

# Robert J. Shimanek

June 30, 1932 – January 22, 2025

**Robert (Bob) J. Shimanek**, 92, formerly of Kewaunee, passed away January 22, 2025. Some people tiptoe through life, sticking to the well-worn path. Bob, on the other hand, treated life like an open runway—full throttle, no hesitation, and always ready for takeoff. He was an explorer of ideas, a collector of experiences, and a firm believer that if something was worth doing, it was worth doing with enthusiasm (and maybe a little mischief). Whether it was fixing airplanes, mastering new skills, or launching into yet another adventure, Bob made sure life was never boring.



Bob was an aviation whiz, a master mechanic, a private pilot, an entrepreneur, a ventriloquist (yes, really), a magician, a Toastmaster, and a world-class PB&J connoisseur. If something intrigued him, he didn't just dip his toes in—he dove in headfirst, usually dragging his equally adventurous (and possibly exasperated) wife along for the ride.

Born with a natural curiosity (and probably a wrench in his tiny fist), Bob's mechanical skills developed early, fixing farm equipment under the watchful eye of his grandfather and uncle. When he saw the draft for the Korean War looming in the early 1950s, he made a proactive move and enlisted in the United States Air Force, setting the stage for a lifelong love affair with aviation. His knack for fixing planes soon became legendary, and when he wasn't working on them, he was flying in them.

But let's talk about Joanne. The love of his life. His best friend. His favorite person, just as he was hers. The woman who "raised him from a pup" (her words, not ours). They met as kids, started dating in high school, and spent over seven decades together. Joanne probably thought she was signing up for a normal marriage—she got a front-row seat to a whirlwind of projects, travel, and whatever new hobby Bob decided to master that week. Through it all, they laughed, competed fiercely at card games, and occasionally ran away in their RV for another adventure.

After retiring from the Air Force, Bob refused to sit still. He helped launch a private charter service, ran an aviation maintenance operation, trained countless mechanics, and was a pioneer in bringing professional aviation education to his community. His contributions earned him the FAA's prestigious Charles Taylor "Master Mechanic" Award, though he was equally proud of convincing a restaurant to serve him PB&J with grape Kool-Aid just to see if they'd do it.

But while Bob had a soft spot for childhood nostalgia, his true culinary love was Joanne's family Czech feast: a hearty spread of pork roast, sauerkraut, and dumplings with caraway, all drenched in rich pork gravy, alongside warm yeast rolls and a poppy seed cake so good it could make a grown man weep. That Czech dinner? That was the real deal.

Bob also had a flair for the unexpected. One day, he announced they were packing up the RV and heading to a ventriloquist convention because—why not? Before long, he and Joanne weren't just attendees; they were full-fledged performers, complete with custom figures, matching outfits, and more than a few hilarious memories.

A man of many talents, Bob also dabbled in woodworking, bowling, square dancing, and playing parlor games designed to baffle and entertain his grandkids. His quick wit and bottomless supply of dad jokes made every gathering an event. He could MacGyver anything back to life and somehow make polka music feel like a grand entrance theme.

Bob's presence was larger than life, and while his departure leaves a hole in the universe, it's safe to say he's already busy fixing up the pearly gates and making sure Heaven's snack menu includes a decent PB&J.

He is survived by Joanne, their wonderful and talented five children, a whole gaggle of grandkids and great-grandkids, and more friends than you can shake a ventriloquist figure at. His legacy lives on in every airplane he ever touched, every student he ever mentored, and every person lucky enough to hear one of his stories.

The Shimanek family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the caregivers and medical personnel who have supported Bob over the years. Two years ago, we feared we might lose him, but, like the Energizer Bunny, Bob kept going because of the fine care he received. We are forever grateful for your dedication and care.

A celebration of Bob's life and service will be held beginning at 9:00 AM CT, on Saturday, June 28, 2025, at the Holy Rosary Catholic Church, 521 Juneau Street, Kewaunee, WI 54216 with a dessert and coffee/tea reception to follow.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Robert Shimanek's honor can be made to St. Paul's Endowment Fund, 202 West Case Street, Negaunee, MI 49866. Kinnard Funeral & Cremation Services is assisting the family. Online condolences can be shared at [KinnardFCS.com](http://KinnardFCS.com)

