



Kathryn Louise Voss Vigen

September 24, 1934 - August 12, 2022

The vivacious Kathryn Louise Voss Vigen was born September 24, 1934 to her beloved parents in Lakefield, MN. Growing up, she loved singing in duets and trios with her older sister Shirley, playing cards and being at the cabin on Spirit Lake. She had a beautiful alto voice and could harmonize at the drop of a hat. She loved to entertain and threw great parties. She was a treasured friend of many. She was graceful, stylish and rarely took a bad photo.

When she was 4 years old, her dog was hit by a car and Kate tended to her. From then on, she knew she would become a nurse. Her strong faith in God was the foundation upon which she built her life. She knew her life had a purpose and strove to live her calling fully.

Kathryn graduated magna cum laude from St. Olaf College in 1956, a member of the very first baccalaureate nursing class. She married David Vigen that summer. She worked night shifts as a nurse and prepared to be a pastor's wife while he attended seminary. In 1970, she discovered her love of teaching at the Sioux Falls School of Practical Nursing, later becoming Assistant Director.

Kathryn navigated many challenges, including a divorce, pursuing graduate education as a single mom and moving 17 times. Despite daunting obstacles such as these, Kathryn was a pioneer in nursing education.

At age 46, she was recruited to start a nursing program in Huron, SD from the ground up. She was a recipient of the prestigious Bush Fellowship Award in 1979. Ultimately, she earned two Masters and a Ph.D. She was the first nurse in the U.S. to be awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 1991, which enabled her to teach and mentor students in Malta and to make many lifelong friendships there. She received the Rozella Scholtfeldt Leadership Award from the Midwest Alliance in Nursing in 1993. In 2003, Kathryn was honored with the St. Olaf Distinguished Alumni/ae Award. She chaired or was a member of the faculty at Huron College, Luther College, Graceland University and Northpark University.

Throughout her life, even as it waned, Kathryn mentored and inspired students and nurses to reach their vocational goals. She was determined to develop the profession of nursing and increase its leadership capacities. She also believed strongly in civic engagement and urged everyone to vote and participate actively in our democracy.

Along with nursing, her greatest passion was her family. She was a “hands on” mom and grandparent. She supported her 3 children to complete not only college, but graduate school. And she was utterly delighted in her grandchildren—making tea rings galore and playing with them at every opportunity. As they grew, she actively encouraged and supported their passions.

The indomitable Kathryn passed on peacefully on August 12, 2022 with her daughters at her side singing to her and blessing her on her way.

She is predeceased by parents, Bertha Conradine Richter Voss and Edward Stanley Voss, by her sister Shirley Jovaag and by her faithful companion in later years, Bob Jones. She is survived by three children: Eric Edward Vigen,

Amy Louise Hemstad (Burton Schwartz), Aana Marie Vigen (Alison Strickler); by four grandchildren: Sean Michael Hemstad, Christopher James Hemstad (Laura), Sarah Kathryn Hemstad, Benjamin Gabriel Vigen Strickler; by nieces and nephew Kathryn West (Casey), Brad Jovaag (Pam) and Joy Alvares. Most of all, she leaves a throng of smart, courageous nursing leaders who are the backbone of U.S. healthcare.

A funeral service will be held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 1218 W. Addison, Chicago, IL 60613 on Sun. Oct. 9 at 4 pm. It will be livestreamed and posted on YouTube.

In lieu of flowers, the family invites memorial contributions to the Department of Nursing, the L-Università ta' Malta (send your contribution to Amy Hemstad who will make one collective gift); St. Olaf Nursing Student Fund (select "other" & specify that it is for nursing students) <https://stolaf.alumniq.com/giving/to/default> ; Holy Trinity Lutheran Church <https://www.htchicago.org/> ; or to First Lutheran Church https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithe/give-one-time/255283 . With any gift, please indicate in memory of Kathryn L. Voss Vigen.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

OCT 9. 4:00 PM (CT)

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
1218 West Addison Street
Chicago, IL 60613

Tribute Wall



“ *Kathryn Louise Voss Vigen*

October 08, 2023 at 11:31 AM



“ *Roberta and Edward Sammut purchased the Beautiful Heart Bouquet for the family of Kathryn Louise Voss Vigen.*



Roberta and Edward Sammut - August 24, 2022 at 06:41 AM



“ *We have been great friends since we joined United Lutheran Church in Oak Park and have kept that friendship warmly throughout the years that our Choir reunions, lately in Door County WI have been meeting. May God bless your family and all of us remaining here till we all meet again, dear Kathy.*
Dan Conrad

Daniel E Conrad MD - August 23, 2022 at 03:49 PM

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“ Dr. Vigen and i known since 2008 when I came to the USA from Malta. I was a student nursing at the University of Malta. When I decided to come to the US, the head of the nursing faculty introduced me with Dr. Vigen by email. I am black man from Eritrea, Africa who works hard for better was in desperate need for help. As a new settler in Sioux Falls, SD, I contacted by email with Dr. Vigen while she was living in Chicago. Surprisingly, she drove from Chicago to Sioux Falls to meet me in person, which is more than 9 hours drive. Imagine to make that kind of sacrifice and long drive to meet a stranger. Its very hard to believe. Eversince that time she had been as my mentor, mother, best friend, and my advocate. She showed me true love, kindness, good manner every positive aspects. Now, I am a nurse working where she invested her entire life. I and my wife stayed in her home for days and introduced us with her family. Because of being a little away from us, she sent Amy her daughter to visit us when we had our first baby. She was amazing person. No words to explain her deed. OMG, I couldn't stop crying. Thanks Anna and Amy for calling me when she passed away!

Amanuel Estifanos - August 22, 2022 at 10:32 PM