



Obituary

Born: Tuesday, June 14, 1932

Died: Wednesday, July 8, 2020

Joanne Elizabeth Ayres, 88, who nurtured a generation of children, died on July 8, in Acton, MA. Joanne, a longtime resident of Belmont, was born on June 14, 1932, in Lexington, the eldest child of Martha C. (Cook) and William E. Spellenberg. Much of her childhood was spent at Winning Farm, a summer camp for inner-city children in Lexington, where her father was the caretaker and her mother and grandmother were the cooks, preparing meals for approximately 50 people each day. They lived in the caretaker's house at Winning Farm, where Joanne looked after her younger siblings while her parents worked, instilling in her a lifelong love of teaching and caring for children. Joanne experienced tragedy at an early age when, in 1952, her parents and grandmother perished in what the Minute-man called the "worst home fire catastrophe in Lexington's history."

Service Summary

Funeral Service

Location: - *Not available* -

Joanne graduated from Lexington High School and was married to George L. Ayres, with whom she had six children. Although the marriage ended in divorce, the couple remained friends. As a single mother, Joanne enrolled in Middlesex Community College and earned her associate's degree in early childhood education. She established a daycare business in her home in Belmont, which she operated for over 30 years, until she retired. This career provided her with much satisfaction, as well as the means to support her family. She eventually purchased not only her own two-family home in Belmont, but another two-family rental property next door.

Her family life and businesses were always closely entwined, and her home was a bustling and welcoming place, generally filled with a half dozen daycare children, as well as her own six children and many other family and friends. For many years, Joanne's home was the family hub for the holidays, and she hosted Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and birthday celebrations for her extended family and friends. Her home was always beautifully decorated, and her table glowed with candlelight and her sparkling antique crystal, fine linens and handmade place cards for every occasion. Family members still recall the warmth and aromas of those special days. No child ever left her house empty-handed, whether loaded down with Christmas gifts, an Easter bunny or a simple arts and crafts project created with her endless supply of glitter and paints.

Joanne enjoyed many interests and hobbies throughout her life, including traveling, photography, gardening, restoring old furniture and dancing. She was an active member of the Waltham and Newton Camera Clubs. She traveled throughout the United States and Canada, as well as to

Europe, South America, Costa Rica and the Caribbean. She believed it was important to see the world and capture its beauty through photography. She especially enjoyed sharing her experiences and adventures through her slide shows when she returned home.

Red was her color, and in spite of bearing more than her share of sadness, Joanne will be remembered by those who loved her for her joyful approach to life, her infectious laughter and her kindness to all.

Joanne leaves her daughter Sharon Ayres of Concord, New Hampshire, and her friend Richard Lambert; her son and daughter-in-law Jonathan and Denise Ayres of Georgetown; her son and daughter-in-law Robert and Donna Ayres of Enfield, New Hampshire; her daughter and son-in-law Jennifer Ayres and Edward Rist of Carlisle; her daughter-in-law Sheila Ayres of Maine; her grandchildren: Sarah, Emily, Silas, Levon, Chandra, Jillian, Jonathan, Michaela, Graham, Abigail, Amelia and Amber; her many great-grandchildren; her brother and sister-in-law William and Joan Spellenberg of Swampscott; her sister Patricia Cole of Nashua, New Hampshire; and many nieces, nephews and friends. She was pre-deceased by two of her sons, George Little Ayres, Jr., of Dorchester, New Hampshire, and Jeffrey Scott Ayres of Belmont.

Arrangements are being made through the Short, Williamson & Diamond Funeral Home in Belmont. A celebration of Joanne's life will be held at a later date. Donations in her memory may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, Massachusetts/New Hampshire Chapter, 309 Waverley Oaks Road, Waltham, MA 02452. swdfuneralhome.com