John Ronald Brake, emeritus professor of Applied Economics and Management, passed away on August 6, 2019 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He was 87 years old.

John was born January 22, 1932 in Stanton, Michigan, the son of D. Hale Brake and Marjorie Valentine Brake. While growing up in Stanton, John worked on the family farm, developing an interest in the business of farming, which carried into his later professional career. An avid sports enthusiast, he was stricken with polio at the age of fourteen and spent nearly a year recovering at a Lansing, Michigan hospital. Although he regained the ability to walk without assistance, he would never run again and began following sports from the sidelines as Sports Reporter for the local paper, developing his writing skills. He graduated Valedictorian from Stanton High School in 1951.

John attended Michigan State University where he received his B.S. degree in agricultural education and his M.S. degree in agricultural economics. He went on to receive his Ph.D. in agricultural economics from North Carolina State University in 1959. He then accepted a position as an assistant professor in agricultural
economics at Michigan State University in 1959. He left Michigan State University as a full professor in 1981, when he accepted the William I. Myers Professorship in Agricultural Finance at Cornell University, one of the first endowed professorships in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at Cornell University and the first focused on agricultural finance in the country. He retired from Cornell University in 1996.

One of the constants in John’s professional career was his abiding interest in agriculture and his concerns for the wellbeing of farmers and farm families. He not only was a farmer himself, managing the family farm in Michigan for many years until 1980, but John taught farm management and agricultural finance, both at Michigan State University and Cornell University. His classes were well received by students and he trained many students who are now working in the finance industry around the world. His years of service spanned the full spectrum of teaching, research, and extension/public service.

John was an internationally recognized expert in agricultural finance. He co-authored the chapter on Agricultural Finance and Capital Markets in the multiple volume work, *A Survey of Agricultural Economics Literature*, which was published in 1977 under the oversight of the American Agricultural Economics Association. When the United States Department of Agriculture, in a budget cutting process, decided to cease their publication of the scholarly journal, *Agricultural Finance Review*, John brought the journal to Cornell University in 1983 and served as the editor or co-editor until his retirement. His national reputation led to nomination for president of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association and service on the Foundation Board of that organization.

John exhibited tremendous leadership during the U.S. farm financial crisis in the 1980’s, serving on various national commissions and task forces on farm financial stress. He established the FarmNet Program at Cornell to assist financial and mentally struggling farmers in New York. That program is still actively assisting farmers in the year 2019. He also established the Farming Alternatives Program to assist farmers who wanted to make a transition out of
farming.

Over the course of his career he published numerous journal articles, papers and books. Additionally, he served as an advisor and consultant to the CEO of Farm Credit Administration and various entities of the Farm Credit System and gave dozens of speeches and numerous workshops for family farmers. He took sabbaticals to work with the Brookings Institute in Washington, DC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the University of Guelph, and Purdue University. His work took him to Argentina, South America, South Korea and the Philippines.

John married his high school sweetheart, Betty Jane Neitzel in 1952, who predeceased John earlier in 2019. During their 66 years together, they raised four daughters, instilling their own values for integrity, hard work, compassion, and pursuing higher education.

Written by Loren W. Tauer (chair), Wayne A. Knoblauch, and Eddy L. LaDue