

# Margaret Ruth Tieszen Epp

April 7, 2021 — November 29, 2023

Ruth is survived by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren:

Mark J. Epp and Catherine Wismer  
of Henderson, Nebraska –

Hannah Epp of Madison, Tennessee

Carlin Epp (Alexandria) of Middlebury, Indiana

Shaun, Theodora, Graham

Mary and Tyler Klassen of Goshen, Indiana –

Sara Klassen (Christopher) of Goshen, Indiana

June, George

Carmen and Andrew Shelly of Lenexa, Kansas –

Gregory Shelly-Unruh (Leah) of Wichita, Kansas

Elizabeth Shelly of Shawnee, Kansas (Louis Glinzak)



Thank you to the Bethesda Mennonite Church family for its friendship, support, and care for Ruth during her 75 years in the Henderson community.

Thank you to the administration and staff of Rosewood Court and Legacy Square for their enriching and compassionate care for Ruth during her 11 years in residence.

Thank you to Tabitha Home Health Care and Hospice for Ruth's final weeks of care.



Memorial gifts can be directed to Henderson Health Care Foundation, P.O. Box 423, Henderson, NE 68371.

Remembrance Gathering, December 27, 2023

Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. *Joshua 1:9*

This verse captures the essence of life well lived for Margaret Ruth (Tieszen) Epp who passed away on November 29, 2023, at the age of 102.

Margaret Ruth was born to Abraham V. and Jacobina (Tiahrt) Tieszen in York, Nebraska, on April 7, 1921. She lived only a short time in Henderson, Nebraska, where her father was a teacher and Superintendent of Schools (1919-22). From there they moved to Creighton, Nebraska, and Brookings, South Dakota, before settling near the family farm in the Freeman and Marion area of South Dakota. On the northward journey, the family grew. Ruth became a big sister to four younger siblings, all of whom she outlived: Norma Reimer, Paul Tieszen, Dorothy Ann Gunnels, and Karl Tieszen.

Her parents called her by her middle name, Ruth. However, in each stop or school, her first name might be used instead. She would later comment that she could



place her friends in particular locations based on whether they referred to her as “Margaret” or “Ruth.” She often literally recounted the numerous towns and homes she lived in before graduating from Marion (S.D.) High School in 1939. During this time, she was also baptized into membership at the Bethesda Mennonite Church near Marion, South Dakota.

Ruth earned an elementary teaching certificate from Freeman Junior College and taught in a one-room school house from 1940-42. Years later when many other memories had faded, Ruth recalled her exact yearly salary from that teaching contract.

Her curiosity and the war times took her to various other locations during her young adulthood. She worked in the Department of Commerce in Washington, D.C., during the war. Those business skills made her sought-after for employment at a Dolton (S.D.) bank when returning home at the end of WWII. She also studied Home Economics at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, choosing to save her final year’s college tuition in preparation for marriage.

On May 22, 1948, Ruth married Carl H. Epp at Bethesda Mennonite Church near Marion, South Dakota, and transferred her church membership to Bethesda Mennonite Church in Henderson, Nebraska. Ruth and Carl first made a home in the country near Lushton, Nebraska, later moving to the family farm just outside the Henderson city limits. Three children were born into the family, Mark J., Mary, and Carmen. Carl preceded her in death on December 29, 2009.

While the family grew, Ruth enjoyed making a loving home and supporting the work of the farm. Her large garden, free from weeds and with straight rows, provided abundant produce to be canned, frozen, and dried. She always had a sewing project to work on while something

was cooking or baking in the kitchen. Word puzzles provided relaxation and enjoyment. Even in her years at Legacy Square, Ruth could be counted on to solve the Wheel of Fortune puzzles.

However, it was this partnership with Carl that proved to be more adventurous than the usual quiet farm life. Carl, Ruth, and Carmen made a “working visit” to Bolivia in 1976-77 while Mark was serving there with Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). This trip kindled their interest in further service. So, over the years, Ruth and Carl did short terms of MCC service in the Dominican Republic (1980), Honduras (1985), Mexico (1986), and Nicaragua (1989). Ruth was integral to the work in each one of these locations, often serving the unit as a book-keeper, cook, and visitor hostess. Ruth never had much formal training in Spanish, yet she managed these jobs gracefully with her ability to learn quickly and solve problems creatively. Ruth competently joined in social gatherings, interacted with neighborhood children, and shopped for MCC unit supplies – all in Spanish. She embraced and thrived in this Latin American culture that Carl had enjoyed since his Civilian Public Service work in Puerto Rico. Through these experiences, Ruth and Carl cultivated life-long friendships with their coworkers and neighbors, both the people living in those areas and other MCC volunteers.

After Carl’s passing, Ruth continued to live independently in the family home, enjoying the country views and spontaneous chats with her neighbors. In 2012, Ruth made the decision to enter Rosewood Court assisted living, gaining a new set of neighbors. Ruth was admitted to the Henderson Care Center in 2014 and made the move to the new Legacy Square in June 2019. She willingly participated in the activities, games, and socializing. For her 102nd birthday, the staff honored her request to celebrate it with an apple prieschka party.