

Kenneth Dale Rupe (Ken), was born on December 3, 1919 in Pueblo, Colorado to Herbert Amos Rupe and Carmen Hinda Vandivort. He had one brother, Herbert Alden Rupe, two years younger than Ken. (Alden also served in Europe during World War II.)

Ken graduated from Centennial High School in 1938 followed by two years of business/junior college in Pueblo. In high school he played trumpet in the band, and was a DeMolay leader, serving as Grand Master his senior year of high school.

Starting in July 1937 and continuing until February 1942, Ken worked as a messenger and stenographer in various departments for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company located on the south side of Pueblo.

Following the United States' entry into World War II, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 1942. Initially assigned to the infantry, while receiving training at Camp Campbell, Kentucky, it was discovered that Ken was proficient in stenography. As a result, he was reassigned to an administrative team supporting a hospital group then being formed and composed of doctors and nurses from the Vanderbilt University medical school, and led by Col. George W. Reyer, a career military officer.

In August, 1943 the 300th General Hospital group (5th Army) left New York Harbor aboard the Thomas H. Barry troopship and initially landed in Bizerte, Tunisia, North Africa, and then later that year arrived in Naples, Italy, taking over a portion of a new hospital located in Vomero, a nearby suburb. At times the hospital served 2,000 patients that were casualties of combat.

Ken observed the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius near Naples on March 17, 1944, the last time in recent history that the volcano was active. He remained and served honorably in Italy until the end of the war.

Ken's father, Herbert, was employed as a freight agent with the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad. During the war years, he and his wife Carmen were relocated several times, first to Albuquerque, New Mexico, then Joplin, Missouri, and then to Chanute, Kansas. By 1945 they had moved one last time to Wichita, Kansas. So, at the conclusion of his service in 1945 and now nearly 26 years old, Ken returned to the home of his parents in Wichita on the date of his mother's birthday, November 28th. He made the return voyage across the Atlantic aboard the S.S. Mariposa troopship.

In 1946, Ken resumed his studies and finished his college education at Wichita University, earning a degree in accounting. He met Bonnie Jean Brown at a group for young singles at First Methodist Church in downtown Wichita, and on August 3, 1947 they were married at the church. Together they raised two children, Carmen LaVonne Rupe and Douglas Grant Rupe.

Upon college graduation, Ken was hired by Fred Koch at Wood River Oil Company, which later became Koch Industries based in Wichita, Kansas, where he served in various executive accounting positions. He remained with the company his entire career, retiring in 1985.

Following his retirement, he remained active in his church, serving as a volunteer with the American Red Cross and Open Door ministry. He especially enjoyed trips to his home state of Colorado and extensive travel whenever possible, including a return trip in his eighties to Naples with a group of the 300th General Hospital, as they recalled their days of service from 1943 to 1945.

As of this date, May 30, 2023, at age 103 Ken lives with Bonnie, his wife of 76 years, in an assisted living facility in Wichita.