



Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehlers

January 7, 2024

Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehlers (formerly Betty Lynn Ehlers Rueckert) died peacefully in the presence of family on January 7, 2024, at West Hartford Health and Rehabilitation Center. She was 90 years old. She was able to stay in her home, supported by her family, into October. She was a resident of West Hartford, CT and a summer resident on Stave Island, Leeds and the Thousand Islands, ON, Canada. Born in 1933 in Ann Arbor Michigan, she was the daughter of the late Ralph Burlin Ehlers and Sadie Katherine Kincaid. She spent her early years in the Midwest then moved to Buckhead, Georgia, near Atlanta. Elizabeth attended the University of Michigan as an undergraduate, where she received a Hopwood Award in poetry. She married William Howe Rueckert, a graduate student, in 1954, and left school as a junior to accompany him to Troy, NY, for the start of his career. She returned to Ann Arbor to finish her senior year in a semester and obtained her B.A. in 1955. While raising a family, she earned an M.A. from the University of Illinois in 1966 and a Ph.D. from the University of Rochester in 1978. She taught at the University of Illinois, Rochester Institute of Technology, the University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and at the University of Connecticut. She taught as a visiting writer in several Connecticut public school systems. At one school, a 5th grader interviewed her for the school newsletter and although she had been introduced as Dr. Kincaid-Ehlers, in her published interview, she called her “Dr. Kinky Waller.” In Elizabeth’s words, her irrepressible alter ego had finally been named and she

thereafter wrote many poems under that name.

Elizabeth published three books of poetry: *Leaping and Looming* (2005), *Seasoning* (2009), and *How do I hate Thee* (2011). She contributed to two other collections with her beloved poetry group, the River's Edge Poets: *River's Edge* (1985) and *Waterscapes* (1986). Her poetry and literary and psychological essays appeared in numerous collections, university and medical journals, and books. Elizabeth read at the inaugural Sunken Garden Poetry Festival at the Hillstead Museum and gave countless other poetry readings over many years. It was a joy to watch her read.

Elizabeth moved to Connecticut in 1979 and while teaching part-time, retrained to become a psychotherapist and kept an office at the Hartford Family Institute with her treasured colleagues where she helped clients into her 80's.

Elizabeth survived polio as a child and then cancer twice as an adult. She was a fighter. She took great comfort and fulfillment at Quaker Meeting in West Hartford, continuing to attend remotely when she could no longer get out of the house. She was a lifelong advocate for the environment, civil rights, including women's rights, and peace, and participated in many protests, both individual or as part of a group in a march or by simply holding a sign on a street corner. She was brilliant (a MENSA member), fiercely independent, and generous with her time, attention, and resources.

Elizabeth enjoyed music (bluegrass and opera). She played piano and dulcimer and continued to meet with her dulcimer group even after she could no longer play. She hiked, skied, and most of all loved traveling including two cross country driving trips, and other visits to Alaska, Europe, New Mexico, and Hawaii. She lived in Italy (making the voyage across the Atlantic alone at 22 on a cargo ship), England, Canada and all over the United States. In her

words, she did it while she could. But the one place that mattered most to her was the Thousand Islands in the St. Lawrence River (“the River”). She first came to the River in 1951 with her fiancée to meet his family, who had kept a place on Murray Isle for generations. She fell in love with the River and never left. They bought their own property on Stave Island in the 1960’s and built a house there in 1970. She came up every summer until she could no longer get in and out of the boat and then continued to dream of it.

She is survived by her four sons: Theron (and his former wife Kay), Watertown, NY, Quentin (Mandie), Canton, CT, Jordan (Kate), West Hartford, CT, and Morgan (Rorie), West Hartford, CT. In addition to her sons, she is survived by her grandchildren: Abbie, Ashley, Sade, Will, Jackson, Sam, Kyle, Addison and Juliette; and her great-grandchildren Adriano, Leanna, and Arabella -- all of whom were able to be with her in November. She took great joy in participating in the lives of her family. She was a constant fixture at concerts, games, races, and shows.

Along with her parents, she was predeceased by her former husband, William, and her brother Jack Ehlers.

The family would like to thank Jola Dereszkiwicz, UCONN Cardiology, Hartford Healthcare at Home Hospice, and her aides and nurses at West Hartford Health and Rehabilitation Center for their devoted care of Elizabeth. Per her request, there will be no funeral. A family remembrance will be held at a later date at the River. In lieu of flowers, donations in Elizabeth’s memory may be made to Save the River <https://www.savetheriver.org/donate/>.

Tribute Wall

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“ In 1996, Elizabeth and I were "suite-mates" at the Colgate University Writers' Conference, and although we never met again, we remained friends ever since, swapping poems and greeting cards, and sharing photos of our desks and work-spaces. Elizabeth was 30 years older than I am, and I often thought "that's who I want to be when I grow up." I still feel that way. My deepest sympathy on the loss of such a truly extraordinary and wonderful person.

Laura Jean Cordts - January 15, 2024 at 10:52 AM