

Kathleen Ann “Kathie” Collins Ayres

January 14, 1943 (Rockford, IL) December 26, 2019 (Rockford, IL)

Kathleen Ann “Kathie” Collins Ayres died on Thursday, December 26, 2019; she had been under home hospice care for 10 months in her Peterson Meadows apartment. Kathie was supported by her family, Heartland Hospice, home care workers, Peterson Meadows staff, Peterson Meadows residents, and her life partner, Ted Ross.

Kathie, the first of three children born to her parents, Lilah (Kleckner) and William P. Collins. Lilah's family were farmers east of Rockford. William came from a large Chicago Irish family; his accomplishments included studying at the Chicago Art Institute, working as an illustrator for several firms, becoming a partner of Hollingsworth and Collins Advertising Agency, and serving a term as President of the Rockford Art Association. Sadly, William, passed away in 1957 when Kathie was only 14. Lilah reentered the work force as a Rockford Park District bookkeeper and enjoyed many years of retirement. During her last years, Lilah resided at Fairhaven Christian Retirement Center.



In 1961, Kathie graduated from Rockford's West High School where she formed many enduring friendships, especially the Potluck Club. In 1962, she was hired by City National Bank where she organized a fund-raising hot air balloon event; Kathie attended many nationwide hot air balloon events and became an Observer for balloon races. When City Bank was acquired, as Director of Public Relations, she developed alliances with other women bankers; they formed the Mama Owls group that continues today. Kathie ended her banking career in 1993 as Vice President of Retail Banking.

On August 31, 1968, Kathie married Joseph (Bud) Shepard Ayres, a ship pilot on the Great Lakes. During WWII, as a teenager, Bud served as a frog man in Europe. Kathie and Bud lived in Rockford. Sadly, Bud died in 1986. Bill W. “Ted” Ross and Kathie became acquainted through charitable fund-raising efforts. On February 11, 2002 they became Life Partners. On that day, Kathie and Ted voiced their love for each other and vowed to support each other in work and play.

Engaging in private prayer became a spiritual practice that gave her strength and comfort. As a youth, Kathie attended Second Congregational Church. On March 28, 1999 she joined Zion Lutheran Church where she was active for many years. In 2018, she joined Ted as a member of Emmanuel Episcopal Church.

Community involvement was important to Kathie; starting in high school, she volunteered at Rockford Memorial Hospital. When Kathie left banking, she became Director of Development for Zion Development Corporation where for six years she helped improve housing for homeless and low-income families. As a Board Member, Kathy helped raise funds for the YMCA, Booker Washington Center, Stepping Stones, Rockford Memorial Hospital, Children's Home and Aid Society, Cloisters of Forest Hills, the American Institute of Banking, and Al Anon.

Kathy is survived by her Sisters, Mary Anderson (Peter) and Susi Atkinson (Rick); Nephews, Brian (Stacy Nelson) and Dan (Katie Knox) Dickover; Nieces, Chrissie and Katie (Seth Factor) Atkinson; Great nephews, Tej and Simon Dickover; Great nieces, Elsie Dickover, Cecelia Hampton, Amelia Hampton, Visha Dave, and Piper Factor; Step-nephews, Jim (Lori) Ongena and Jim's Sons, Jim, Michael, Ryan, Erick, and John (Sue) Ongena; Step-niece, Marianne (Keven) Holland and Marianne's Son, Jordon Anderson; and many Cousins. Also left to mourn her passing are members of Ted's family: his Children, Karen Alanis, Mary (Bill Davies) Ross, Nancy Alex Riordan) Ross; and Ted's Stepchildren, Ben Schoenberg, Grace Schoenberg, Dan (Sarah) Schoenberg, Martha (Ben) O'Toole, and Sam O'Toole. Kathy will also be remembered by Ted's Grandchildren, Lee and Daniel Alanis, and Melinda and T.J. Davies.



A Memorial Service will be held at 11:00 a.m. Saturday, January 25, 2020, at Zion Lutheran Church, 925 5th Avenue, Rockford, IL, Rev. Dr. Michael Thomas officiating. A light lunch will be served after the service. Visitation will be Friday, January 24, 2020 from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. in the Dick and Pat Nyquist Chapel at Peterson Meadows, 6401 Newburg Rd., Rockford. Memorials may be sent to Zion Lutheran Church.

References:

[Kathleen Collins Ayres Obituary - Visitation & Funeral Information \(olsonfh.com\)](#)
[Kathleen Collins Ayres Obituary - Rockford, Illinois , Olson Funeral and Cremation Services | Tribute Archive](#)
[Kathleen Ayres Obituary \(1943 - 2019\) - Rockford, IL - Rockford Register Star \(legacy.com\)](#)

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