



Elizabeth Ann Cowles

NOV 6, 1934 - AUG 12, 2024



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Funeral Home & Cemetery

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Elizabeth (Betty) Kelly Cowles (89) passed away peacefully on August 12, 2024. A devout Catholic, she went with a sense of joy knowing she would soon join her loved ones in Heaven, the ultimate destination. She would often say, “What a wonderful life it will be.” Betty, the only child of Elizabeth and Daniel Kelly, was born on November 6, 1934. She graduated from Mundelein College in Chicago, now Loyola University. She met her husband, Alfred Cowles Jr. (Sonny), who was a student at Notre Dame, during her college years on a trip to Acapulco accompanied by her mother. They were together for 71 years and happily married for 68. After her move to Memphis, Betty was proud to be a converted Southerner. She began her career in teaching at St. Dominic and St. Agnes School. A staple of the school and easily recognizable due to her auburn red hair, many former students often approached her decades later saying, “Aren’t you Mrs. Cowles? You were my second-grade teacher!” She always loved reconnecting with them and following their life successes.

As a child, Betty found joy and purpose during WWII as she dedicated herself to a USO fundraiser collecting newspapers to raise money in support of the American troops. At 8 years old she collected just over a ton of newspaper and was recognized as the winner in the state of Indiana. Volunteering, fundraising, and donating became a way of life.



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After restoring “SummerTrees,” their antebellum home in Red Banks, Mississippi, she and Alfred often opened their doors to host many charitable organizations, events, dinners, and social gatherings. One of the grandest events was a Spring party in 1994 recognizing Betty as the Queen of the Memphi, a Carnival Memphis Krewe. Also memorable was a seated dinner for the Mayo Clinic Medical Center. SummerTrees was featured as a Madonna Circle Decorators Show House and was a huge undertaking, raising significant funds for the organization. The consummate hostess with stunning table settings, she often donated lovely dinners at her home to be auctioned off, aiding many Memphis charities.

Over the years, her leadership skills were put to good use. She served as President of the Madonna Circle, the Memphis chapter of Ikebana International, as well as the Mothers’ Clubs of St. Agnes St. Dominic, Christian Brothers High School, and Hutchison. In 1987, she spearheaded the LeBonheur Gold Tag campaign which ran for decades as a major fundraiser for the LeBonheur Club. Always a people person, she regretted the conclusion of her active volunteer years and chose to establish Circle Arts for sustaining members of Madonna Circle to enjoy and continue their fellowship. It was modeled after the Travel/Study club for LeBonheur which she so loved.

Other organizations with which she spent her time and developed close friendships include: The Women’s Exchange of Memphis, Memphis Symphony League, Brooks Art League, English Speaking Union, Memphis Opera Guild, The Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities, The Dixon Art Gallery, the Memphis Botanic Gardens, The Holly Springs Garden Club, and Thursday Club. Last but not least, she was a member of the Random Readers Book Club for 65 years.

With a passion for life, she and Alfred traveled the world as well as the United States. Their three favorite locations will always be Santa Fe, Key West, and the Gulf Coast. For over 30 years, they enjoyed long stays sharing each of these places with family and friends. Their yacht, aptly named The Redhead, led to many adventures in the Gulf of Mexico, the Mississippi River, the Tombigbee, and Pickwick Lake. Her children were ever inspired by all of their amazing travels.

Unique in her array of interests, Betty often shared with her grandchildren and great-grandchildren stories of being on her college fencing team, riding horses in Lincoln Park with her father, serving as a certified Coast Guard Inspector for the Memphis Yacht Club on the Mississippi River, and being named An Outstanding Young Woman in America.



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“Five foot two, eyes of blue, we love and will miss you.” Betty is survived by her husband, Alfred Cowles, Jr; her four children Colleen Cowles Capstick (Larry), Alfred Cowles III (Linda), Daniel Cowles (Darlene), and Shannon Cowles Latham (Davant); 10 grandchildren Caroline Sones (Greg), Clayton Capstick (Valerie), Kyle Lauderdale (Erika), Alfred Cowles IV (Sarah Katherine), Lauren McCaskill (Dustin), Morgan Newsom (David), Allie Long (Corey), Grace Cason (Sam), Dunn Latham and Davant Latham III; as well as 16 great-grandchildren, soon to be 17.

Thank you to Baptist Reynolds Hospice House, Sharon Banks, Charlene Maxwell, and Cindy Sandlin for providing the exceptional care given to Betty, Alfred, and family during this difficult time.

A luncheon visitation will be held at St. Louis Catholic Church 203 South White Station Road Memphis, TN 38117 in Clunan Center Hall on Monday August 19 at 11:00am. The Funeral Mass will follow in the sanctuary at 1:30pm. Private burial will be held at Memorial Park Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers memorials may be sent to LeBonheur, Memphis Botanic Gardens, or the charity of one's choice.



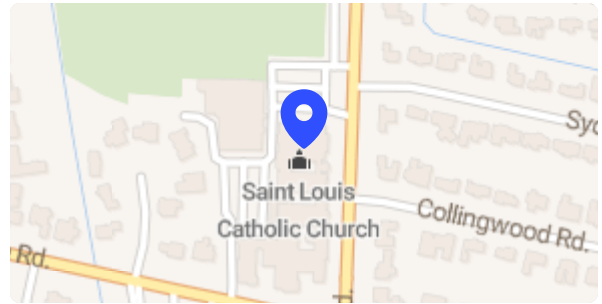
Events

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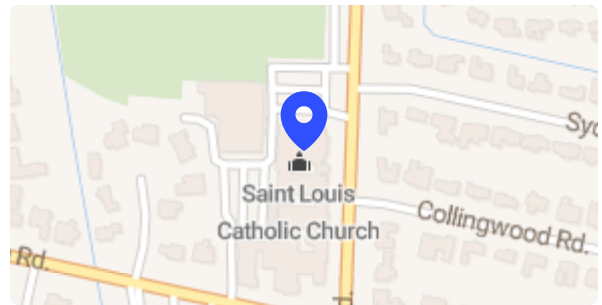
Visitation

- Monday**, August 19, 2024
- 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM CT
- St. Louis Catholic Church**
203 S. White Station Rd., Memphis TN 38117



Funeral Mass

- Monday**, August 19, 2024
- 1:30 PM CT
- St. Louis Catholic Church**
203 S. White Station Rd., Memphis TN 38117





Tribute Wall

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AS

A.W. Simmons Jr posted:

I am in Nantucket, and just learned of Betty's death. Know that I am thinking of you Alfred as well as all the members of your family. Betty was special and it was always a pleasure to be in her presence. AWS

August 19 at 7:01 AM

JH

Jean Harrison posted:

My husband and I were honored to spend time with Betty and Alfred, with the most memorable being with Daniel and Darlene at their condo in Key West. Beautiful conversations and dinners were shared. And I treasure our dinner with them at Summer Trees. Betty was a very social person, loving and kind. I'd love to have one more opportunity to spend time with her. I have no doubt she rests today in the Arms of the Master. She will be missed. Jean and George Harrison

August 15 at 9:02 AM



Memories only last if you share them

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



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