



## Dr. Ralph E. Carlson

October 28, 1921 - November 23, 2016

Dr. Ralph Everett Carlson, 95, passed away on November 23, 2016, after a full life and surrounded by loved ones.

Ralph came from very humble beginnings, born in the farming town of Prentice, Wisconsin on October 28th, 1921 to parents Alice and Ben Carlson. After graduating from Kingsford High School, he worked nights and weekends to put himself through Augustana College. He then attended medical school, enrolling in the US Army's program at the University of Illinois- Chicago and completing his internship/residency at Cook County Hospital. While in Chicago, he met his wife Cynthia Alexander of Iron Mountain, to whom he was married for 69 years.

After leaving Cook County Hospital, Dr. Carlson completed a two-year residency in surgery at Percy Jones Army Hospital in Battle Creek, Michigan, during which time his first daughter was born. He was honorably discharged as a Captain (US Army Medical Corps), and then spent another 3 1/2 years at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit where he qualified as American Board Certified in surgery, and became a father of two more daughters. A Fellow of the highly respected American College of Surgeons, Dr. Carlson eventually was chosen its examiner.

In 1953, the Carlson family moved home to Iron Mountain where Ralph began

his surgical practice with his father-in-law, the late Dr. William H. Alexander. Ralph practiced surgery for 33 years, during which he often expressed his gratitude in finding a like-minded partner in Dr. Paul Trump. In addition, he was grateful for the dedicated doctors and nurses with whom he was privileged to practice medicine while at Dickinson County Memorial Hospital (DCH), where he served as Chief of the Medical Staff and Chief of Surgery. Ralph was deeply respected for his gracious manner, his "magic hands" in the operating room, and his love of good music. When he retired, his former patients often wrote letters to him, praising his skills and declaring how much they missed him as their doctor.

Throughout his life, Ralph was active in the community that he loved so dearly. As co-founder of the Dickinson County Memorial Hospital Foundation, one of his proudest accomplishments, he helped raise over a million dollars to support a variety of programs and equipment purchases. He was also an active member of the DCH Board of Trustees and the Chamber of Commerce. At the time of his death, he was a member of the 6-7-8 Club, the Chippewa Club, Pine Grove Country Club and Our Savior's Lutheran Church.

Ralph was an avid sportsman and loved the great outdoors, having been an excellent tennis player and downhill skier in his younger years. He relished recounting stories about his numerous hunting and fishing trips to Montana, British Columbia, Alaska and north of the Arctic Circle. On a more local level, he loved spending time with his friends and family on Sun Dog Lake. Many fond memories of deer hunting, snowmobiling and Christmas tree cutting parties at this magical place have been shared over the years. After retiring and moving to Spread Eagle, Wisconsin, he and Cynthia took up cross country skiing with friends, often skiing for miles on the frozen lake and swamps behind it. In the summer, Ralph turned his focus to golf, a passion of his throughout his entire life. He played until his 94th year, once sinking a 30 foot putt, despite being classified as legally blind due to macular degeneration.

Ralph was also an excellent cook and early advocate of the “farm to table” concept, often driving miles to find his favorite sweet white corn. Ralph especially loved when his extended family gathered around one of the dinners that he helped prepare. Family, good food and good conversations (along with wins by his beloved Packers) were things that made him happy. Many a recipe card containing one of “Ralph’s Recipes” will now contain tear stains – a result of realizing that he will no longer be there to enjoy the meal.

Above all, Ralph was blessed to have a wonderful extended family both here in the UP and in Bonita Springs, FL where he spent many winters. Thanks to his zest for life and love of family (no doubt a key to his longevity), Ralph’s children and grandchildren spent countless happy summer vacations at Spread Eagle. A rainy day never kept him down – there was always a card game to play with “the kids” – especially gin. Ralph will always be remembered and loved for his wry (even wicked) sense of humor, gentle nature, and compassionate attitude. He will be greatly missed by all those who loved him.

Dr. Carlson was preceded in death by his parents and brothers, Waldo and Duane Carlson. He is survived by his wife Cynthia and three daughters Deborah (Norm) Miede, Meredith Carlson, and Marsha (Ted) Hodges, and his grandchildren who adored him –Teddy and Gavin Hodges; Mara, Nick and Lisa Herron; and Nick, Matt, and Dan Miede. .

Thank you to all the people who kept Ralph close to them in his final years. He was extremely grateful, and spoke fondly of you all.

Friends may call from 9:30 am until 11:30 am Thursday, December 1, 2016 at the Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church. Funeral services will be held at 11:30 am

at the Our Savior's Lutheran Church. Rev. Robert Gordon will officiate. Burial will be in Cemetery Park.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Our Saviour's Lutheran Church or the charity of your choice. Condolences to the family of Dr. Ralph E. Carlson may be expressed online at [ernashfuneralhomes.com](http://ernashfuneralhomes.com).

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home and Cremation Services of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.

# Previous Events

## Visitation

DEC 1. 9:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
1210 S. Kimberly Ave.  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

## Funeral Service

DEC 1. 11:30 AM (CT)

Our Saviour's Lutheran Church  
1210 S. Kimberly Ave.  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801

# Tribute Wall



“ I just want to I'm sorry for Ralphs passing ...I knew Ralph from his condo in Bonita Beach .. I take care of the pool there and he would come every morning with his walker slowly but Shirley with a smile on his face to the pool and enjoy his time with his friend Keith. I will definitely miss him 🙏

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**Jack Burney** - December 02, 2016 at 01:41 PM



“ Dear Cynthia, Debbie, Mimi and Marsha, please accept my long-distance condolences for your loss. I am sorry that I couldn't be there to pay my respects in person. I have so many wonderful memories of Uncle Ralph that I don't know where to begin. His life long friendship with my dad set the bar and provided us Mitchells with another great role model and mentor. He was always inquisitive and supportive when I would see him even if only once per year. He was kind, smart and just plain fun to be around. I will miss him almost as much as you will. With deep sympathy, Mike M

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**Mike Mitchell** - December 02, 2016 at 03:55 AM



“ To the Family, will miss Ralph's. Saying so what are you cooking today Connie ? You too are very missed at Sea Isles. God Bless my friend.

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**Connie &. Dave. Ream.** - November 30, 2016 at 01:12 PM

MA

“ You are all in our thoughts and prayers at this time ,we will miss Dr.Ralph greatly,he was a beautiful soul and we loved him dearly

*Barbara , Ken & Janet*

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**Mayes** - November 30, 2016 at 01:02 PM

BD

“ To Cynthia and family,

*Trudy and I extend our deepest sympathies to you for your loss. Ralph was a great human being who I got to know quite well when we worked together to gain the citizens' approval for a new hospital. Ralph, along with Paul Trump, Dick Cecconi, and many, many others, played an integral role in that successful effort. He will long be remembered.*

*Bill & Trudy DeGroot*

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**Bill DeGroot** - November 30, 2016 at 08:41 AM



“ Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Dr. Ralph E. Carlson.



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November 29, 2016 at 02:08 PM

WN

“ We cherish the many wonderful memories we have of times spent together with Ralph and Cynthia. You have our deepest sympathies.  
*The Nagy's*

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**William Nagy** - November 29, 2016 at 02:07 PM

RB

“ Sorry for your loss he was a wonderful doctor and man. My grandmother Estelle Kjellman worked with him for many years. I remember him tapping my ankle up before a game when I played basketball for IMHS in 1966 and doctor Alexander resetting my dislocated thumb. Respectfully Richard Bureau

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**Richard Bureau** - November 29, 2016 at 06:17 AM

JZ

“ To Cynthia and family,  
Yelena joins me in sending you big hugs at this time. Ralph and his father-in-law, Dr "Bill" Alexander, encouraged me to aim for a career in medicine and, once I completed my training, Ralph encouraged me to return to Iron Mountain (I was recruited to join the staff at Mt Sinai in NY at that time). Ralph was extremely attentive to my father's illness over a period of several years, communicating with me about his concerns and guiding us in our decisions. His and Cynthia's friendship with my parents was truly cherished over the years and we are forever grateful to the entire Carlson family for the bond that formed and endured. Ralph was an extraordinary human being and a super-extraordinary physician. Many of us are fortunate to have had Ralph as our role model. The memories of Ralph will continue to brighten the lives of so many for years to come!  
Jerry Zacks

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**Jerome Zacks** - November 28, 2016 at 06:44 PM