

Dr. Frank Turk

September 22, 1929 – March 12, 2025

Former South Dakota School for the Deaf Superintendent, one of CSD leaders, amd longtime SDAD member, Frank R. Turk, 95, his wife, Marlene, 89, and their beloved miniature schnauzer, Jenny, tragically passed away on March 12, 2025, at their home in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, due to carbon monoxide poisoning.

Celebration of Life held on March 20, 2025 at Peace Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD

The Celebration of Life for Frank and Marlene Turk held on May 9, 2025 at Gallaudet University, Elstad Auditorium.



Born on September 22, 1929, in Hibbing, Minnesota, Frank became deaf at the age of four due to spinal meningitis. He attended the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (formerly of Minnesota School for the Deaf) in Faribault, graduating in 1947. He attended Gallaudet University, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1952; a Master's degree from the University of Maryland in 1969; and an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Student Development from American University in 1983.

Frank's professional journey began at Gallaudet University, where he played a pivotal role in shaping the educational experiences of Deaf students. He served at Gallaudet from 1952 to 1989 and later returned from 2008 to 2009. Over the years, he held various leadership positions. One of his lasting contributions was developing the paraprofessional programs in Student Affairs, which continue to thrive today. Through his leadership at Gallaudet, N.C. DSDHH, CSD, and other organizations, Frank empowered people of all ages. Throughout his career, he remained a passionate advocate for Deaf youth, leaving a lasting impact on countless lives.

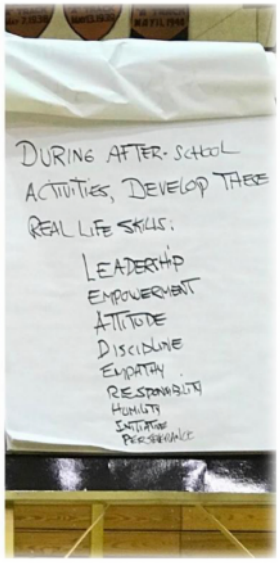


Beyond his professional contributions, Frank was involved in volunteer work, particularly in developing future Deaf leaders. His early commitment to nurturing youth led him to become the National Director of Junior NAD (1966–1980). In 1968, Frank, supported by Gary Olsen, founded the NAD Youth Leadership Camp (YLC) -

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a pioneering four-week summer program that has since shaped over 3,000 Deaf youth into strong, confident leaders and advocates – many citing Frank as their greatest mentor. Under Frank's leadership, YLC grew into a legacy-building program that inspired self-identity, leadership skills, and community involvement among Deaf high school students. The first YLC session took place in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, in 1969, then, Frank and Don Padden secured a permanent home for YLC in 1970 at Swan Lake Lodge in Minnesota. YLC continues to thrive today after 55 years.





Frank was a devoted father, husband, and mentor. He was first married to Bernice (Barlow) Turk, with whom he had three children: Frank (Rosa) W. Turk, Jr., Marianne (Erik) Doremus, and Michael (Brenda) Turk. He had seven grandchildren: Gabriella Ortiz Turk, Frank Turk, Jr., Benjamin Turk, Ryan and Toby Doremus, Michele and Tim Turk. He later married Marilyn (Zahrbock) Grenell, his sweetheart from Minnesota School for the Deaf. In his later years he wed Marlene (Hestness) Wagner. Each of his spouses played a meaningful role in his life, sharing in his deep commitment to the Deaf community.

He became a father figure to thousands of young Deaf leaders, many of whom credit him with shaping their personal and professional journeys. Until his passing, he served as a Board Member of the YLC Alumni Foundation. His dedication helped ensure that future generations of Deaf individuals had the opportunities and support to thrive.

The family will share details of a forthcoming celebration of Frank's life at a later date, providing an opportunity for friends, colleagues, and loved ones to come together and honor his legacy.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the National Association of the Deaf and Youth Leadership Camp Foundation.

Kober Funeral Home of Vermillion, SD, has been entrusted with the services. Condolences may be posted online to www.koberfuneralhome.com.

