

started by Ruth's father called "Your Neighborhood Chapel." Kermit resumed his college education, earning his BA and MA at UCLA. The family grew quickly! All five children were born while they lived in Pasadena: Kenneth, Ronald, David and Marilyn in the first five years, and Eugene 5 years later. Though a student, Kermit worked at various jobs from teaching to construction. Whether he was away working or studying, Kermit was always home for Sunday, making sure shoes were polished and hair was slicked with Pomade for Sunday School and church.

In the early 1950s, the family began participating in the City Terrace Mennonite Brethren Church, a Hispanic congregation in east Los Angeles. Kermit and Ruth loved and served that church in many capacities. They embraced the community and the authentic ethnic foods that were enjoyed by the whole family. By 1958, the family had moved to west LA to shorten Kermit's commute for graduate study at UCLA, but their commitment to City Terrace continued. It was 25 miles across LA for Sunday and Wednesday services. On some Sunday evenings, Dad indulged his insatiable sweet tooth by stopping on that long drive home to get ice cream cones for everyone.

In June, 1962, Kermit received his PhD in Zoology from UCLA and joined the faculty of Southern Illinois University in Edwardsville, Illinois. He taught physiology and continued his research there for 30 years. He was faculty advisor for the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. The family became active at the local American Baptist Church.

Together, Kermit and Ruth had a heart for showing the love of Christ Jesus to international students. Deep relationships formed with students from Iran and China who boarded with the family. There were memorable interactions with foreign students during sabbaticals to Seattle and Washington, DC.

In 1992, Kermit retired, and he and Ruth moved to Hillsboro, Kansas. Kermit immediately became an active volunteer. He served as President of the Hillsboro Senior Center, where he even did roof repairs himself and helped the organization overcome a financial crisis. He was Sexton of Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Cemetery. He was active in the Lion's Club and learned to make funnel cakes for Hillsboro events. His passion for taking care of God's creation by recycling became legendary. He even delivered the Hillsboro Free Press in his neighborhood until age 97.

Kermit enjoyed gardening and eating their canned tomatoes, zucchini relish, and the "cherry-pit" pie that Ruth prepared. His life orientation was to be "Frugal but Generous."

The Ratzlaff children and their families enjoyed vacation reunions every five years, planned and financed by Kermit and Ruth, until Ruth went to heaven on July 6, 2016.

Despite being alone for his last 6 years, Kermit took great interest in the achievements of his grandchildren, attending graduations and weddings. He made great effort to know each great-grandchild by name, and they adored him. His legacy remains with 14 grandchildren, 23 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great grandchild. It was always reassuring for us to know that he and Mom showed their love by praying for each one of us daily. He was also a life-long learner, reading, studying, and memorizing scriptures. His Bible was deeply studied and had many underlines, especially I John 4:16 that "God is Love."

In his last days and hours, he was heard singing his favorite hymn, "Gott Ist Die Liebe", reciting John 3:16, and exchanging "I love you" with loved ones. All of us who were blessed to be family and friends of Kermit O. Ratzlaff benefited enormously from his example of faith and devotion, stretching over more than a hundred years. We are comforted to know that he has now gone to be with Mom in Heaven and will always be with us in spirit.

Marilyn Lovinger for the family ~ October, 2022

Celebrating the Life of **Kermit O. Ratzlaff**



December 26, 1921 - September 27, 2022

Parkview Mennonite Brethren Church

Hillsboro, Kansas

Saturday, October 8, 2022

11:00 a.m.

Kermit Omer Ratzlaff

Graveside Service

Saturday, October 8, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.
Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Cemetery
Garvie Schmidt officiating

Memorial Service

*Please enjoy the pictures from the life of
Kermit Ratzlaff accompanied by favorite hymns.*

Prelude		Carla Koslowsky
Welcome and Prayer		Garvie Schmidt
Congregational Hymn	“Blessed Assurance”	#191
Scripture	Psalm 103	Ken Ratzlaff
	<i>While dealing with cancer, Kermit memorized Psalm 103 and recently renewed that memory</i>	
Life Story		Read by Ron Ratzlaff
Congregational Hymn	“Great Is Thy Faithfulness”	#166
	<i>This hymn has been the “theme song” for Kermit and Ruth</i>	
Meditation		Pastor Dave Loewen
Congregational Hymn	“Gott Ist Die Liebe”	Insert
	<i>First verse in German followed by the first verse in English</i>	
Benediction		Pastor Dave Loewen
Postlude		Carla Koslowsky

Song Leader

Ken Koslowsky

Memorial Funds

Hillsboro Senior Center
Mennonite Central Committee

*Thank you for your presence and support in the
celebration of a life lived for the glory of God.*

*All are invited to join the family for a light lunch
and fellowship following the Celebration.*

*Please pause and view the items on the display table
celebrating Kermit’s life.*

Jost Funeral Home

Kermit O. Ratzlaff was born December 26, 1921, in Salem Hospital, Hillsboro, Kansas, to Jonathan J and Marie (Plenert) Ratzlaff. He passed away on September 27, 2022, at the age of 100, at Parkside Homes in Hillsboro, Kansas. Although the buildings in which he was born and died are within half a mile of each other, life took Kermit away from Hillsboro for many years.

Kermit’s early childhood years were on the family farm in the Johannestal community northwest of Hillsboro, but in 1928, the family moved from Hillsboro to a farm in Balko, Oklahoma, in the semi-arid panhandle. The family first lived in the grainary, and then in a house with one faucet for running water and a wind turbine with a battery to power one light bulb. They had four horses to work the fields and a black riding horse named Ribbon. Kermit’s chores began with gathering eggs, feeding and watering chickens, finding firewood, milking, feeding calves, and carrying slop to the hogs.

Soon the hardships of the Great Depression set in with the Dust Bowl drought years. Kermit remembered the dust storms rattling the house and told of scooping piles of dust out of the school each day. Times were tough for the family and their livestock alike.

The family was part of the Balko Mennonite Brethren Church worshiping in German. One to two weeks of evangelistic services with a guest evangelist were held each year, and at one of these meetings, Kermit accepted Jesus as his Savior, and was baptized at the age of twelve.

On the farm, the family persevered under grim circumstances, but Kermit flourished at school, attending Bethany School, a four-room, first-through-twelfth-grade school in Balko. Kermit made great effort to get books to read. For two years, he attended Corn Bible Academy in Corn, Oklahoma, graduating as valedictorian in 1939 and delivering his speech in German. A year later, he graduated from Bethany High School, again as valedictorian.

Kermit next enrolled at Tabor College and continued to excel. In his sophomore year, he asked classmate Ruth Warkentin, of Reedley, California, to see a school play with him. Their relationship grew as they talked and prayed together, a practice they would exercise often. They both earned AA degrees, graduating in the spring of 1942 after which they returned to their homes. A long-distance letter-writing relationship began just as the outside world was turning upside-down with the start of World War II.

In December, 1942, Kermit traveled by bus to visit Ruth and family in Reedley. Upon arrival, he learned that he had just been drafted and must promptly report for service. So, Kermit proposed, they prayed together, and Ruth accepted. Having just sold a cow, he had money to buy an engagement ring. But he remained with his new fiancé only a few days before his induction into the Civilian Public Service, alternative service for conscientious objectors.

During the next three years, he served in LaPine, Oregon, as part of a logging crew and cook; in Union Grove, Wisconsin, as a cook and attendant at a facility for the developmentally disabled; and in Three Rivers, California, as part of a fire fighting and fire suppression crew.

Kermit and Ruth married August 11, 1944, at Hoover Street Mennonite Brethren Church, in Los Angeles, CA, a union that lasted almost 72 years! The honeymoon included the trip back to his CPS assignment in Wisconsin where Ruth lived with other wives while Kermit lived in barracks.

Following completion of his CPS duty in early 1946, Kermit and Ruth made their home in Pasadena, California, living in the upstairs back apartment of a church