



Ralph L. Ritzen

February 22, 1923 - May 18, 2018

Ralph L. Ritzen, 95, of Kearney, died Friday, May 18, 2018 at his home. A memorial service will be 1:00 p.m. Thursday, May 24, 2018 at the First Lutheran Church in Kearney with Revs. Rick and Michelle Carlson officiating. Inurnment will follow at the church columbarium.

Memorials are suggested to the First Lutheran Church, Midland University or AseraCare Hospice. Condolences may be shared online at www.osrfh.com. O'Brien Straatmann Redinger Funeral Home is in charge of arrangements.

Ralph Luther Ritzen was born on February 22, 1923, near Falls City, Nebraska, to the Rev. and Mrs. Martin Ritzen. Ralph's childhood was spent in Victoria, Texas. He spent his high school years in Lincoln, Nebraska, and then moved to Fremont, Nebraska, for college.

Ralph met Anna Marie (Ree) Hoesly at Midland College and they were married in 1944. While still attending seminary, he supplied St. Peter's Church in Pilger and St. Petri's Lutheran Church near Howells. The two congregations merged and built a new church in Pilger. From 1949 to 1953 he served St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Stanton along with Pilger. In 1953, he became Director of Admissions at Midland College where he served until 1979 when he was called to First Lutheran Church in Kearney, Nebraska, as an Associate Pastor. He served as a Pastoral Advisor to the Midwest Synod Luther League

and was Camp Director for WANATUA Camp at Niobrara for 17 years. Ralph received a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and the Doctor of Divinity Degree from Midland College in 1994.

He was Model A and Spiritual Growth Workshop Leader for pastors and spouses and Chaplain to THEOS, an organization for widows and widowers, for 20 years in Kearney, Nebraska.

Ralph retired in 1985. He continued to supply pulpits, lead workshops, and serve as a Synod Pastor Evangelist.

Survivors include his wife of 73 years, Ree; daughter and son-in-law, Ann & DJ Knipping of Kearney; son and daughter-in-law, Bob & Patti Ritzen of Longmont, Colorado; along with four grandchildren, Michael Walker, Erik Ritzen, Ethan Ritzen and Molly Ritzen; sister, Anita Brand; brother and sister-in-law, Norman and LaVonne Ritzen; brother-in-law, Richard Hansen, and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brother and sister-in-law, Leander and Jean Ritzen; sister, Ruth Ellen Hansen; brother-in-law Myron Brand; brother- and sister-in-law, Elmer and Pearl Hoesly; granddaughter, Emily Ritzen; and nephew and niece, Rick and Rebecca Hansen.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY **24**. 1:00 PM (CT)

First Lutheran Church
3315 Ave G
Kearney, NE 68847

Tribute Wall



“ *Ralph L. Ritzen*

January 28, 2023 at 08:01 AM



“ *Dear Ree, I am sorry this note is to late. I just read Pastor's obituary yesterday. I am so thankful that God sent Pastor and Ree Ritzen to Pilger. He was very instrumental in my life and for years later. I always have good memories of Pastor, Uncle Hank and Orville Heller and the great Luther league we had in my teens. I always think of you and Pastor fondly and know God is saying "well done my good and faithful servants". Norma Jean (Willers) Bertram*

Norma Jean (Willers) Bertram - July 26, 2018 at 10:00 AM



“ *Thanks for giving me your 440 Cutlass after you retired. Midland was less without you. Lots of history with the Ritzens at Salem. Your son Bob is a great guy. Acolyted at Ann's wedding. Bob surprised us in 1978 by coming to our wedding in Denver. And on and on. Say hi to my brother Pud. We'll talk again in Glory. Much love and respect-Gregg Kupfer*

Gregg Kupfer - May 24, 2018 at 07:34 AM

GK

“ *Ralph and I share a special connection. I was given his Olds Cutlass 440 when I went to work in the admissions department in 1979. He and Ree had been pulling a camper the last year. His son Bob showed up at our wedding-totally unannounced-what a great surprise! Pastor, you were always a big behind the scenes inspiration to me. I remember accolyting at Bob and Ann's wedding. Bob recruited me to go to Midland. And all the fun with your son Bob. What a great guy. And on and on. Nothing but great memories of the Ritzens and Salem Lutheran. No doubt you've already re-connected with my brother Pud. We'll share many Midland stories in Glory. Much love and respect-Gregg Kupfer*

Gregg Kupfer - May 23, 2018 at 10:52 AM