



BROWNING FUNERAL HOME



Obituary

On Thursday, July 20, 2023, at the age of 85 years, Donna Faye Ratcliffe left her amazing, adventure-filled life behind at Deaconess Hospital Midtown to be with her Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and all of her loved ones who have gone before her, especially her favorite grandmother, "Mammy."

Donna was born on May 5, 1938 on the second floor of her aunt Dorothy Rutledge's home on West Franklin Street in Evansville, Indiana.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Claris "Bud" Ratcliffe and Willa Mae (McRoy) Ratcliffe Talbott; sister, Diane Mauer; half brother, William "Bill" McCullough; special friends, Winnie White, Leona Cobb, Nancy Ann Rayburn, Peggy Sasseen, Michael Duncan, and Jan Kelsey; and her beloved fur babies, Doodles, Lilly White, Katie Ann, Sadie Mae, Sweetie Pie, Baby, and Moses.

Donna is survived by her favorite cousins, Tommy Rutledge (Frances) of Evansville and cousin, caregiver, and best friend, Kathryn "Kathy" Curtis of Evansville; two foster sons, Allen and Billy Golden both of Detroit, MI; former husband, Rev. Homer Dave Morgan of Russelville, KY; and a daughter known only to Donna, God, and her adoptive family. She is also survived by special friends, Lynn Suter of Norfolk, VA, Josephine Camp Jackson of Newburgh, Judy Ludwig, Kathy Duncan, Carole and Allen Siesky, Pat Barker, Jeff and Leana Weber, Gail Schimmel, Toni Stephens, and Angela all of Evansville, Lucille Welborn of Odessa, TX, Pastor Al Cobb, Kenneth Sasseen of Mayfield, KY, Pastor Larry and Ann Salmon of Farmington, KY, and Diane Schoettlin of Posey County, IN.

Donna attended Wheeler, Howard Rossa, Vogel, and Baker Grade School, where she met life long friend, Josephine Camp Jackson. She then went to Bosse High School where she enjoyed attending the annual 1956 mini class reunions held at Archie and Clydes Restaurant in Newburgh. She attended San Antonio Business College with her parents and family. Donna in her formative and teen years, was a faithful member of Bible Center Cathedral, often touting she knew more about the pastor, Rick VanHoose, than anyone else because she used to change his diapers. From a young age, Donna enjoyed playing the accordion with longtime friend, Nancy Ann Rayburn in the Evansville Campbell Band, and marching in parades and other community events. After her sophomore year at Bosse High School, Donna entered the work force at Lockyears Letter Service to help support her family. Donna was instrumental in hiring her childhood friend, Leona Davenport Cobb as she honed her craft on the use of various machines, memographs, type set-up, addressographs, kluge, chain delivery systems, and many more. Donna, being so mechanically inclined, would later author an instructions manual for the Pitney Bowes Co. on maintenance and repair of the chain delivery systems, reducing repair time in half.

On a lark in her early teen years, Donna threw some cherry bombs at a police car, which landed her in jail overnight, being served a bologna sandwich and strong stale black coffee. She met the late Jim Lopp, Sr. (attorney) and developed a life long friendship. The second time Donna got into mischief as she put it, "I borrowed a scooter mail vehicle" which netted her probation. Not wanting to be tied down with a weekly probation appointment, Donna fled to St. Louis; but not before she fulfilled an arranged marriage to a 22

year old man, pledged by her mother and signed for in Shawneetown, IL at the young age of 17. Donna said the honeymoon lasted two hours and she left for St. Louis in the 1960's and said "I did anything and everything that I was big enough to do, but I never killed anybody." Her reckless behavior at 26 years old landed her in the Tennessee Women's Prison for 22 months for forgery. When they learned of Donna's mechanical expertise she was put in charge of maintenance for the prison, received her own set of keys for the building and was never locked in a cell. With her magnetic personality, Donna endeared herself to not only the prison staff and the warden, but to the President of the bank that she had forged checks on. The newspaper at the time dubbed her "Athletic Marilyn" for her bleach blonde hair and her athletic physique. While incarcerated, Donna saw a need for a visitation room for the women and their families so she built one at the prison. Another favorite project was the Koi goldfish pond she dug at the prison. At the age of 26, she realized that her name was no longer Donna Ratcliffe, but inmate #58849. She admitted that she had a lot of time to think about her life and vowed to change the direction. Donna was always open and unapologetic about her past, saying, "I did the crime and I served my time" in hopes of helping young people avoid the mistakes she had made. She said, "nothing to be proud of" and "I knew I needed help." Donna eventually relocated to Detroit, MI and worked her way up and eventually bought her own printing company in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Realizing the advantages of working with the Navy, she relocated to Norfolk, VA bought Creative Systems Inc., gained top security clearance and weekly drove to Washington, DC to bid contracts to print manuals for the Navy. She regretted that she didn't accept the Navy's offer enlisting at rank E-11 and teach the seamen the printing trade. Eventually when printing changed to computer and digitalization, Donna returned to Evansville and ran the printing Dept. at Alstadt Business Forms. Tiring of the printing business, Donna enrolled in a professional dog grooming school and was certified to do "show cuts". Donna's first grooming shop "The Pampered Poodle" was on North Main Street in Evansville where she was very active in the North Main Street Association. Her second shop was "Puppy Love" on the west side of Evansville. Donna loved animals and taught others to love and respect them as well. Donna would often stop traffic (or have Kathy stop traffic) while she rescued a slow moving turtle crossing the road.

Wanting to do something different, although semi-retired, she was disappointed when she was passed over for a patient sitter job at a local hospital, for lack of a high school diploma. Donna studied and received her GED certification at age 68.

Donna loved people and was just as comfortable talking with the president of a hospital as she was talking with the housekeeper. In the 1990's Donna got involved in network marketing. Donna and Kathy enjoyed being flown to Houston and Dallas, TX by good friend and pilot, Ray Sult, but always kept the day job; Donna with dog grooming and Kathy with nursing.

Donna loved watching old westerns on TV, loved working in the yard on her favorite John Deere, but most of all she relished pulling pranks on people, friends, and family alike. And, oh, the stories she could tell! Donna loved the outdoors. It didn't matter if it was the Class A or Class C RV. She enjoyed meeting lifelong friends Bro. Al and Leona Cobb and Kenneth and Peggy Sasseen (Mayfield, KY) at their annual trek to the covered bridge festival in Brazil, IN every October and many other adventures.

In 2019 Donna's health took a decline as she was diagnosed with melanoma stage III to the lymph nodes. Immunotherapy was successful and no further spread had been detected. In late 2020, Donna faced blood cancer (Polycythemia and Myelodysplastic Syndrome) courageously. She was weak but still able to be up independently with a cane. Unfortunately, in 2022 heart disease and a tragic accident resulting in two back fractures (L1 & L2) and multiple rib fractures was a mountain Donna could not climb. For the last fourteen months she had been bed bound at home and cared for by Kathy. Sadly, two short term stints of rehab was not successful due to having excruciating pain with movement after back surgery.

Donna succumbed to the heart disease and injuries on Thursday July 20, 2023.

Special thanks to our medical team: Dr. Anthony Stephens, Dr. Rick Crawford, Dr. David Schultz, Dr. Z. Fields, Dr. Cliff Dodson, Dr. Siddiqis, Dr. Campos, and Dr. Dedaj.

Special thanks to the staff of 2900 (ICU) and 2500 (Step Down), pastoral staff, Sammy for much needed spiritual comfort and guidance, Deaconess Home Health, Deaconess Palliative Care, Deaconess Home Medical Equipment, and Mt. Vernon Nursing and Rehab staff.

A celebration of Donna's life will be held at 11:00 am on Wednesday, July 26, 2023 at Browning Funeral Home, 738 E. Diamond Ave., Evansville, IN 47711 with Linda Jeffries officiating. Entombment will follow at Memorial Park Cemetery.

Friends may visit from 2:00 pm until 8:00 pm on Tuesday, July 25, 2023 at Browning Funeral Home and again from 10:00 am until service time on Wednesday at the funeral home.

Memorial contributions can be made to It Takes a Village, 1417 N. Stockwell Rd., Evansville, IN 47715.

Condolences may be made online at www.browningfuneral.com.

Tuesday, July 25, 2023
2:00PM - 8:00PM
Browning Funeral Home
738 E. Diamond Avenue
Evansville, IN 47711

Visitation

Wednesday, July 26, 2023
10:00AM - 11:00AM
Browning Funeral Home
738 E. Diamond Avenue
Evansville, IN 47711

[Get Directions](#)

Service

Wednesday, July 26, 2023
11:00AM
Browning Funeral Home
738 E. Diamond Avenue
Evansville, IN 47711

Final Resting Place

Memorial Park
2200 Mesker Park Dr
Evansville, IN 47720

Browning Funeral Home | [\(812\) 425-2896](tel:8124252896)
738 E. Diamond Avenue, Evansville, IN

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