

A Word About Our Late President

ELLEN ELIZABETH IRONS

JULY 27, 1952 – JANUARY 15, 2025

Ellen Elizabeth Irons, born in July 1952, died peacefully at home in University City, Missouri, on January 15, 2025, after a short battle with cancer. Her life was filled with creativity, love of learning, and a deep commitment to her friends and community. Born and raised in Hyde Park Chicago, she graduated from University of Chicago High School and went to California. She attended Pomona College for a year and then spent several years living in San Francisco with a group of friends in “Project One.”

In 1978 Ellen earned her Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from Washington University in St. Louis. She went on to build a distinguished career spanning over 30 years at St. Louis Community College, where she helped businesses develop training and quality improvement programs. Her projects included work for leading manufacturers in the St Louis area. She had a special combination of expertise in organizational development and understanding how things are made.

She was an avid lifelong reader and writer and belonged to a writer’s group. She was skilled in healing modalities including massage, Tai Chi, healing touch, and had metaphysical practice. She also worked as a life coach.

Ellen was passionate about improving her community (and the world). She volunteered extensively. She contributed over 350 hours to the St. Louis Botanical Garden, helping to digitize the GPS mapping of the Gardens. She was an active member in American Association of University Women (AAUW), St. Louis Branch. Her leadership within AAUW was particularly significant, as she recently served as its president, advocating for education and equity for women. She provided invaluable work to the community radio station, KDHX FM. She employed landscape architectural practices, and she spearheaded several neighborhood projects.

Ellen shared more than forty wonderful years with her partner, Paul Neuenkirk. Together, they cultivated a life filled with shared passions for music, travel, and art, especially photography. Ellen was interested in

genealogy, traveling in the US and abroad as far as New Zealand and the United Kingdom to connect with cousins. Ellen's love for gardening was especially evident in the annual crop of hot peppers and other summer treats from her backyard garden. Ellen took great care of her beloved cats, Rusty and Smokey. She loved nature. Her family lake home in Northwest MN, where she grew up her summers, profoundly influenced her with its beauty and wonderful friends.

Ellen loved her family and friends. She treasured time shared for coffee or lunch and talking about life. She was a faith-filled, spiritual woman who meditated daily and felt guided by her Higher Power. An excellent listener, Ellen was an active and generous member of the recovery community. Her commitment to 12-Step programs helped many people over the years. Ellen's warmth, intelligence, and generosity touched all who knew her. Her spirit will be lovingly remembered and missed by all.

Preceded in death by her parents, Dr Edwin and Mary Irons, and brother-in-law, Ron Karsnia. Survived by her loving partner, Paul Neuenkirk; his children Chris, Noel, and Nell; Paul's brother, Ray; her siblings, Ernest (Janet) Irons, Carol Karsnia, Katherine (Douglas) Floyd; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Friends and family are invited to celebrate Ellen's life on Saturday, March 1, 2025, at Kriegshauser Mortuary - West Chapel at 9450 Olive Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63132. Visitation 11:30-1:30. Memorial Service 1:30 p.m., followed immediately with Placement of Ashes at St. John cemetery, 1293 St Cyr Rd, St. Louis, MO.

Memorial contributions can be made by check to the AAUW St Louis Branch at: AAUW St Louis Branch, c/o Carol Davis McDonald, 827 Bergquist Dr, Manchester, MO 63011-4215, or online at: <http://aauw.org/>.

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