



John Von Rueden

January 4, 1934 - April 17, 2007

John E. Von Rueden, Bismarck, known by his friends as "Von", died peacefully on April 17, 2007. Funeral services will be held on Saturday at 10:00 AM at Cathedral of the Holy Spirit in Bismarck with Rev. Thomas E. Kramer officiating. Burial will be Monday at 10:00 AM at the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery in Mandan. Visitation will be Friday from 3:00 - 9:00 PM at Parkway Funeral Service, 2330 Tyler Parkway, Bismarck, where a vigil service will be held at 7:00 PM. Visitation will continue one hour prior to the service at the church. John Edward Von Rueden was born on January 4, 1934, in Grand Forks, ND, to Teresa Ackerman and John L. Von Rueden. He attended elementary and high school in Grand Forks, graduating from Grand Forks Central High School. He attended the University of North Dakota where he was active in many activities including the Varsity Bards, Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity and ROTC. By far Von's proudest association with UND was as a member of the Fighting Sioux football team where he played on both the offensive and defensive lines. He graduated from UND in 1955 with a Bachelor of Philosophy degree. He enlisted in the U.S. Army with the rank of First Lieutenant. Von earned national fame while a young army lieutenant as a contestant on the popular television game show, "The \$64,000 Question." Von was stationed at Fort Monmouth, NJ, and Fort Huachuca, AZ, during his military career. Von married his UND sweetheart, Joan Alice Schulz, on September 15, 1962. Von and Joan have three children, all raised in Bismarck. After military service, Von began a long and proud career in sales.

He often recalled his memories as a salesman for 3M National Advertising, Warner Lambert and Procter and Gamble; traveling to every part of North Dakota selling products. Von's love of and dedication to his state grew. He also served as sales manager for McCarney Ford, which presented the opportunity to hone both his sales and his political skills through his relationship with "referral king" Bob McCarney. Von took his sales experience and combined it with his flare for showmanship and went into broadcasting; first as a sales manager for Meyer Broadcasting, where he oversaw both television and radio sales. He then went to work for Reiten Television as a sales manager and ultimately served as general manager at KXMB TV in Bismarck. He spent nearly 25 years with the 4X network where his contributions led him to leadership positions with the North Dakota Broadcasters Association, the National Association of Broadcasters, Ad-Mark, Bismarck Chamber of Commerce, Bismarck-Mandan Development Association, Bismarck-Mandan Convention and Visitors Bureau, and many other organizations. Von was a popular speaker and MC throughout North Dakota. It was during his tenure at KXMB that Von got involved with the Muscular Dystrophy Association and served as a local host for the annual Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethons for many years, raising thousands of dollars for Jerry's Kids. Another major project Von oversaw at KXMB was the North Dakota Centennial Celebration in 1989 where he served as Co-MC at the "Party of the Century" on the state capitol grounds. For many years Von wrote a popular feature, "Von on Vin" for area publications. Von's love of politics and heart for public service manifested themselves in many ways. He was elected to the Bismarck Park Board and the Bismarck City Commission and was active in the National and ND League of Cities. He was elected North Dakota Republican Party Vice-Chairman and served as a stint as Chairman in 1993. He was elected to represent North Dakota as the state's Republican National Committeeman in 1984. Von served as chairman of the ND Historical Board and the Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation as was a member of both when he died. He was instrumental in the passage of the appropriations bill enabling

the construction of a new wing on the ND Heritage Center during the last legislative session and was integral in the founding of the North Dakota Cowboy Hall of Fame. Von served as chairman of the ND Film Commission and received the ND Heritage Award from Governor Allen I. Olson. Throughout his career of public service, Von received far too many acknowledgements and awards to mention. He is survived by his wife, Joan, of Bismarck; his mother, Teresa, of Grand Forks; his children, Jody Dave Estensen of Minneapolis, MN, Kurt Linda Von Rueden of Rogers, MN, and Karen Von Rueden of Eden Prairie, MN; and four grandchildren, Whitney and Barrett Estensen and Alex and Andrew Von Rueden. He is preceded in death by his father, Brother Kenneth and Sister Kathryn Sullivan and a granddaughter, Caroline Estensen. Memorials will be accepted by the family to be used to establish an endowment in Von's name at a later date

Tribute Wall

JK

“ *John Von Rueden*

John T. Korsmo - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ *I regret not ever getting the chance to meet more relatives on my Dad's side of the family. But I can tell you that it sounds like John "Von" had a very similar sense of humor as my father Norman Von Rueden. "Von" sounded like a very nice man and I wish I could have met him. My mother remember's John Senior. My deepest sympathy is with you at this difficult time.*

Jane Von Rueden - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

MF

“ *To our dear friend Joan and her darling kids, Jody, Kurt and Karen - Our thoughts and prayers have been there for you these past many months and our memories of John will be of laughter and fun serving with both of you throughout our political wars and events. We always knew our view point was the right one right - or correct?, no matter what anyone else wanted to tell us. So we will keep up the political battles and remember Von forever as our co-conspirator and oh how he will be missed. God Bless him in heaven and each of you with us here on earth. Love and Hugs, Marlys & Bob Fleck*

Marlys & Bob Fleck - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

BB

“ We will always remember how John filled a room with enthusiasm for whatever passion he was advancing---politics, wine, UND or preserving ND history. We need more cheerleaders like John for ND. I am sure all channels will be tuned to UND sports where he is in heaven.

Bill and Dina Butcher - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JP

“ Teresa, Joan, Jody, Kurt, and Karen, My deepest sympathy in the loss of Von. I know that there are many, including myself, that will miss his sense of humor, his booming voice and his zest for life. I know that the past months have been tough on all of you. I know that Von is in peace, watching down on all of us, loving you all, laughing with old friends, and cheering on the Fighting Sioux from heaven! We all care for you deeply, and grieve this loss with you. Please know we are here to help. God bless Von, and God bless you all as you deal with this loss.

Jim Poolman - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SJ

“ I am terribly sorry for the loss of your father. I remember how highly you spoke of him in college. His devotion to UND was second to none. I moved to Bismarck 11 and a half years ago, and learned of his significant contributions to this community then. I regret I never had a chance to meet him personally, but I am thankful for all he did to make Bismarck such a great place to live. May God be with you and your family during this time of loss, and help guide you through your grief.

Sean M. Johnson - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

DM

“ I have so many fond memories of John! He was truly a very special member of our UND alumni family. He was proud of Grand Forks, UND, his state, and of course, his Fighting Sioux! I remember when we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Varsity Bards. We had a tough time at rehearsals because we were all laughing so hard because of John and his one-liners. What a stitch! Everyone just loved him - young and old alike. He took pride in hitting those high notes, which he did very well, by the way!! The wild Irish tenor. Your family can take comfort in knowing John was loved by so many, especially those of us at UND who were proud to claim him as "one of ours!" God bless!

Dave Miedema - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

RG

“ Von was what college was all about in the 1950s. Good times, special friends , he will always be remembered.

Ruth Uden Green - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JW

“ Joan and family, My thoughts and prayers are with you all at this time. I met Von when I worked at the Parks and Rec with Joan for a short time last year and Von was always a great joy to visit with. He always had some some thing to share with you and it didn't matter if you were busy or not. He was a great man who accomplished a lot in his life time and became more than a millionaire. I wish you all the best during this time and I know that with all the wonderful memories and stories Von has left behind he will always be with you in thought and in prayers. With all my heart and prayers. Janet Wald and family

Janet Wald - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

CK

“ I remember "Rudy" from my days playing football at UND '59-'61. I got the "Rudy" from "Zaz" Coach Frank Zazula and the tales he would tell about his days as a player. A devoted UND loyalist who will be dearly missed.

Charlie Kankel - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

JW

“ I have many fond memories of Von. As a "frosh" footballer, I recall John as a menacing mountain on the gridiron. He loved his football. I also had the opportunity to sing with John in Varsity Bards, and to be a competitor against him during "Flickertail Follies", UND's Spring Variety Show. Von was a great entertainer. Always a showman. He had a great voice, a wonderful sense of humor, a captivating smile, and an open super friendly personality. His personal and professional accomplishments attest to the type of person he was. Certainly, he was a wonderful representative of UND, and the people of North Dakota. He will truly be missed.

Jim Webb - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

SG

“ Von was truly a mover and a shaker. He really stepped up to build the Custer House and develop Ft. Lincoln after years of benign neglect. He was smart, funny and energetic, creative and a good companion for conversation. A trip to Bismarck wasn't complete without running into Von. I wil miss him. We served together on the Ft. Lincoln board and my office was in the Bismarck Chamber building where Von was a frequent and welcome visitor. Go Sioux!

Sheldon Green - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GO

“ I REMEMBER VON AS A KID GROWING UP IN GRAND FORKS. JOHN AND MY BROTHER BOB OLSON WERE FRIENDS AND ENTERTAINED AROUND THE AREA THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE. WHO CAN FORGET "TEMPTATION". I LOVED VON AND ALWAYS LOOKED UP TO HIM AS A FRIEND AND LOVED HIS HUMOR! SOMEWHERE IN HEAVEN THEY'VE GOT THEMSELVES TWO FUNNY GUYS WHO LOVED LIFE AND THEIR FAMILIES. JOHN WAS ONE OF THOSE GUYS YOU NEVER FORGET. GOD BLESS THE MEMORY OF JOHN VON RUDEN AND GOD BLESS JOAN AND THE VON RUDEN FAMILY!!!!

GLEN OLSON - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

GM

“ Von was a friend to me when I was a football player at UND 59-62 and a big time supporter when I coached there for 14 years. Von was bigger than life and a positive center of attraction at Alumni gatherings.....He loved his University, classmates and teammates.....I am one of the many that will miss him, but won't forget him.....and one of the many that have a favorite Von story...

Gene Murphy - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM

FH

“ John you will be remembered for your love of wine, women and song. You treated everyone like a friend. After 10 years we still miss Bismarck and we are certain that Bismarck, North Dakota, and the Fighting Sioux will miss you. God Bless You John.

Frank Haynes - March 17, 2015 at 12:00 AM