

Nancy June Kaenel was born on September 13, 1943, in Hagerstown, Maryland, the daughter of Maurice and Evelyn (Rude) Ellestad. She grew up in the Willmar community and graduated from Willmar High School in 1961. In 1962, Nancy was united in marriage to Donald Bruhn. They made their home in Willmar and to this union they were blessed with four children, Jeffrey, Tammie, Twyla and Jason. Besides being a homemaker, Nancy worked in food service at the Willmar State Hospital and Rice Memorial Hospital. In 1992, Donald passed away.

On August 15, 1987, Nancy was married to Lester "Les" Kaenel. They lived in Willmar briefly prior to Davenport, Nebraska, where they owned and operated Chief's Mess Bar & Grill. In 2003, they returned to Willmar and in 2022, Les passed away. Nancy was most recently employed at Cash Wise Foods in Willmar.

Nancy was a member of Calvary Lutheran Church and was an extremely active member of the V.F.W. Auxiliary Post #1639 in Willmar. Nancy enjoyed attending dirt track races (especially at KRA), cooking, camping, dogs, long car rides on Sunday afternoons and being with her family and friends.

Nancy passed away Wednesday, February 4, at Bethesda Grand in Willmar at the age of 82.

She is survived by her four children, Jeff (and Tiffany) Bruhn of Smithland, KY., Tammie (and Jeff) Paulson of Atwater, Twyla (and Dave) Scofield of Litchfield and Jason (and Beth) Bruhn of Willmar; a step-son, Ron (and Lisa) Kaenel of Willmar; thirteen grandchildren; two great grandchildren; and one brother, Michael (and Mary Ann) Ellestad of Kearney, NE.; besides other relatives and many friends.

She was preceded in death by both of her husbands, Don Bruhn and Les Kaenel; two sisters, Donna and Mary; and a son-in-law, Roger Bauch.

Celebrating the Life of



Nancy J. Kaenel

1943 — 2026

I'M FREE

*Don't grieve for me now for I'm free
I am following the path God laid for me.
I took His hand when I heard Him call,
I turned my back and left it all,
I could not stay another day,
To laugh, to love, to work or play,
If my parting has left a void,
Then fill it with remembered joy,
A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss,
Ah, these things I too will miss.
Be not burdened with time of sorrow,
I wish for you the shine of tomorrow.
My life's been full, I savored much,
Good friends, good times, a loved one touched.
Perhaps my time seemed all to brief,
Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.
Lift up your heart and share with me;
God wanted me now, He set me free.*

In Loving Memory Of

Nancy J. Kaenel

September 13, 1943
Hagerstown, Maryland

February 4, 2026
Willmar, Minnesota

Celebration of Life Service

Thursday, March 5, 2026 - 11:00 a.m.

Peterson Brothers Funeral Home
Willmar, Minnesota

Welcome

Prayer

Song "When I Get Where I'm Going"

Brad Paisley & Dolly Parton (cd)

Reading of the Obituary

Family Remembrances

Song "On Eagle's Wings"

Michael Joncas (cd)

Message

Pastor H. Paul McCullough

Song "I Will Rise"

Chris Tomlin (cd)

V.F.W. Auxiliary Ritual

Closing Remarks

Honorary Pallbearers

Nancy's beloved Grandchildren & Great Grandchildren

Interment

Fairview Cemetery
Willmar, Minnesota