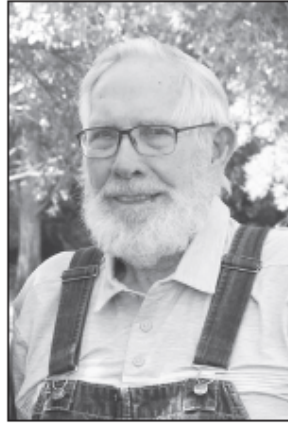


Francis Henry "Frank" Tanner
1932 - 2026



Dr. Francis Henry "Frank" Tanner, Ed.D., died peacefully at home on January 7, 2026, with his children and grandchildren holding his hand. A product of the 1930s American West, Frank was born on his uncle's farm in South Dakota's Black Hills in 1932 and lived on a homestead in what is now Wind Cave National Park before moving to a "dry land farm" outside Newcastle. Frank remained a fiercely proud Wyomingite for the next 89 years.

Frank cherished memories of the summers he spent living and working-but mostly working-on the Limestone Plateau west of Custer, South Dakota. Beginning around age 9, each summer through high school, Frank, his father, and brothers relocated to a one-room cabin on the Limestone to cut pitch pine posts using hand-drawn cross saws, selling each post for a tidy profit of 35 cents. When they weren't working, Frank and his brothers fished and explored the Limestone, resulting in stories Frank cherished and retold until the end. Although he would later travel the world, Frank often reminisced that the one place he truly loved was the Black Hills of South Dakota.

After graduating from Newcastle High School in 1951, Frank enlisted in the Navy, serving as a Seabee in Newfoundland, Bermuda, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. When his enlistment ended in 1955, Frank returned to Newcastle, where he met Sarah Jean "Jeanie." Bonded by their common love of Elvis and dancing, Frank and Jeanie married in 1957 remaining dance partners until Jeanie's death in 2019. In 1958, the couple moved to Spearfish, South Dakota, where they ran a small motel while Frank attended Black Hills State College. In 1961, they moved to Buffalo, where Frank taught junior high school and worked on a master's degree at the University of Wyoming. During their time in Buffalo, Frank and Jeanie were blessed with two children, Diana and Michael. In 1968, the family moved to Laramie, where Frank obtained a doctoral degree from UW and their third child, Mark, was born.

In 1972, after writing a successful grant to create and fund his job, Frank began working for the University of Wyoming as its Coordinator of Aging, an avocation that allowed Frank to travel throughout Wyoming developing programs to enrich the lives of seniors including a "senior summer camp" and Elderhostel programs which brought seniors from across the state together for a week of enrichment activities and fun. In 1982, the family moved to Riverton, where Frank worked for the Wyoming Commission on Aging until 1987. Frank went on to work as a stockbroker and independent businessman until he retired. Actually, Frank never really retired. Well into his 90s, Frank could be found in his signature bib overalls, standing on an unsteady ladder, or crawling on or under a house fixing things. We should all be so driven, lucky, or both.

Despite his kind outward appearance, Frank was a fierce competitor, playing basketball and football in high school and cribbage and bridge for hours in his later years. For years, Frank officiated Wyoming high school soccer, stopping only when he was unable to keep up with the play. Frank coached many successful youth baseball and soccer teams, where it being the late '70s or early '80s, he managed his frustration with the officials, players, and parents by chain-smoking cigarettes on the sidelines.

After quasi-retiring, Frank and Jeanie traveled the country, rode their 4-wheelers, kept up their gardens, annually produced their Christmas bear display, and spent time with one another, their grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Frank also served on the Board of Directors and as President of the Riverton Senior Center, a source of pride and frustration.

As early as his second-grade year-end "memory book," friends described Frank as thoughtful, kind, and gentle-words consistent with Frank's compassion for people and how he chose to live his life. Frank will be missed by those lucky enough to truly know him.

Frank is survived by his daughter Diana Cooper and her daughters, Jerin Hinkle (Steven) and Kaylan Steele (Bryan), and their children Sophia, Michael, and Zoey; and his son Mark Tanner (Sarah) and their children Emma and Caroline. Frank was preceded in death by his wife Jeanie, son Michael, brothers Robert and Rolland, infant brothers George and Glen, and his parents Earl and Minnie Tanner.

A private family service will be held at the Historic Cold Springs Cemetery east of Pringle, South Dakota, in Frank's beloved Black Hills.