



Eleanor Kay Kiefer

September 7, 1936 - November 5, 2021

Educator, Historian & Author Eleanor Kay Kiefer RIP

Eleanor Kay Kiefer, historian, author and educator, died November 5, 2021, at age 85. She was a mother of three, grandmother of three, and friend to many. She is preceded in death by her beloved husband, Jack, who passed away in 1994. Kay was born in Rock Island, Illinois, to Don Oder, son and employee of Claude and Stella Oder, owners of a successful large dairy and milk bottling company in Danville, Illinois, and Maxine Elliot, business school graduate and the revered only child of Sarah Elizabeth Jewell and Charles Elliot of Lewiston, Illinois. Kay was born during the Depression, the middle child in a household of five children, two older female siblings, and a younger brother and sister, until the death of her own mother at the tender age of 8. Her father was a Navy chef during WWII and was gone from the household during this time for four years. Her mother's untimely death set off the traumatic separation and dispersal of the children to other family members. Luckily, Kay was placed with her maternal grandmother for the remainder of her childhood, a time that set the stage for her lifelong love of education and history. Her grandmother was a music teacher, Shakespeare scholar, witness to the Lincoln/Douglas debates as a child, sister to a longtime Illinois senator and judge, and daughter of a literate and cultured extended family in the Springfield, Illinois area. The Jewells and the Elliots proudly traced their lineages back to the beginnings of this country with the second ship of English settlers to the Boston area (Braintree) in 1632. Daughters and Sons of the

American Revolution, the Jewell family were early pioneers of Indiana and Illinois, and fought for the Union in the Civil War. None of this was lost on Eleanor Kay Kiefer and she became known for her pioneer spirit. She was an advocate for the needy and underprivileged, worked against injustice her entire life, and believed that education was the key underpinning to a fully realized life and essential for the citizens of a healthy country. Following the death of her husband, Jack, she completed her PhD in history from Southern Illinois University in 2003 on the subject of the transformation of American medicine in the 20th century. She also completed a manuscript on the Great Ohio Flood of 1937. Her interest and research in history evolved over time, including co-writing (with Paul Fellows) *Hobnail Boots and Khaki Suits* (1983), a book about the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roosevelt New Deal as well as mounting local exhibitions and lectures about vintage 20th century clothing that focused on the Depression Era. She was a lifelong collector of clothing and ephemera from this period. Never without a book in her hand, she continued to remain active and alert to her dying day. She was most proud of her three children, all with advanced degrees. She walked nearly every day of her life over a three mile wooded trail on her family property and fought to preserve the old hardwood trees and natural habitat of the area. She is survived by her three children: Kerry Echo Kiefer of San Diego, California, Lisa Katovich of Berkeley, California, and Jack Christopher Kiefer of Marion, Illinois. Her grandchildren are Kiefer Katovich, a data scientist based in Portland, Oregon, and Scout Katovich, a New York attorney residing in Brooklyn, NY, children of Lisa Katovich. Madeline Kiefer, daughter of Jack C. Kiefer, is currently a sophomore at Southern Illinois University. She is survived by two sisters, Margery Frevert of Nashville, Tennessee, and Rosemary Branham of Lecanto, Florida. The family will be honoring Kay privately. Any personal recollections, photographs, messages, or anecdotes would be appreciated by the family either directly or through the Bailey Funeral Home website. In lieu of flowers and in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer's love of nature, donations can be made to The Arbor Day Foundation, 211 North 12th

Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508 or online at www.arboday.org

Tribute Wall



“ *Eleanor Kay Kiefer*

January 30, 2023 at 12:19 AM



“ *My sincerest condolences to Mrs. Kiefer's family. She was a rare and lovely person. She enjoyed teaching and enriching her pupils' lives by encouraging them to find something they loved and to learn more about it.*

I learned so much about this wonderful lady in this remembrance of her. She fed my interest in history and poetry. I took the time a few years ago to contact her and we spent quite a while catching up. Our friendship was very special. I am sad to know she has left the world, but she left it a much more beautiful place for those who were fortunate enough to know her.

Sally Van Rheeden - May 23, 2022 at 06:45 PM



“ *Thank you, all who posted here, for your precious memories and kind words.*

Kerry Echo Kiefer - November 24, 2021 at 03:29 PM



“ *My Condolences to Kery, Lisa, and Jack*



Robin - November 13, 2021 at 05:42 PM

RJ

“ *Ruth And Alex Jordan lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer*



Ruth and Alex Jordan - November 12, 2021 at 07:43 PM

TB

“ *Dear Jack and Family:*

Please accept our condolences on the passing of your wonderful mom. While you had shared some of her history with us in the past, the recounting of her life in her obituary was truly amazing. She certainly had a big impact on the world around her. Hope that the sadness of your loss is comforted by the knowledge that she had a life that was so well-lived. Know that our thoughts are with you and your family.

Sincerely,

Tom Bik/Laurel Toussaint

Tom Bik - November 12, 2021 at 11:43 AM

KL

“ *Kathy(Whiteside) Lay lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer*



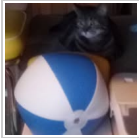
Kathy(Whiteside) Lay - November 11, 2021 at 11:13 PM

GM

“ Gary Murray lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Gary Murray - November 11, 2021 at 12:44 PM



“ She said in p e class I" T S t o h ot TO G O OUT SID E TODAY, S O w e stayed i n t h e AC THAT DA. Y. TH E BES T DA Y EVER!

Joy Higgins - November 11, 2021 at 12:12 PM

DH

“ Debby Hodge lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Debby Hodge - November 10, 2021 at 12:48 PM

DH

I am so sorry about your mother. She was an amazing women who accomplished much during her life. I use to see her walking up her trail & always gave her a " You go girl" when i went by. My mother gave me a copy of her book for x-mas & had Kay sign it for me. Thought that was cool! She will be missed!

Debby Hodge - November 10, 2021 at 01:23 PM

KK

Thank you so much, Debby. I missed you at the 50th high-school reunion back in September. I do hope to see another time.

Kerry Echo Kiefer - November 24, 2021 at 03:15 PM

JB

“ Lisa, sorry to hear of your mother's death. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Joy Bundren

Joy Bundren - November 09, 2021 at 07:46 PM

NH

“ Norma Hodge lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Norma Hodge - November 09, 2021 at 12:43 PM

KK

Thank you so much, Norma. I remember you fondly! It was always a treat to visit your big house in Belknap and to attend Debby and Alice's parties.

Kerry Echo Kiefer - November 24, 2021 at 03:17 PM

PF

“ *To the family of E. Kay Kiefer:
I was saddened to learn of Kay's passing. She was a unique person and I thought of her many times over the years. I enjoyed working with her on the CCC book and wished she had had her manuscript concerning the 1937 Ohio River Flood published. I thought it was excellent.*

Please accept my condolences.

Sincerely, Paul E. Fellows

Paul E. Fellows - November 09, 2021 at 11:05 AM

MM

Condolences to the family. She was truest a special person. I had the privilege of wearing some of her vintage clothing at a style show fundraising event years ago. Kay made sure we had fun "playing dress up"!

Margaret Mathis - November 10, 2021 at 12:06 AM

KK

Mr. Fellows, Thank you for your condolences. I recently attended a high-school reunion at Giant City State Park's Lodge, which was build by the CCC. I do wish the book you co-wrote with my mother were available there. It really ought to be.

Kerry Echo Kiefer - November 24, 2021 at 03:23 PM

JS

“ *John Slack sent a virtual gift in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer*



John Slack - November 09, 2021 at 08:09 AM

JS

She is one of the finest people I have ever known, so wise and witty, always smiling with her eyes flashing as she related a bit of news or a word of good cheer. Beautiful inside and out, she was a genuine friend for years. Rest in peace, Dear Kay. ❤️

John Slack - November 09, 2021 at 08:15 AM

KK

Thank you, John.

Kerry Echo Kiefer - November 24, 2021 at 03:24 PM

JS



John Slack - November 13, 2022 at 05:34 PM

NS

“ Nancy Solomon lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Nancy Solomon - November 09, 2021 at 06:11 AM

NS

Kay was such a sweet lady and will be missed by so many who knew her. She gave me a book years ago based on the CCC camps as my Dad was in the CCC camp in northern IL. She would always ask about my dad once she knew he was part of this. Always with a smile and a kind word. A very special lady to me.

Nancy Solomon - November 09, 2021 at 06:16 AM

PC

“ Kay was such a hoot. So funny and kind. She will be missed.

Patty Cottom - November 08, 2021 at 10:11 PM

JF

“ What a wonderful lady. Always enjoyed talking with Kay. She will be missed by many. thoughts and prayers are with the family at this sad time.



Richard and Joan Faulkner-Owen

Joan Faulkner-Owen - November 08, 2021 at 07:49 PM



“ Such a lady was Kay and I was so proud to be her friend.

Dixie Terry - November 08, 2021 at 07:11 PM

JP

“ Kerry, Lisa, and Jack & Stephanie, So sorry for the loss of your Mother/Mother-in-law. She was a lovely lady both inside and out. Our love and sympathy to all of you. May God comfort you in the days ahead. Sincerely, Jerry, Judy and Jay Phelps.

J Phelps - November 08, 2021 at 06:45 PM

BJ

“ Barbara Jeffress lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Barbara Jeffress - November 08, 2021 at 04:49 PM



“ Valerie Lynne sent a virtual gift in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Valerie Lynne - November 08, 2021 at 03:24 PM



“ Valerie Lynne lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Valerie Lynne - November 08, 2021 at 03:23 PM

SR

“ For the Kiefer family: All my sympathy shares with you. Your mother, Kay, was always the best all around in every way, with so many strong attributes and achievements I could carry on for hours. Most of all she never had a ill word for any one. I will miss her. Know she was most proud of her children and grandchildren and spoke highly of all of you, your accomplishments, travels, and endeavors. Keep her in your heart forever.
Steven L. Richey

Steven Richey - November 08, 2021 at 11:51 AM

WB

“ She was such a Lady i loved buying clothes at her store so much fun to talk to



Wm & Nancy Belford - November 08, 2021 at 11:32 AM



“ My mother Betty R Jones and I would take homemade Christmas candy to Kay and we would be at her house for hours visiting. Kay was so knowledgeable and share so much of her wisdom with us. I believe she may be the one who was responsible for Mom to start collecting clothes, gloves, hats and other items from our past. Kay will definitely be missed here, but I can only imagine all the conversations that she and Mom are catching up on. So sorry for your loss.

Jani R Jones

Jani Jones - November 08, 2021 at 10:50 AM

KB

“ Karen (Evans) Brumley lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Karen (Evans) Brumley - November 08, 2021 at 10:29 AM

PW

“ Pat Womack lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



pat womack - November 08, 2021 at 10:22 AM

LM

“ Larry And Carolyn McGill lit a candle in memory of Eleanor Kay Kiefer



Larry and Carolyn McGill - November 08, 2021 at 10:18 AM

MF

“ I have so many good memories of both of your mom. I can hear her saying, "Lisa", in that special way when she thought we were out of line. Lol. May all those memories bring you comfort. Always here if you need me. ❤️

Mary Faulkner - November 08, 2021 at 10:17 AM



“ *Lisa, so very sorry to hear of the loss of your mother. May she rest in peace, and may you and your family be comforted by loving memories.* ”

DEBBIE HORN - November 08, 2021 at 10:02 AM