

Russell Jerome Petersen, 79, of Burwell, Nebraska died February 16, 2013 at the Good Samaritan Hospital in Kearney, Nebraska.

Funeral services will be 10:30 a.m. on Thursday, February 21, 2013 at the First Congregational United Church of Christ in Burwell, Nebraska. Burial will be in Cottonwood Cemetery in Burwell. Pastor Alan Petersen will officiate. Visitation will be from 5 – 8 p.m. Wednesday at Hitchcock Funeral Home in Burwell.

Russell was born October 27, 1933 in Loup County, Nebraska, to Harold and Vera (Williams) Petersen. He attended Taylor High School and graduated in 1951. October 16, 1952 he volunteered for the draft in the U.S. Army where he served in Korea as a Field Wireman. Russell was honorably discharged August 17, 1954. He was united in marriage to Reita Jean Lundy on October 21, 1954. They had two children, Doyle J. Petersen and LeAnn Reneè Petersen Huhman.

Russell and Reita lived on the Petersen “home place” where they ranched for their career in eastern Loup County in the Pleasant View community. Russell was active in the life of the community, serving on the local school board at the time when Loup County consolidated. He was a Charter member of the Loup County Farm Bureau in which he was the President for several years. Russell and his brother, Dallas formed the little league Basketball Team—The Bobcats! He was particularly dedicated to Burwell Legion Post 298, and it’s Color Guard, having served as Commander of both. He also served as Adjutant of the Legion Post. He was a member of the VFW Post 2155. Because of his patriotism for his country it was an honor for him to carry it on through the Burwell Color Guard. He served as Commander of the Color Guard since 1964. After his illness, his dear friend, Harry Gaukel took his place. Since 1992 The Avenue of Flags has been a great project for Russell and Reita. He also taught many Boy Scouts to march and they marched behind the Color Guard at all the parades during the Burwell Rodeo. The Burwell Color Guard under the command of Russell marched in countless parades and honored all veterans with military rites in the surrounding area.

After retiring, he worked at different Ranch jobs for several years. Another great time of his life was when his son, 4 grandkids and 2 other boys, were his hay crew at one of the ranch jobs. There were lots of stories and fun times!

Someone once described Russell as the “little man with the big voice.” Whether it was football games, parades, or other functions, you could always hear Russell above the crowd. Russell loved kids and was good with them. He served as a surrogate dad for many in the community at different times in their lives. He gave of his time and attention generously and was always there to lend a helping hand.

Survivors include: his wife Reita Petersen of Burwell, Nebraska; two children and their spouses, Doyle and Nanette Petersen of Burwell, Nebraska and LeAnn and Doug Huhman of Taylor, Nebraska; six grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren: Jossi & Matt Jeffres and their 5 children, Jimmy & Lisa and their 4 girls, Precilla & Jeff Stout and their 4 children and Dulcie & John Chaffin and 4 children all of Burwell. Tanya & Casey (Huhman) Wheeler and 2 children of California and Kip Huhman from Oregon. He is also survived by his best friend his dog, Lacy Jane. Survivors also include his two brothers and their spouses, H. David and Ruth Ann Petersen of Burwell, Nebraska and J. Stanley and Amy Petersen of Central City, Nebraska, plus eleven nieces and nephews. Several cousins and many extended family members and a host of friends and neighbors.

Russell was preceded in death by his parents, Harold and Vera Petersen, one brother and his wife, Dallas and Madelon Petersen and niece, Sharon Field.

In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to the Burwell Color Guard Avenue of Flags building fund.