

Herb Bonsack Jr.



Former Mayor Herb Bonsack Remembered for Community Service

Well-known Wood River resident and former mayor Herb Bonsack Jr. died last Thursday at age 77. Bonsack gave much time and effort in service to the community. He was involved in fund raising for Western Hall County Samaritan Center, Wood River Country Club, Wood River Volunteer Fire Department and the First United Methodist Church.

He also helped establish Wood River Rural Junior Senior High School, and was a past member of the Wood River Physician Procurement Committee, which sought out doctors to relocate and serve the community.

Over the years, Bonsack served on various local, area and state boards, including Hall County District 24 School Board and Board Directors for the Wood River Housing Development. He also served on the Board of Directors for the Nebraska Water Resources and the State Board of Nebraska Crop improvement.

For 18 years, he was a First United Methodist Church Sunday School teacher. He was a scoutmaster for two years; and, at Christmas time Santa Claus to Wood River's children for over 50 years.

Bonsack's most recent extended community service was with the Wood River City Council. On February 18, 1992, Mayor Ervin appointed him to fill a council vacancy, and he subsequently won election in 1994 and 1998.

On December 8, 1998, Bonsack was elected Council President, on May 18, 1999 he began presiding as acting mayor at council meetings when Mazour was unable to attend due to illness. He became mayor on December 21, 1999 and served in that capacity until last December.

A complete obituary

Herb Bonsack Jr.

Herb C. Bonsack, 77, of Wood River died Thursday August 9, 2001, at his home.

Services were held Monday, August 15 at the First United Methodist Church in Wood River.

The Rev. Rose Bartleson officiated. Burial was in Westlawn Memorial Park Cemetery, in Grand Island.

Memorials are suggested to Wood River Volunteer Department or to Wood River Foundation.

Mr. Bonsack was born September 7, 1925 at Shelton to Herbert and Lottie (Wiggins) Bonsack Sr. He moved to Wood River at the age of 8 and graduated from Wood River High School. After graduation, he went to work for Union Pacific Railroad.

He married Elsie Fairbanks on February 7, 1942, in Smith Center, Kan. The couple lived in various communities along the railroad. After the war ended, he left the railroad after seven years and moved north of Wood River and began a farming operation. He farmed until 1968, when he moved with his family to Wood River. He began working for Pioneer Seeds. He worked for Pioneer Seeds until 1989 when he retired as the district sales manager in Central Nebraska.

Prior to and during his retirement years, he helped establish funds for various community organizations including the Wood River Country Club, Western Hall County Good Samaritan Center, First United Methodist Church, Wood River Volunteer Fire Department and helped relocate doctors to serve the Wood River area. He served on the Wood River City Council and served as acting mayor for several years. He was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Wood River, United Methodist Men, and Lions Club and taught Sunday school. He enjoyed playing Santa Claus for more than 50 years, spending time with his grandchildren, fishing and woodworking.

Survivors include his wife; a daughter and son-in-law, Debra and Gaul Brummond of Grand Island; four grandchildren; and a brother, Elmer, of Gibbon.

He is preceded in death by a daughter, Lyanne Lange.