was spoken, a rare phenomenon.

Fred was my parents’ “adopted” son who shared many a meal with our family and took care of the Village Toggery (on more than a few occasions) when the Kudlickis took a vacation. He “remarried” my parents on their 25th wedding anniversary and was close at hand to assist when their time on earth ended.

I am sure Fred is reunited with family members in heaven and maybe drowning a few worms. Set the hook, my friend, as only you could do.

Freddy, I will never forget you nor our friendship.

God’s speed. And I know I will see you again someday.

Bob Kudlicki

Bob Kudlicki - July 01, 2025 at 12:01 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.

June 27, 2025 at 08:30 AM



“ Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.



June 27, 2025 at 08:30 AM

RS

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss, Linda.
Ruth Solberg*

RUTH SOLBERG - June 25, 2025 at 10:33 PM

DS

“ *Sorry for you loss. I taught in Hampshire during the early 80's, my first job. Fred and I were friends and colleagues. Not only could he tell a good story, he created them. We reunited two years ago in Hampshire for a Wrestling Reunion. Still the good guy I remembered. We can only hope that our legacy of helping people will be as strong as his. Rest in Peace Fred. Dennis Smalley*

Dennis Smalley - June 25, 2025 at 09:12 PM



“ *Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of
Fredrick "Fred" W. Rackow.*



June 25, 2025 at 07:07 PM

TH

“ *A fine person who knew the meaning of service. Rest easy fred.*

Tom Hay - June 24, 2025 at 03:04 PM

TH

“ *Kate,
So sorry for your loss...many blessings and prayers.
Tina Hock*

Tina Hock - June 24, 2025 at 11:18 AM

TM

“ *Kate, I'm so sorry for your loss. My deepest condolences to
you and your Family.*



Trish McDaniels - June 24, 2025 at 06:48 AM

JE

“ Fred had a tremendous impact on my life and possibly the reason I am where I am today. When Fred found out I had not turned in my application to NIU, he personally drove it there, hand delivered it, and somehow got them to accept it. If he hadn't, who knows if I would've ever gone, gotten an education, found a good job, got out of poverty, and been able to provide my own kids with everything they needed. That was just one impact Fred had on my life - there were many, many more.

Jeff - June 23, 2025 at 11:53 PM

MA

I have to thank Mr. Rackow for looking out for my future education. He seemed to keep a watchful eye on my grades to make sure I was set up for success. He pulled me out of class a few times to give me advice even when I didn't seek it. He looked out for my best interest and made sure I went on to college after graduation (even though I didn't know how I was going to make that happen). I followed his advice and graduated from NIU which has helped me so much through the course of my life. He played a very purposeful role in my life.

Marcy - June 24, 2025 at 12:32 AM

TK

Fred was a good man, we will miss him dearly. My sincere condolences!!
Tony k

Tony Kensik - June 24, 2025 at 08:46 AM

TF

Fred was a remarkable man...coach, mentor, parent and friend. He coached and mentored our sons and provided guidance to our daughters. He served his students, family and community selflessly for decades and was a guiding light to many. His interest in our community knew no bounds, and his service will be greatly missed. May he now reap the reward he so richly deserves. Our sincere condolences to his family.

The Evinger Family - June 24, 2025 at 09:04 AM

B(

Rest is peace Mr. Rackow. You had such a positive impact on my younger years. I will be eternally grateful. Keeping the family in my prayers.

Beth Burkett (Sieloff) - June 24, 2025 at 10:36 AM

SU

I was heavily influenced by Mr. Rackow, he's the reason I got through school. His positive influence has never been forgotten, truly a selfless man. Rest in peace Sir..

Sue - June 24, 2025 at 06:55 PM

SC

“ This space isn't big enough for all of the Fred and Purple Haze memories that have been going through our mind! A couple favorites are when he loaned Mandi his cleats for a tournament when she forgot hers! And of course there will always be the “Steve wrecked my only new car story”!! The memories are fun and treasured, but our hearts are aching for you all! He was very proud of his girls and loved you so much. We would love to be able to share the celebration of life with you. But know we will be thinking of you and Fred fondly that day and many other days too. Hugs to you all.

Steve & Anne Conro - June 23, 2025 at 06:33 PM

JS

“ Fred a dedicated man to all students. Janine my wife now deceased cared deeply about Fred's service to the students of Hampshire. Fred will be truly missed

jonathan steffen - June 23, 2025 at 06:31 PM

T(

“ Fred was a wonderful person! He was a wonderful family friend, the life of the party, and one of the most kind, caring and giving people I know! One of my favorite memories was him driving Lola(his prized car) at our wedding! Thanks for being such an integral part of the Hampshire community!

Taylor Loftus (Ellett) - June 23, 2025 at 05:36 PM

KC

“ Mr. Rackow had a lasting impact on my life - personally and professionally. It was always a pleasure to see him. I happened to see him a couple of summers ago and he still recognized me right off after many, many years. He was definitely one in a million.

Kendra Carter - June 23, 2025 at 03:25 PM

RY

“ Fred was a true inspiration to me personally! He demonstrated an incredible service to our community and showed what real leadership in that arena looks like. I wish the family comfort and love during this difficult time.

Ryan - June 23, 2025 at 01:13 PM

SC

“ As many know Fred is the reason I am where I am today! He was not only a guidance counselor but a father figure and friend! He knew me so well and exactly how to direct me and guide me. I am deeply saddened to lose him as still a confidant within the community. Fred will be sorely missed by many and especially myself and family!

Susanne Cass - June 23, 2025 at 01:06 PM

TH

“ I graduated in '81. Mr. Rackow was my inspiration to finish school. He helped me get my first job. I remember his exact words when he told me I got the job, unfortunately I shouldn't post them here. I'm sure anyone who knew him would know what those words were. I would see him at the Rose Garden from time to time and he always took the time to stop by and talk. I will always remember him and his advice growing up.

Thomas Hicks - June 23, 2025 at 08:30 AM

DJ

“ Fred came to Hampshire High as a Guidance Counselor when I was a student. He also helped coach our Baseball team. Later, he was there for my kids. R.I.P.

Darrel Johnson - June 22, 2025 at 04:04 PM

MA

“ Fred was a great storyteller! I've heard some of them many times, and yet, each time they got better and funnier! He was a long time friend and educator. He will be missed!

Milt Awe - June 21, 2025 at 12:08 PM

DI

Linda and family, I'm so sorry for the loss, Fred was such a great person. I used to give him a hard time after graduating because when I went to him for guidance in my career, he told me that computers were not the way to go, and that is what my first job was! He will be missed by so many people whose lives he touched!

Diane - June 26, 2025 at 03:13 PM

JR

Fred and I grew up together. We attended the same schools from grammar school through high school. Fred and I sat next to one another through many of those years, Rackow and Rehr. We even played on the same Little League team, the Indians. In high school, Fred was our catcher on the varsity team. I was a pitcher. Fred was the Best Man at our wedding. Linda, Fred, Kay and I would meet halfway and have dinner together in Elburn. The last ten years or so, a few of the high school guys would have breakfast together. Fred would drive 65 miles to meet with us. He missed a few times of our breakfast taking his brother-in-law to the doctor. Typical of Fred, always taking time out to help family and friends.

Fred had many stories that he would tell us. In the early years it was about his Chrysler product that had broken down again. He thanked his brother Dick for keeping it on the road for a few more miles. Later years it was about the family. Some were about the attending the Bear games with Linda and their daughters. We discussed politics occasionally, but I better have all the correct information. If I was wrong, he was quick to point out my error, especially discussing President Trump. He was proud of his family and coaching his many baseball teams in high school. One story he told was about one of his high school kids that could throw very hard but was a little on the wild side. Many of his team members were reluctant to bat against the young man. Fred explained the situation to the wild pitcher and asked him to throw the ball a little "easier". The first batter hit one of the "easier" ones out of the park in batting practice. The pitcher not accepting a homer being hit by one of his own players, even in batting practice, hit the batter with the next pitch in the back. Fred ran out to check on his player and seeing that he was okay, pulled the pitcher on the side and said "you didn't have to hit him with one of your fastest F-----g pitches. Fred used that colorful word a lot. It could be about one of the teachers we had in high school, an opposing /batter when I was pitching and about the President, especially Trump. He would put a smile on all our faces. We are going to miss you Fred and all those stories and the your colorful language. I'm smiling now, Fred, thinking about all those good times.

Jerry Rehr - July 06, 2025 at 12:12 PM