

Russell John Ziegler

February 24, 1932 - March 9, 2025

Russell John Ziegler passed away peacefully on March 9, 2025 in Raleigh, NC, shortly after his 93rd birthday, which he celebrated with four generations of the family he adored.

Born in Utica, Michigan to John Ziegler and Kathleen Lamb Ziegler, Russ was the 4th of 5 brothers—Edwin, Raymond, Donald, and Harry—all of whom have predeceased him.

When Russ was just 9, his father passed away, leaving his mother to raise five active boys on her own. The Ziegler brothers quickly learned to pitch-in with paper routes and all the odd jobs they could manage, creating a bond of family loyalty and a commitment to hard work that would define Russ for the next eight decades. Despite what many would consider extreme hardship, the Ziegler childhood home was filled with friends and laughter. Russ and his brothers had a deep love for their mother and for the faith she instilled in them.

Russ graduated as class president from St. Leo High School in Detroit and received a BS from the University of Detroit School of Commerce and Finance. It was at St. Leo

where he first met

Eleanor Mitchell, a transfer student who put the nuns through their paces.

In 1954, Russ married Eleanor at St. Mary of Redford Catholic Church, embarking on a 70-year

adventure together. They had four children in six years and their long marriage was filled with

faith, commitment and mutual respect. Though family life revolved around the demands and

activities of 4 active children, Russ was home from work every day at 5:15 for family dinner at

5:30. Russ wanted to share his love of sports with his children and there were many trips to see

the Detroit Tigers, Lions and Red Wings play games, as well as boating adventures, fishing trips

(which rarely resulted in fish), snowmobile excursions and family camping in a pop-up trailer.

Though Russ loved his home state of Michigan, he wanted to show his children the world, and

the Ziegler family vacation road trips were legendary, with Russ behind the wheel for thousands

of miles, with strict rules around limited bathroom breaks. He delighted in his children's

accomplishments and never missed an opportunity to boast about his grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Russ began his professional journey with Michigan Bell Telephone Company in 1956, where he

found a "charmed experience" that kept him engaged for 39 years across various roles,

eventually finishing his career with AT&T, where he provided business support to AT&T's legal

team during the company's famous antitrust case and the eventual break-up of the Bell system.

In a feat that mystified, but didn't surprise, his children and grandchildren, he proudly reported

missing only three days of work in nearly four decades.

The AT&T years took Russ and Eleanor to Orlando, Florida, and later to Morristown, New

Jersey, but Florida's sunshine called them back for retirement. They seized their golden years

with characteristic enthusiasm, traveling to 25 countries and exploring every inch of the United

States. They ventured to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, China and deep into rural

Mexico. No matter how far he roamed, though, Russ never shed his Michigan driving habits.

When asked by one of his children to slow down on the highway, he would innocently explain

that he was "just keeping up with traffic."

Russ was the family's fix-it man extraordinaire. No air filter went unchanged, no leaky faucet

continued dripping, and no sticky door remained jammed once Russ had been alerted to the


situation. Even well into his 80s, he insisted on climbing ladders and crawling under sinks.

In a world of drama, Russ was steadfastly stoic. After completing a morning round of

chemotherapy several years ago, he spent the afternoon weeding his garden, refusing to let

illness dictate his schedule.

He is survived by his wife Eleanor, their 4 children and spouses, Laura (Bob),

David (Carol),
Diane (Patrick) and Robert (Helen), 15 grandchildren and great-grandchildren,
all of whom he
taught to play pinochle.  At his family's urging, Russ completed work on
his personal
autobiography last year. He ended his own story with this quote by Helen
Lowrie Marshall

Afterglow:

'I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one.
I'd like to leave an afterglow of smiles when life is done.
I'd like to leave an echo whispering softly down the ways.
Of happy times and laughing times and bright sunny days.
I'd like the tears of those who grieve to dry before the sun.
Of happy memories that I leave when life is done."

In lieu of flowers, the family is asking for charitable donation to Food Bank of
Central and Eastern North Carolina
https://secure.foodbankcenc.org/site/Donation2?df_id=10523&mfc_pref=T&10523.donation=form1&chosen=60&s_src=footer&s_subsrc=website

Tribute Wall

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“ My name is Andrea Hill and I was Russell and Eleanor’s caregiver for a short time, but in that time that I spent with both of them, it was a pleasure the way Russell would look at Eleanor, the kindness, the patience, and the love that he had for his wife is a blessing Russell was unproblematic and kind Russell’s quote by Helen Lowrie Marshall is truly what you have left Russell. To his daughters the love and long suffering as the Bible speaks of, and the caring in which your father showed and gave to your mother take that with you in your marriages and settle for nothing less to his sons the love that your father , exemplified give that to your wives and nothing less. To the grand children remember remember. I was so blessed to have shared the time that I did with your family. God bless you all.



Andrea Hill - March 12, 2025 at 02:48 PM