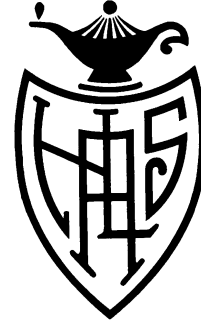


DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI - 2011

RALPH I. OLSON

CLASS OF 1952



Ralph Olson was born Feb. 8, 1934 at Naeve Hospital in Albert Lea to Truman and Marie Olson. He attended elementary school at Northside School (K - 3) and Abbott School (3 - 6); attended Central Junior High School (7 - 9) and graduated from Albert Lea High School in 1952.

He worked after school and summers at various businesses from the age of 15 until his graduation, when he began working full time at Skinner-Chamberlain Department Store. In October of 1953, he began what would be a 45 year career at Interstate Power Company. His first position was a trainee draftsman. He was to hold several positions of increasing responsibility during his career with Interstate including Engineering Clerk, Assistant Gas Superintendant and then Superintendant of Natural Gas Operations for the Albert Lea District in 1964. During this time he enlisted in the local U. S. Army Reserve and served until he was honorably discharged in 1957.

In 1989, Ralph was promoted to Asst. District Manager of the Albert Lea District of Interstate, and in 1993, he was named District Manager. In 1996, Interstate merged with two other utilities and formed Alliant Utilities. Ralph was named Director of Customer Service for the newly formed company, a position he held until his retirement in 1998.

In 1957, he married Marilyn J. Okland, and they had 3 daughters, Susan (Timothy) Madson, Sarah, (Christopher) Allen, and Rachel, (Rev. Karl) Hermanson.

(Continued on next page)

Ralph was active in community affairs including the Albert Lea Jaycees who presented him with the Distinguished Service Award; Albert Lea Toastmasters Club; Albert Lea Lions Club where he served as Secretary; he chaired to organizing committee for the Junior Achievement organization and was program director for the first years; the Albert Lea Chamber of Commerce, where he served on the Board of Directors; served on the Board of the Freeborn County Historical Society; Jobs Inc., which was to become Greater Jobs Inc. He was elected President of the Jobs Board and led the organization in attracting several new industries and the expansion of other existing businesses; he served on the Board of Directors of Norwest Bank (later to become Wells Fargo Bank). He was elected to the school board of District 241 in 1975 for two terms, and served as Chairman of the Board for two years.

In 1984 he was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Naeve Health Care Foundation. He served as a Director and as President in 1988 until 2006. He also was elected to the Board of Trustees of the Naeve Health Care Association (Naeve Hospital et al) and served until the merger with Mayo Health System and the Albert Lea Clinic. He continued as a Trustee of the new medical center board, serving as Secretary for 3 years.

Ralph was an active member of Our Savior's Evangelical Lutheran Church where he taught Sunday School, led the Luther League, and held several offices including Trustee, Deacon, Treasurer, and President. He represented the Congregation at several conventions of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and served on the Synod's Board of Trustees.

Ralph and Marilyn enjoyed traveling together and made three trips to Europe, visiting the homelands of their ancestors in Norway, Denmark, Germany, and Holland. They contacted family in Norway and Denmark. They researched and published family genealogies of their four families dating back to the 1500s in some cases.

Following his retirement, Ralph became a Director of the Education Foundation of Albert Lea, and was later elected President. The Foundation became very active under his leadership and now has assets of over \$600,000 which it manages to benefit students of District 241 - Albert Lea Area Schools. He retired from the Board in 2011.

Ralph is proud of the community which he has called home all his life, grateful for the love and support of his wife and daughters, and appreciative of Interstate Power Company for the opportunities it gave him to grow and advance in his career.