

WAUK. FREEMAN
JAN. 13, 2007

Obit. - Kalnes, Donna
1-24-1934-1-12-2007



EAGLE

Donna M. Kalnes

Jan. 24, 1934 - Jan. 12, 2007

Donna M. (nee Simondet) Kalnes, 72, of Eagle, passed away peacefully after a battle with cancer Friday, Jan. 12, 2007, at Waukesha Memorial Hospital. She was born Jan. 24, 1934, in Redwood Falls, Minn., to Oscar and Alma (nee Castle) Simondet.

Donna graduated from Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, and attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, obtaining a master's degree in administration.

She married Rasmus Kalnes in Redwood Falls, Minn., on Aug. 21, 1954. She was a longtime member of St. John Lutheran Church in North Prairie. Donna was a retired teacher and principal of Eagle Elementary School, past president of the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators, National Principal of the Year in 1991, Wisconsin Mother of the Year in 1980, a recipient of the Luther College Distinguished Service Award and honored by three U.S. presidents for her work in education.

Donna is survived by her loving husband, Rasmus of Eagle; her beloved children, Stephanie of Eagle and Eric of Huntington Beach, Calif.; her daughter-in-law, Leslie; two grandchildren, Anna and Erik of Batavia, Ill.; her sister, Carolyn (Bob) Laufenburger of Redwood Falls; and her brother, Norman (Ginny) Simondet of Mound, Minn. She is further survived by many loving relatives and friends. Donna was preceded in death by her son, David; her parents; and brothers, Walter and Douglas.

Visitation will be held from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 16, at St. John Lutheran Church, 312 N. Main St., North Prairie, and from 10 a.m. until the 11 a.m. funeral service Wednesday, Jan. 17, with the Rev. Brady Finnern officiating. Interment will follow at Oak Grove Cemetery in Eagle (next to Old World Wisconsin).

In lieu of flowers, memorials to St. John Lutheran Church are appreciated.

Mealy's Funeral Home in Eagle, 594-2442, is serving the family.

(Freeman - Jan. 13, 2007)

Pastor said that I could only have 3 minutes, so if H.C. starts playing music – then I'll know I'm getting the hook. And by the way - thanks for playing with us H.C. You're a good man.

So this is the Reader's Digest edition of Donna's eulogy. Forgive me for reading it, but if I look at you I may start sobbing and Aunt Pauline told me – 'No blubbing.'

For all of you that took the time to be here for Donna, thank you. It's a testament to how much she was loved. Most of you know Donna as a highly motivated, well honored woman who won awards for everything from education to charity work. The lucky ones know her as the hostess with the mostess. My roommate from Luther College used to say that Donna's theme song should be "*If I knew you were coming, I'd have baked a cake.*"

To me, all the honors were the frosting of her life. I'm more interested in remembering her cake. Her cake was her soul. The *essence* of Donna. The intangibles that made her so incredible.

- Donna loved her family. And she considered all of you family. The church, the school, Luther, AWSA, 4-H, the Historical Societies, politics, our Norwegian and California families..... "Adopting" people that we loved became a family hobby. I never minded sharing my mother, because she had enough energy to go around.
- Donna made learning fun. She read to us at night and sang to us at the piano. We drew pictures, painted, made cards together. She taught us to cook & bake. To run. To love sports. She and Ras quizzed us at the table on history spelling and geography. Her passion for knowledge was contagious.
- Donna was adored as a teacher – so many kids and parents came back to tell her that 4th grade changed their lives. She nurtured people mentally, physically and spiritually. They also mentioned that at school functions, when the gym was a cacophony of noise, the moment she walked into the room, there was a hush. She had an aura of power and respect. She loved and supported her teachers hard work. (And paid them back in brownies.)
- Donna got respect because she gave it. Her strength was obviously not in her size. It was in her love. (Though it continues to amaze me that a 100 lb woman could carry a 50lb purse.) This is a woman so tiny that when I was 10, I was 5'0 tall and weighed 90 lbs, - and could not fit into her wedding dress.
- Donna's little secret that I found out only last year is that when she got married – she couldn't cook. Ras had a 29" waist. Obviously she studied Betty Crocker with the same veracity that she put into everything else. We kids ate like farm-hands while she maintained a 19" waist.
- My favorite memories will forever be Friday night popcorn parties with old movies. After which we got to trade off creating spectacular ice cream desserts which were bestowed with names like David's Delights, Stephanie Specials and Eric's Ecstasies (E's are hard) Huge Saturday morning breakfasts that included eggs, sausage, pancakes, waffles, French toast, muffins, fruit and coffee. After which we made homemade bread and cinnamon rolls – the scent wafting about the house like a euphoric beckoning home. Sunday meant lavish post-church dinners with the whole family gathered around a perfectly set table together.
- This on top of Christmas cookie baking, pie making, family picnics and tea parties.
- She loved dancing, lobster dinners, flowers, travel, her puppiesBut most of all she loved God. Her faith never wavered. So now she's a Princess. Sleeping Beauty awakened by Jesus and taken to the ultimate Ball - where she was welcomed by so many of our cherished loved ones – I have to admit, I'm a bit jealous I see this as Donna's Birthday party into her new life in heaven. A celebration of sorts, or in other words – let us eat cake. And hopefully, while we're still here, we can all carry with us, a little portion of "the essence of Donna."

Steph Kalnes