



Keri Paulson

January 10, 2020

Kari Paulsen, Wife of Former World Church President Jan Paulsen, Dies at 85
Her life was characterized by resilience and compassion.

We all need somebody who listens to us at some time or another,” Kari Paulsen told Ministry magazine in 2006, describing how, as the wife of a Seventh-day Adventist Church administrator, she was able to find a personal ministry despite the limitations of chronic illness.

Paulsen, whose phone ministry of calling those who need encouragement was an integral part of her life, passed to her rest January 10, 2020, in Oslo, Norway, at the age of 85. Jan, her husband and the past president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, was at her side.

“Mrs. Paulsen was a very capable person and a strong support for Pastor Paulsen in his life and their ministry together over many decades in different parts of the world,” said Ted N. C. Wilson, current world church president, in a post on his Facebook account.

Rajmund Dabrowski, former communication director for the world church, noted a close bond with the Paulsens: “I felt that they were our second parents,” he told Adventist Review. Having first worked with Jan Paulsen in the Trans-European Division, and then while Jan was General Conference

president, Dabrowski noted the family commitment Kari Paulsen had.

“When we were abroad, [they] eased our way of accepting a new area, a new culture, and so forth. These are the kind of memories we will have. It is a tremendous loss to not only the family, but to those who were accepted by them as a family,” Dabrowski said.

Gerry and Verna Karst worked with the Paulsens when the couples were in Silver Spring, Maryland. Gerry served as Paulsen’s assistant and Verna as the headquarters nurse. Both remember Kari Paulsen’s adventurousness.

“She was not above having a little bit of fun,” Gerry Karst recalled, while Verna Karst noted Kari’s deep interest in others.

“Kari was a caring person and was very interested in people. But because of her health issues, she was restricted in what she could do,” Verna Karst said.

Kari Trykkerud was born in a small town near Notodden, about 70 miles (113 kilometers) from Oslo. She grew up during World War II, when Norway was under German occupation. Shortly after the war, Kari underwent surgery—the first performed in Norway—for a heart condition. During her recovery, she promised God she would become a Christian if He helped her get well.

That vow led to a search that ended when an Adventist relative’s pastor offered young Kari a copy of *Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White. Following a *Voice of Prophecy* correspondence course and Bible studies, Kari decided to become a Seventh-day Adventist, even though this caused trouble at home when she refused a traditional Christmas dinner of pork. Infuriated, her father asked Kari to leave home, and the young woman went to live at an aunt’s home.

After secondary school in Norway, Kari went to the church-owned Vejlebjergskolen (Danish Junior College) in Daugård, Denmark, to study theology. Arriving two weeks into the semester, she admitted to being confused during a lecture on biblical dates, not least because of language differences. It so happened that another Norwegian student named Jan Paulsen was sitting next to her and offered to help. "Don't worry," he said, "I'll explain it to you later."

That remark began a continuing conversation that lasted more than six decades. Friends at first, love grew between them, and the couple married before Jan went to Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, to continue his education. Kari soon followed, and the couple learned a new culture along with adjusting to married life. They had three children, all of whom survive her: Laila, Jan Rune, and Rein Andre.

The couple went to Africa, first to Ghana and then Nigeria, where Jan Paulsen served as president of Adventist College of West Africa, now Babcock University. Mrs. Paulsen's health problems worsened while in Africa and were to remain with her throughout her life. Returning to Europe, Jan served as president of Newbold College in Binfield, England; secretary and then president of the Trans-European Division, as a general vice president of the world church, and as General Conference president, a role he assumed in January 1999 and held for 11 years.

"I have experienced quite a lot of illness, and this close proximity to death does something to you and your relationship with the Lord," Kari told Ministry magazine in 2006. "Somehow you rely more on Him. It's important to stay close to Him, to pray, to read. It's kind of a constant reminder that this life might not last that long."

In 2015, Pacific Press released *Against All Odds*, Kari Paulsen's memoir of life as a Christian and her struggle with chronic illness and family tragedy. The book won wide praise from readers.

"Kari Paulsen defined 'resilience' for me, and for thousands of believers for whom her challenging life story has been a great encouragement," said Bill Knott, *Adventist Review* editor and executive editor. "Her honesty and wit have helped so many of us understand how grace has intersected our own moments of physical pain and disappointment. She reminded us by her words and her example that the Lord always has the last word—and that His word is deep affection for us."

Tor Tjeransen, communication director for the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Norway, who has known the Paulsens for more than 50 years, noted Kari Paulsen's lifelong optimism: "Kari has always kept a very positive attitude toward everything, everything she met in life. The strain on those who are in traveling positions is just enormous. She has always been there, and always very supportive of Jan," he said.

Funeral services for Kari Paulsen are being planned in Mjøndalen, Norway, on Monday, January 20. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested for donations to be made to the Life Hope orphanage and school in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; donations may be sent via PayPal to reinpaulsen@gmail.com.

In a message, Jan Paulsen remarked, "Kari gave often to keep the school alive and would love for it to continue after her departure."

Tribute Wall



“ 2 files added to the album *Memories Album*



Reflecting on Memories - January 15, 2020 at 10:36 PM