

AR August 13, 1984
**Memorial set for L.G. Keeney,
former Grinnell Mutual head**

Lawrence G. Keeney, 74, former president of Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Company, died Thursday morning, Aug. 9, at Friendship Manor in Grinnell of a lung illness of several months.

Memorial Services will be held Monday at 10:30 a.m. at the Grinnell United Church of Christ-Congregational with the Rev. Philip J. Ramstad, pastor of the church, officiating. Music will be performed by Russelle Leggett, vocalist, and JoAnne Ritacca, organist.

A native of Clarke County, Mr. Keeney studied architectural engineering at Iowa State University before joining the staff of Farmers Mutual Reinsurance Association, now Grinnell Mutual, in 1935. He became chief executive officer in 1944 and for 31 years led the company to unprecedented growth and leadership in the farm mutual insurance industry.

Prominent in farm fire safety work as well as the reinsurance business, Mr. Keeney was active in the American

Association of Agricultural Engineers, the National Fire Protection Association and the National Safety Council. He was one of the organizers of the Iowa Farm Safety Council, and also served as a director of the Iowa 4-H Foundation. In 1968 Iowa State University conferred an alumni merit award on Mr. Keeney for achievement in his profession, in public service, and to his alma mater.

In his home community Mr. Keeney served at various times as chairman of the Grinnell College board of trustees, the Grinnell General Hospital board of trustees, the Grinnell-Newburg Board of Education, and the Congregational Church trustees, heading the latter's building drive. He also was active in United Fund and Red Cross work, and was a charter member of the Grinnell Rotary Club. A flying enthusiast, he frequently piloted company planes on business.

He was married to Adelaide "Peggy" Sybenga on Sept. 4, 1937, at Pella. Upon his retirement in 1975, they moved to Gull Lake in Minnesota, returning to Grinnell in 1983. He is survived by his wife; his three daughters, Martha A. Heddens, Naperville, Ill.; Cynthia A. Cronn of Cozad, Neb.; and Mary M. Mowers of Beloit, Wis.; and seven grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Gilbert Nelson and Mattie Morris Keeney, and his brothers, Morris and Paul Keeney.

Should friends desire, memorials may be made to the L.G. Keeney scholarship fund at Iowa State University; Grinnell College; the United Church of Christ-Congregational; or to Grinnell General Hospital, and left at the Smith Funeral Home where friends may call for additional information.



L.G. Keeney

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This week, Grinnell said goodbye to a very special Grinnellian — L.G. Keeney.

Larry was a friend to many of us. He was a visionary, a builder, and one of a very special breed.

Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance was his "baby." And he guided the growth with unusual wisdom, with unusual energy, and with unusual utilization of the "world of tomorrow" today.

Larry was a true pioneer.

He sailed forth on uncharted waters. He flew out in skyways still unmarked. And in the overall scene, he led the way for the remarkable growth and development of Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance.

Some of us who are now drifting into the "old timer" range can recall that the Grinnell Mutual Reinsurance Co. was located on the second floor of the Grinnell State Bank Building.

President Keeney decided that the tomorrows demanded more. And so, he set his sights on what was then identified as the "hole-in-the-ground" — the area on the north side of Fifth Ave. just west of Broad St. — and a two-story building was built to accommodate the growing firm.

But it should be noted that it was built with the capability of taking on two additional stories in case of expansion.

The expansion came — the two stories were added — but it still was not enough to meet the demands of business being developed by the company under the Keeney leadership.

So they moved south of Interstate 80. They provided plenty of room for growth — and they used it, and continue to use it.

We enjoyed our personal relationships with Larry. Many years ago we served together on the old St. Francis Hospital board. And when the negotiations for joining the two hospitals and forming the all-new Grinnell General Hospital were in the works, Larry Keeney and W.T. Autry were the St. Francis team who worked with A.C. Eisenman and Forrest Mitchell of the Old Community Hospital board to make the arrangements.

Boards of both hospitals were joined and Larry became the new leader of Grinnell General Hospital.

He served in many other civic projects — in good times and bad times. Larry was not one to compromise on principles, and set an interesting and true path for most of us to follow.

Early risers in the town were used to seeing Larry enjoying a pre-6 a.m. breakfast at the old P & M Cafe, and later at the Longhorn Cafe.

One of the goals we set many years ago was to get downtown to work before Larry. And one morning, at 5:45 a.m., as we started on our toast and eggs at the Longhorn, Larry walked in and sat down next to us.

We didn't even give him a chance to look at a menu before saying: "Well, Larry, we finally beat you to breakfast!" And we felt good.

Larry smiled, and said: "Al, this is my coffee break!"

And then we really understood how this man could lead and build the company into prominence — in Iowa, in the Midwest, and in the U.S.

We enjoyed Larry — his sense of humor, his dedication to that which should be done, his love of home and family, and most of all, because he was so completely available to all.

We join with the many who will miss him much. — a.j. Under