



Ruth Elaine Berglund

October 13, 1942 - September 3, 2026

Pierre, South Dakota

Ruth Elaine Berglund died in Pierre on September 3, 2026. She was eighty-three. Born there on October 13, 1942, she grew up knowing the river as a weekday neighbor and the capitol as a building that still needed lunch. She learned a steam table before she learned a highway. A tray, she said, is a kind of sentence: it has to arrive complete.

She spent thirty-one years in the capitol cafeteria, first washing pans, later running a breakfast that had to catch clerks who came in late from a pickup that had already been working since dark. She kept extra milk without making a speech about it. When a storm closed the highways she still opened the kitchen, because weather is not an excuse to skip a meal. She taught younger aides that a government commodity can be seasoned.

She married Howard Berglund in 1963. He sold seed and died in 2001. They raised a son and a daughter who still argue about who got the last piece of caramel cake. Ruth kept the garden of peonies, and the habit of leaving a casserole on a porch without a speech. She sat through long meetings the way other people sit through weather.

Grandchildren remember a woman who corrected their thank-you notes more than their homework, who kept a biscuit tin of paper clips, and who could name every clerk in the building by the mug she no longer used. She died in Pierre, in the cold she had always said you could live with if you dressed for it. The line is someone else's now. The patience she practiced there is harder to replace than a steam table.

Services

A funeral in Pierre with one familiar hymn, sung slowly. A gift to a school meal fund is welcome.

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