



## Mary Ruth Steffens

August 24, 2016 - August 24, 2016

Mary Ruth Steffens, 96, Kearney, died August 24, 2016 at Kearney Regional Medical Center. Memorial Mass will be 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, August 30, 2016 at Prince of Peace Catholic Church with Fr. Paul Colling and Fr. Mike McDonald officiating. A rosary service will be at 7:00 p.m., Monday, August 29, 2016 at Prince Of Peace Catholic Church followed by a vigil service at 7:30 p.m. Memorials are suggested to The Friends Program in Kearney. She will be remembered primarily for her extraordinary determination to seek the good in others, and her uncanny ability to find it. Her favorite horse was a castaway from a neighbor; her favorite dog a stray; and her favorite person, well, it's a 100-way tie. Mary Ruth was born in Omaha in 1920 to John and Anastasia Latenser. She grew up with her younger brothers Jack and Bill, reading books and riding horses. She attended Duchesne Academy and earned a Girl Scout Golden Eaglet Award. In 1938 Mary Ruth boarded the train for Chicago, where she attended Northwestern University. She was captain of the Northwestern women's rifle squad and president of the Gamma chapter of Alpha Chi Omega. She returned to Omaha after graduation and found a job at the Martin Assembly Plant, where she inspected B-26 and B-29 World War II bomber planes. In 1944, Mary Ruth met a Navy doctor, LaVerne Steffens, while on a blind date with someone else. After the war, they married, moved to Kearney, and bought a house at the edge of town. They had four children, Julie Anne (Thomas), Bill, Mary Louise (Nelson), and John. They planted a few pines and watched the children, the trees and the town all grow

up around them. Dr. Steffens died in 1967. Mary Ruth once again returned to the workforce, this time as the first elementary school counselor for Kearney Public Schools. For the next 20 years, she touched the lives of every student at Bryant, Central, Emerson and Kenwood Elementary Schools. After her retirement, Mary Ruth joined the Disaster Relief Services arm of the American Red Cross. She traveled around the country to help after numerous natural disasters, such as Hurricane Hugo and the 1989 San Francisco earthquake. Between disasters, she helped launch the Friends Program of Kearney and was an active member of Kearney's Golden K Kiwanis. Mary Ruth earned numerous awards for her volunteer work, including the Red Cross Clara Barton Award, the Sertoma Service to Mankind Award, and the Hub Freedom Award for Humanitarianism. Mary Ruth is survived by her daughters, Julie Anne Thomas and her husband Jon of Lincoln, Mary Louise Nelson and her husband Pat of Kearney; sons, Bill Steffens and his wife Cory of Broken Bow, John Steffens and his wife Jayne of Lincoln; brothers, Bill Latenser and his wife Marian of Omaha, Jack Latenser of Omaha; grandchildren, Lea Anne (Thomas) Wroblewski, Katherine Thomas, Kelly Steffens, Jaime Steffens, Stephanie (Nelson) White, Michelle (Nelson) Flannigan, Beth Nelson, Chris Steffens, Matt Steffens; great grandchildren, Anna, Mary, and Frank Wickizer; Tess and Calvin White; Noah, Sam, and Chase Flannigan; Isaac and Evan Steffens Mary Ruth was preceded in death by her husband Dr. L.C. Steffens and her parents.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mary Ruth Steffens*

January 29, 2023 at 11:14 AM



“ *I remember Mary Ruth well, and always felt that she was one of my heroes. She and Doc were both lights in my life. My best to Julie, Mary Louise (Weezy), Bill and John. Loved singing for all of you!*

**Joyce Bishop Hogan** - September 07, 2016 at 12:00 AM



“ *So sorry to hear about Mary Ruth. Our family's thoughts and prayers are with you.*

**Dennis Roper** - August 30, 2016 at 12:00 AM



“ *Dear Mary Louise and family;*

*My deepest sympathy and prayers for your family in this time of sorrow. Your mother was a remarkable woman and we can all only hope to emulate her enthusiasm and what seemed like a great joy for life. I know that she raised an amazing daughter, Mary Louise, whom I always looked up to as someone I wanted to emulate. My prayers are with you, God bless you.*

**Kathryn Hiner Woodard** - August 30, 2016 at 12:00 AM

RP

“ I have created a very good life from advise from the incredible lady. I can not say more to have a belief that she was one of the best people in my, as well as, my children's life. I went to school with John and met her again when my children were going to school at Bryant elementary, our paths crossed just a few months after my wife (Carol) had an accident on the UP railroad tracks west of Kearney. Our talk and her challenge made my future bright, I, from her challenge, was on the Dean's list 7 times out of 11 semesters at UNK. Graduated with honors and have been in the workforce for over 20 years. I had many opportunities to express my thoughts to her many times to let her know how those days that were so gloomy to me at the time was opened up when she spoke to me, not just as counselor, but as a friend. My prayers are with the family. Thank You Mary Ruth you were my light in a time of darkness.

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**Russell Peters** - August 30, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ My family sends our most sincere condolences to your family. Mrs. Steffens has always had a special place in our hearts because of the genuine compassion and concern she showed for my sister, Kimberly, when she was a young student at Central Elementary. Kimberly felt comfortable talking with Mrs. Steffens, which was so important for her at that time in her life. As Kimberly grew into adulthood, she never forgot Mrs. Steffens kindness during her years in elementary school.

*Mrs. Steffens was a beautiful, caring, and special person who touched many lives. She will never be forgotten.*

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**Daniece Waggoner on behalf of the Waggoner Family** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CL

“ It was my great honor to have known Mary Ruth. Her being one of the most cherished customers I served at The Lodge Restaurant for 30 years.

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**Claire Longly** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CL

“ It was my honor to have known Mary Ruth. She was one of the most cherished customers at The Lodge Restaurant. I loved serving her and we always had a great visit.

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**Claire Longly** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BY

“ Always smiling and asking how Sandy was. More concerned about others than herself. Affectionally known to us as "mom". From a fellow Red Crosser.

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**Bill and Sandy Yochum** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

AR

“ Mary Ruth Steffens was an amazing lady. Her legacy of helping to establish the Friends Program of Kearney will forever be remembered. Because of this program she helped countless youth connect with a positive adult mentor and increased their opportunity for success. I am so thankful for the impact that she made on the Kearney community!

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**April Roggasch** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

TK

“ Mary Ruth Steffens was an amazing lady. Her legacy of helping to launch the Friends Program of Kearney will forever be remembered. Because of this program, she helped countless youth connect with a positive adult, increasing their opportunity for success! We will continue to celebrate her life through this program!

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**The Friends Program of Kearney** - August 29, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DL

“ Our hearts are very sad with the loss of this incredible woman. Prayers for all the family.

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**Denny and Lynn Leger** - August 27, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DF

“ Thoughts and Prayers to the Family

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**Darleen Farwell** - August 26, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JK

“ The world is a little darker today, even the birds are sad! Mary Ruth was my neighbor and my friend. She touched so many lives through the Red Cross and many other organizations. I can't even imagine the 4th of July without a trip to her house to celebrate John's birthday. I am truly blessed to have known her and learned from her. She was an inspiration!

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**Jeff Knapp** - August 26, 2016 at 12:00 AM

CW

“ Our thoughts and prayers are with your family. She was a very caring mad courageous woman and will never be forgotten.

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**Cheryl and Ed Walker** - August 26, 2016 at 12:00 AM

RJ

“ *Never a more passionate and loving lady than Mary Ruth.  
We were still exchanging emails on a regular basis.  
The Bragg family was so fortunate to have this wonderful friend.*

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**Robert Bragg Jr.** - August 26, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DB

“ *Mary Ruth was a good friend and neighbor. She is a big part of my  
childhood memories and she will be missed.*

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**Deb Baumgartner** - August 25, 2016 at 12:00 AM