



Nancy Lou Kersh

January 10, 1933 - August 22, 2019

Nancy Lou Graham Kersh of Fayetteville, Arkansas, and a long-time resident of Russellville, Arkansas, passed away Thursday, August 22, 2019, in Fayetteville. She was the daughter of Ethel and Homer Graham and was born January 10, 1933, in Oden, Arkansas.

After graduation from high school, she attended Arkansas Tech University in Russellville. While a co-ed, and in a curious turn of events that can only be attributed to fate, Nancy's and another young man's destinies would be sealed. Following a winter's snowfall in which students were cavorting in a snowball fight, Nancy was knocked unconscious by a young man's errant snowball. That young man turned out to be the love of her life, the future Dr. Kenneth Kersh and her husband for nearly six decades. Following graduation, she went on to become a flight attendant for Braniff International Airways. Braniff was the last of the true first-class airlines that included flight attendants wearing uniforms designed by Emilio Pucci. After her flight career she married Kenneth Kersh in New York, New York, on a televised NBC show. Following some time as an English teacher in Dardanelle, Arkansas, as a newlywed, Nancy settled into her chosen career as the wife to Kenneth and a loving mother to their five children: Graham; Richard; Kimberly; Georgia; and Nana.

Nancy became the First Lady of Arkansas Tech University in 1973. During her twenty-year tenure, she hosted and entertained government officials, senators, and presidents. Also, amongst her guests were world famous author Norman Mailer and Jean-Michel Cousteau, the son of oceanographer Jacques Cousteau. Nancy would wow her guests with her famous dinner parties and cooking. She was once presented with a citation from the Arkansas House of Representatives stating how delicious her homemade biscuits with ham and sausage were. Adding to her culinary prowess, Nancy owned one of the very first commercial Wolf stoves before they became a standard residential item. She often referred to her stove as her alter to the amusement and delight of friends, family, and guests.

Not only was she a gracious hostess and First Lady, but Nancy was a lover of children,

nature, and animals. She famously had a pet deer affectionately named “Deer” that briefly lived in the backyard of the Arkansas Tech president’s residence. Nancy rarely missed a day of swimming, and her love for water was undeniable. A strong advocate for swimming, she encouraged anyone who had her audience to adopt the sport as it allowed participation at any fitness level. She learned how to swim in her beloved Ouachita River in Pine Ridge, Arkansas. Nancy was responsible for bringing SCAN (Suspected Child Abuse & Neglect) to Pope County, Arkansas, and she was an avid volunteer for the organization, especially to the children that SCAN served. She was a member of the Arkansas Tech Dames Club and a member of All Saints Episcopal Church in Russellville. Nancy’s life was motivated by her devotion to her faith, love of family and friends, and the nature that surrounded her in her beloved home state of Arkansas. Nancy never met a stranger and always found that special spark in those around her-always paying compliments and encouragement and letting people know how special they were.

Nancy was preceded in death by her parents and beloved husband Kenneth. She is survived by her five children: Graham Kersh (wife Lily) of Russellville, AR; Richard Kersh (wife Gina) of Dardanelle, AR; Kimberly Kersh of Dardanelle, AR; Georgia Kersh Dye of Russellville, AR; and Nana Kersh Winters (husband David) of Fayetteville, AR. Nancy is also survived by seven much loved grandchildren: Jessica Kersh Hunt (husband Kyle); Lauren Kersh; Shelby Dye; Savannah Dye Johnston (husband Wendel); William Kersh; Dane Winters; and Nash Winters.

A private family interment will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer’s Association at <https://www.alz.org/>

Cemetery

Fort Smith National Cemetery

522 S. 6th Street

Fort Smith, AR, 72901

Comments



“ What a life! What a bright light!
The world is much less interesting without "Madam Kersh"

I cherish the memories of her and the Kersh family.

Robin Shaver - September 13 at 11:12 AM



“ My dad loved this little lady. He told great stories about her humor. She will be missed by all.

sallie cline langford - September 11 at 01:25 PM



“ The Bert Gore family would like to express our sympathy and condolences to the members of Nancy Kersh's family. We remember her with great fondness and will miss her. May she rest in peace !!! In His precious love with blessings, always!

Susan Gore and family...Karen Gore McKnight and family

Susan Gore - September 02 at 08:56 PM



“ With a grateful heart I write this post in honor of Miss Nancy.
She was someone we could all admire in many ways. She was fiercely protective of those she loved and called family. She loved the Lord. She loved children of all ages. She kept herself informed in many medical advances and shared them all with us. Nancy enjoyed life and always could turn a negative into a positive.
To say Nancy was unique doesn't begin to describe her. We all have hilarious stories we could share. One word that comes to mind is FUN. She was just fun to be around in any situation.
To my family she will be remembered fondly and with love. I am so grateful to have known her.

Robert, Karla, Matt & Nikki

Karla Graybill - September 02 at 02:10 PM



“ Condolences, love, and blessings to the family of Nancy Kersh. The Bert Gore family sends this with sincerest comforting wishes to all of her children and grand children. She is now with her precious Creator enjoying great love and peace, eternally.

From: Susan Gore and Karen Gore McKnight families. September 1, 2019

Susan Gore - September 01 at 11:24 PM



“ My deepest condolences to Nancy's family. I am Harmon Graham's youngest son (73 now), Howard's half-brother, and Richard's uncle! I remember Nancy from visits to Pine Ridge many, many years ago...fond memories. Uncle Homer, Aunt Ethel, the Huddleston's, and the Jot-Em-Down Store! Nancy's life was full and productive; we should all be so lucky!

James Monroe (Jimmy) Graham, Prescott

Jim Graham - August 29 at 03:36 PM



“ I am so sorry to hear of Nancy's passing as well! She was full of life and fun. I am Richard's daughter and Howard's granddaughter. I also remember Nancy from visits in Pine Ridge with Aunt Ethel and Uncle Homer. And she was a character and beautiful. Loved to be around her and all her lovely children. Please know your Prescott family is thinking of you. She was a lovely Lovie!

Missy Graham - September 12 at 01:33 AM



“ Nancy was a unique person and I have so many delightful memories of her unusual personality and hilarious antics. The obituary provides a wonderful look at her interesting life full of love for family and total dedication to the welfare of children. My sincere condolences to all her family. Those of us at Tech when Kenneth became president, literally watched their children grow up on campus in the President's Residence which is now the Alumni House. I know all of her children and grandchildren will cherish their memories of their "one of a kind" mother and grandmother!

Mary Ann Rollans - August 28 at 11:50 PM