

Neoma A. Laken, 81, Breckenridge, Minnesota, passed away Monday, Dec. 7, 2015 at CHI St. Francis Health in Breckenridge.



The funeral will be held at 11 a.m. Friday, Dec. 11, 2015 at Breckenridge Lutheran Church. The Rev. Mark Manning will be officiating. Interment will be at Riverside Cemetery in Breckenridge.

Visitation will be held from 5-8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, 2015 at Joseph Vertin and Sons Funeral Home in Breckenridge. There will no prayer service.

Neoma Ann Laken was born Saturday, June 16, 1934 at St. Mary's Hospital in Wahpeton, North Dakota, the only child of Palmer and Grace (Gast) Laken of Doran, Minnesota. She was baptized into the Lutheran faith Dec. 30, 1934 at the farm home of her maternal grandparents in rural Newfalden, Minnesota. She was confirmed May 23, 1948 at Breckenridge Lutheran Church. During her elementary school years, she attended Doran Presbyterian Church Sunday School, so this church claimed a special place in her heart. Neoma attended

Doran grade school, graduating valedictorian of her eighth grade class. She furthered her education at Breckenridge High School, graduating in 1952 as co-valedictorian. She became a charter member of the Charles Holmgren Chapter of the National Honor Society when she was a junior in high school. Following graduation, Neoma was hired by the law firm of Korbel & Gospodar as a paralegal/veterans service secretary and moved to Breckenridge.

In December 1954, at age 20, Neoma was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She had two surgeries, a lifetime of radiation and was told she had a 20 percent chance of living the next five years. She refused to dwell on the cancer and decided she would have to be stronger than the malignancy. Neoma did become cancer free, however, she battled numerous other health issues all her life from the after effects of radiation.

In November of 1956, Neoma became the Wilkin County Deputy Registrar of Deeds. In April of 1976 she was appointed the Registrar of Deeds. In August of that same year, the title was changed by Minnesota Legislation to County Recorder. She held this position until her retirement in 1994, serving Wilkin County for 42 years. She was also a licensed land title abstracter. In 1988, Neoma was named Minnesota County Recorder of the Year by her peers and then in 1989, she was elected president of the Minnesota County Recorders Association.

Neoma was an adventurous, independent woman who loved to travel. She visited 30 states, including Hawaii, several Canadian Provinces and Washington, D.C., several times. Overseas trips included Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Greece and Rome, Italy. Neoma's faith was important to her. She was active the Breckenridge Lutheran Church, serving on numerous

committees, including WELCA. She also taught eighth grade confirmation and in 1978, became the first woman in the history of Breckenridge Lutheran to be elected president of the congregation.

Neoma was of the opinion that you have to do more than just pass through life. She believed you must give back to the community in which you live for the privilege of being a part of it. Following the flood of 1997, she accepted a two-year appointment to the Breckenridge City Council. Then she ran for a four-year term, serving as an alderman and also on the Breckenridge Port Authority.

As an avid historian and a visionary, Neoma became involved in many community projects and because of her efforts, won numerous awards through the years. She received the Breckenridge Chamber Distinguished Citizen award; Breckenridge Rotary Outstanding Service to Business; The Extra Mile Award from the Wahpeton Chamber, and the Cizek Volunteer Award. In 2002, she received the Friend of the Red River award, given by the River Keepers in Fargo, North Dakota, for obtaining MN Legislative action, which named the Red River of the North an official Minnesota boating and canoeing route. This legislation also provided the needed funding for the project. Neoma was a member of Project Breckenridge, Historic King of Trails, a member of Minnesota 16th District Bar Association Ethics Committee, and was listed in Who's Who in America (Midwest) from 1994-98.

Neoma authored two books, "War of the Rivers" and "Winding Journey to History." She also wrote many historical pamphlets and was a featured columnist in the Wahpeton Daily News. She was a performer in the Head of the Red Community Theater and wrote and/or performed in 10 Breckenridge Community and Headwaters Day Historical Pageants. She was very interested in Christian drama and performed many portrayals of women in the Bible. She became known as the "Storyteller," a title she thoroughly enjoyed.

Relationships were important to Neoma. She treasured friendships she made throughout her lifetime. Friends from her youth remained lifelong friends. However, she often said "little people" were her favorite. She loved children. She was a steadfast presence in the lives of family and friends. She and her special smile are gone now. She leaves a legacy of historical research and service to community. At age 81, the cancer came again. This time, as she took her Lord's hand and went home with Him, she defeated cancer forever and won the final victory!

Neoma is survived by her goddaughters, Susan Easton Strenger and Stephanie Haugen Angst; her godsons, Brian J. Haugen and Eric W. Ringdahl; a family of cousins and a family of friends.

She is preceded in death by her parents, Palmer and Grace Laken.

Preferred charities include Wilkin County Historical Society, Breckenridge Lutheran Church, and Luther Crest Bible Camp.

Joseph Vertin and Sons Funeral Home in Breckenridge is in charge of the arrangements.