

Burt Riskedahl

OAKDALE, MN - Burt Riskedahl passed away on December 12, 2023, in Oakdale, MN.

Burt was born Sept. 8, 1940, to Clifford and Erna (Sauter) Riskedahl. He was raised in Tuttle, ND, where his parents owned and operated Riskedahl's Store. Among his early memories were many hours spent candling eggs at the store. Burt graduated from Tuttle High School where he excelled at playing the trumpet and was an athlete on the high school's basketball team.

Burt earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in social work from Jamestown College (now the University of Jamestown) in Jamestown, ND, in 1962 and a Master's in Social Work from the University of Denver in Colorado in 1964. As a social worker with the Lutheran Welfare Society in Fargo, and Bethany Children's Home in Duluth, Burt focused on adoption and foster care, and mental health support for families and children, particularly adolescents. Through this social work, Burt became aware of the ways in which the legal system failed to adequately protect families and children. He therefore decided to attend night school at William Mitchell Law School in St. Paul while working at the Wilder Foundation as a social worker in the day. Burt received his Juris Doctor degree in 1973.



During this period in his life, Burt also married and had two children. During college at Jamestown, Burt met and fell in love with Margo Paulsberg from New Rockford, ND. Burt and Margo married in 1964. Their son, Mark, was born in 1966, and their daughter, Diane, was born in 1969.

Burt, Margo, and their children moved to Bismarck in 1973. Burt began work as a Legal Consultant with the North Dakota Public Welfare System, and later the North Dakota Human Services Department. He began the private practice of law in Bismarck in 1974. From 1979 until his retirement in 2006 Burt served as a Burleigh County Court Judge and then as a State Trial Court District Judge. After retiring he continued to assist the judiciary, particularly as a mediator. As a lawyer and a judge, his priority was the impact of laws on children and families, as well as cases focused on individual rights, and he was lauded by the Bismarck Tribune for bringing "Compassion to the Court House." In 2010, Burt received

the Love Without Fear award from the Abused Adult Resource Center in Bismarck for his work on behalf of the rights of victims of domestic violence.

Burt was also an active participant in many civic, educational, and religious organizations, including serving as a trustee at the University of Jamestown for over 20 years. Burt and Margo also did volunteer work with children and young adults when they traveled to Ecuador and Peru during their retirement, in addition to visiting Rotary volunteer projects in Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Sri Lanka. In his final years, he championed Death with Dignity and supported Minnesota's End-of-Life Options Act.

Burt's connection to family and friends was a major focus of his life. The home that Burt, Margo, Mark, and Diane moved to in 1973 in rural Burleigh County overlooking the Missouri River was the site of innumerable gatherings of family and friends. Burt referred to the years they spent there as, "a wonderful period of time for our family." Added to the happiness of those years was Mark marrying Melissa Powers, and Diane marrying Muhammad Ali Khalidi, who are parents of Zayd (born in 2003) and Layla (born in 2006). In 2015 Burt and Margo moved back to St. Paul, MN, and then in 2019 to Oakdale, MN.

Burt valued the connections he had made with people throughout his life. He, Margo, his children, and grandchildren traveled to Norway in 2021 to visit family in Norway. Burt had regular visits, phone calls, and meetings with cousins, former classmates, colleagues, and new friends, even after he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in September 2023. Few things gave him more pleasure than spending time with his children and grandchildren and his many friends.

Some of Burt's favorite activities included biking, gardening, and bird watching. He always expressed how grateful he was for his life, during which he enjoyed learning, leading, and helping others. Burt was also very appreciative of the last 21 years in the fellowship of AA, where he formed close friendships and received the support of many who were very significant in his life.

Burt leaves behind his wife, Margo, Oakdale, MN; son, Mark (Melissa Powers), Portland, OR; daughter, Diane (Muhammad Ali Khalidi), Ossining, NY; two grandchildren, Zayd and Layla; sisters, Barbara Vellenga and Laura Hampton; and numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews.

The family requests memorials to Mano a Mano at manoamano.org, the Outreach Ministry at Unity Church or the charity of your choice.

There will be a celebration of life gathering for Burt in the Spring at Unity Church Unitarian in St. Paul, MN.