

Ruth (Dudley) Grysen was a frugal woman - she made sure lights were turned off, and was able to find a practical use for almost anything that other people would out. Thrifty as she was with money, however, Ruth was no miser when it came to her time or affection. Kind-hearted and loving, Ruth devoted herself to caring for her beloved family, the greatest joy of her life.

Ruth Finna Baker was born April 26, 1913, in the dusty Oklahoma town of Cheyenne. She was the first-born of Edward and Fannie (Weeks) Baker, but soon enough she had five younger brothers to play with. However, times were tough for the Baker family, and there wasn't much time for playing before Ruth had to grow into adult responsibilities. Edward worked hard to put food on the table, but it was not an easy life for a field worker. The family often moved from place to place, looking for better work; at one point they even lived in a wagon. When Ruth was twelve, her mother left the family and Ruth had to step into her shoes. Not only did she work in the fields to help the family earn money, she also managed the home, cooking meals, sewing, cleaning, and caring for her five younger brothers. Despite the difficulties, Ruth's father made sure that the family stayed together, and while they may not have been living in luxury, they always managed to get by. Even after she grew up and moved away, however, Ruth would forever cringe at the word "water biscuit" - one of the staples of those lean days.

Although the family had little enough to spare, Ruth's father was a friendly, generous man and loved to bring guests home for dinner. One day, he brought home Leonard Dudley, a man from Michigan who was visiting Texas. Leonard and Ruth fell in love, and when Ruth was nineteen years old they got married. Since Leonard was from Michigan, the young couple moved back to his home in Grand Rapids. While Ruth was very happy with her new life, she couldn't help worrying about her father and brothers - Ruth had always been a worrier. To ease her mind, Leonard and Ruth took a trip back home to check on them. It turned out that Ruth's youngest brother, George, had taken over all her jobs, and they were doing just fine! This allowed Ruth to return to Michigan and enjoy her new life with a clear conscience. Leonard was the perfect husband for Ruth - his light-hearted attitude and great sense of humor balanced out the anxieties Ruth had from growing up under such unstable circumstances. He could always make her forget her worries and enjoy life.

Eventually Leonard and Ruth bought fifteen acres of land on Leonard NW, near Wilson. Ruth loved this opportunity to renew one of her lifelong passions, gardening. She was really good at it - it is said that some people have a "green thumb," but Ruth must have had a green hand! She had vegetables, flowers, and even a small orchard. The most important thing Ruth raised, however, was her children, and she was good at that too. Ruth and Leonard

were blessed with three beautiful babies: James, Marilyn, and Mary Kay. Ruth enjoyed being a homemaker, and she was always busy. In the summer she took care of the garden, canning all the produce her family couldn't eat. In the winter, she spent time sewing, quilting, and working on other craft projects. She liked these kinds of projects, and was very savvy about re-making whatever she had lying around. Ruth was also a wonderful cook and baker - her kids remember especially warm apple pies fresh out of the oven. During this time, Ruth stayed close to her father and brothers, and every year the Dudley family returned to Arkansas to visit them. It was always a party when she came down, and both sides of the family looked forward to her visits.

Tragically, Leonard was diagnosed with cancer and died in 1947. Ruth cared for him in their home throughout this difficult time. Bereft of Leonard's light-hearted attitude, Ruth's world was a very different place; it was hard for her to come to terms with his absence. However, Ruth had three children depending on her, and this gave her the motivation to carry on. She was determined to provide a good home for children, just as Leonard had done. First, she worked at Kresge's and earned extra money by picking apples on the side. Later, she was hired at the Grand Rapids Press, where she made coffee and took care of the break and coffee area. Ruth loved this job, since it gave her the chance to talk with many different people. Everyone enjoyed her attitude of Southern hospitality, and Ruth made lots of good friends.

After her children grew up and moved away, Ruth married Bill Grysen, whom she had met through a mutual friend. Ruth spent nearly twenty years with her second husband before he passed away in the early 1980s. One of the greatest joys in her later years was the time she was able to spend with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Ruth also valued the companionship of series of dogs over the years, ranging from Tookie to Littlebit. Ruth continued to receive great comfort from her faith, as she had her entire life; from an early age she had learned that the opportunity to attend church was a privilege. She had a private faith, and was a faithful student of the Bible.

As she grew older, Ruth realized that it was time to move away from her home. She was too lonely there, despite frequent visits from her children and grandchildren. After trying a few different places in Michigan, she moved to Pennsylvania with her daughter Mary Kay. At first she found the change difficult, but she felt much more at home when she moved to a room in Country Meadows with a balcony where she could grow flowers and vegetables.

Having lived a full life, Ruth died on March 14, 2007, at the age of ninety-three.

Ruth was a determined, proud woman who cared deeply for her family. She will be lovingly remembered and missed by all those who had the privilege of knowing her.

Ruth's family includes her children, James (Elsie) Dudley, Marilyn (Ken) Eikenhout, and Mary Kay (George) Hanson; ten grandchildren; twenty-four great-grandchildren; two great-great-grandchildren; and five nieces and seven nephews. She was preceded in death by her first husband, Leonard Dudley; her second husband, Bill Gysen; her granddaughter, Timberly DeBoer; and her brothers Gene, Allan, Marvin, George and Sterling Baker.

A service to celebrate Ruth's life will be held on Monday, March 19 at 11 AM at Heritage Life Story Funeral Home - Alt & Shawmut Hills Chapel, 2120 Lake Michigan Drive NW, where relatives and friends are invited to visit with her family on Sunday from 2-5 PM. For those who wish, memorial contributions to the Alzheimer's Association, 213 Sheldon Blvd SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 are appreciated. Please visit Ruth's personal memory page at [www.lifestorynet.com](http://www.lifestorynet.com) to share a favorite memory.