



Dora Jean Ellis Reyes

MAR 26, 1956 - APR 6, 2024



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“**W**ildlife and the Wild Woman are both endangered species.” – Women who Run with the Wolves by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, PhD

Memphis, Tennessee, and beyond, bids farewell to one of the strongest women to ever live in her generation, Dora Jean Ellis Reyes. Dora’s battle with cancer on this earth came to a peaceful close on April 6, 2024, surrounded by close friends and family, leaving behind a legacy of kindness, creativity, fun, and a profound love for people and animals alike.

Born on March 26, 1956, in Osceola, Arkansas to Shirley (Sutton) Ellis and Rayburn Ellis, Dora was a beacon of care and an avenue of laughter from the beginning. Growing up as the oldest to her brothers, James, Kenneth, Sammy, and Ben, she was a natural caretaker and the biggest advocate for her brothers. That love resounded beyond her immediate family to her beloved cousins, Danny Sutton, John Michael Coalter, Kim Coalter, Karla (Ross) Barekman, Joey Sutton, Scott Sutton, Kevin Sutton, Tom Sutton, Harry Elliott, Deanie Elliott, and Jackie Elliott.

She grew up in Blytheville, Arkansas, and was ready at first chance to adventure beyond. After high school graduation, she attended college in Memphis, Tennessee. It was in college that she met her lifelong best friend, Cindy. In the years that followed, she owned an Afghan Hound, “Angel”, one of many animals she would cherish; but she tripped over dear Angel once, resulting in a badly broken leg. That didn’t impact her passion for animals, however. Far from it. She managed a shop with fine China and gifts in the historic Peabody Hotel, later running a discontinued China pattern replacement service with Cindy; she became pregnant with me, her daughter Rachel, in 1984 and she held down two jobs while pregnant – one of which was working nights at the MidSouth Coliseum (which I am certain played a part in my love for music). She found her passion in marketing and advertising, eventually owning her own agency with her second mother, Ann Crowell. Dora had a passion for interior decorating and gardening and she was so very talented. Her dedication to animal welfare was always at the forefront, rescuing animals, giving to animal rescue non-profits, and attempting to trap and spay feral cats. In addition, and probably most profound, was her unwavering love for Jesus, throughout the various



Obituary

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perils of her life. She was a staunch believer until the end, and that brings us all great comfort knowing she is in His arms.

Remembered for her humor, her advocacy for women, and her love of animals, Dora had the unique ability to light up any room she entered. She was a consistent force behind me pushing the limits as a woman, just as she had. She was a true warrior princess, with the strength of a lioness and the will of a tigress. She pushed through limits that many women were afraid to endure. She encouraged me to always “own the boardroom”. This was evident not only throughout her life, but also in her valiant battle of over 3.5 years with cancer. She was not ready to die, only because she had so much zeal in living. But we find comfort in her peace, and that she is no longer suffering.

Dora was predeceased by her grandparents Eugenia and Harris Sutton, her mother Shirley and her father Rayburn, brothers Kenneth and James, her cousin Kim, her favorite Aunt Gerry, and countless other aunts and uncles and family. She leaves behind a heartbroken yet grateful family: her daughter, Rachel, and beloved son-in-law Brian Rousseau; her grandsons Jacob Rousseau, Foxx Castle, and Rhett Rousseau; her mother in love Ann Crowell; her brothers Sam Ellis, Ben McDaniel (Marilyn), Danny Sutton (Carolyn), and brother in love Ben Crowell; her sisters in love Kristen Irvin (David), Donna Crenshaw (Jeff), Cindy Garner, Carol Thackston (Tom), Melinda Almond, and Sandy Barnes; her cousin who was like a brother, John Michael Coalter (Stacey); and a host of extended family members and friends who were blessed to know her.

A service to celebrate Dora’s life will be held at 3:00 pm on April 12, 2024, at Memorial Park Funeral Home, located at 5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee 38119. Visitation will precede a short service and a butterfly release on property.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to The Humane Society, honoring Dora’s passion for animal welfare.

Dora Jean’s memory will forever be a guiding light in the hearts of those she touched. Her legacy of passion, love, women empowerment, and laughter will continue to inspire all who knew her. Rest in peace, dear Mama. Your spirit lives on in the countless lives you touched.



Events


Dora Jean Ellis Reyes

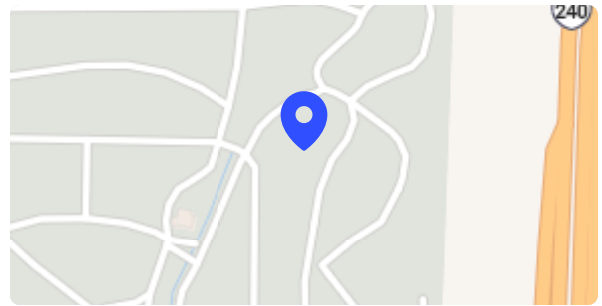
MAR 26, 1956 - APR 6, 2024

Visitation

 **Friday, April 12, 2024**


 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM CT


 **Memorial Park Funeral Home & Cemetery**
5668 Poplar Ave, Memphis TN 38119

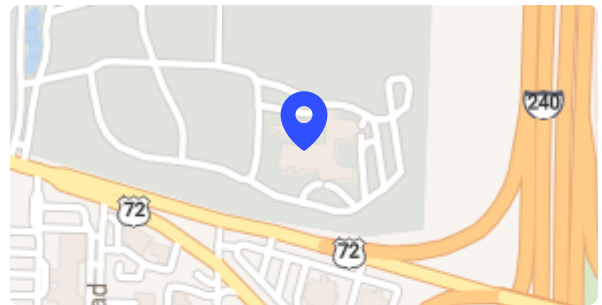


Celebration of Life

 **Friday, April 12, 2024**

 4:00 PM CT

 **Memorial Park Funeral Home and Cemetery**
5668 Poplar Avenue, Memphis TN 38119





Tribute Wall

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The Ellis/Johnson Family sent a Dreams From the Heart Bouquet to the Reyes family.

April 12 at 3:49 AM



The Ellis/Johnson Family planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Dora.

April 12 at 3:49 AM



Stacey Coalter posted:

I loved Dora from the day I met her! She loved me and accepted me as part of the family and I knew she always was in my corner. And the stories she told of her and all of her cousins growing up has brought many tears from laughter. She will be missed by so many of us, especially her Mac & cheese! 🤔🤔 I do find comfort in knowing that she is no longer in pain and that she is laughing and having a big ole time with all of those that left this world before her! Love you always, Dora Jean! Stacey Coalter

April 11 at 8:25 AM



Anonymous sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Reyes family.

April 11 at 5:07 AM



Donna S lit a candle in honor of Dora.

PeaceDonna S

April 10 at 7:13 AM





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AS

Angel Smith posted:

When Dora and I were in our very early 20's, she came with me to Sacramento, California. My husband then was a youth pastor at a church there. I discovered that there was a way to get up on the top of the church building so we could get a suntan without being seen. We had to walk across a very narrow plank like bridge to get to the secret spot so we wouldn't be spotted half naked up there. Well it was morning and we settled in quite nicely and jabbered until we got hungry. By this time we had been up there too long and after making our way back across the plank/bridge we got inside our house and had a nice lunch. She started talking about her skin hurting and that she was cold. We found out that she had gotten terribly burned...she looked like a lobster! She couldn't stand to wear clothing so we cut a hole in a sheet and she wore that until she could wear her clothes again. We always laughed about how naive we were and what a dumb thing we had done. She was the sweetest person. She will be amongst the first faces I'll look for in heaven.

April 9 at 6:29 PM

LS

Laura Sweetsir posted:

I attended college with Dora Jean. I am so sorry to hear of her passing. She was often mischievous and a prankster. She loved with her whole being. Laura Jo Taylor Sweetsir

April 9 at 2:25 PM

KO

Kathy Osborne lit a candle in honor of Dora.

Kathy Osborne lit a candle in memory of Dora Reyes

April 9 at 1:09 PM



CW

Carol W Williams lit a candle in honor of Dora.

Carol Williams lit a candle in memory of Dora Reyes

April 9 at 11:48 AM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Dora by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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