

RAE ANN BRIESE

OBITUARY



*B*orn on August 22nd, 1936, in San Francisco as Rachel Ann Canoles, she later changed her first name to Rae Ann. She was the only child of James Stanley and Rachel Canoles. She grew up and went to school all over California and the American Southwest, because her father was a carpenter. When she was going to high school, they usually managed to stay in the Barstow area during the school year, so she graduated from Barstow High School in 1954. After that they settled in the San Bernardino area, and she attended both San Bernardino Valley College and St. Paul's Methodist Church. That is where she met her future husband and father of her children, Ernest M. Briese. She worked for an insurance firm until they married in 1956 while he was attending the University of Redlands, and she worked at the University switchboard to help support them. They then moved to Boston, where she worked as a Secretary at Boston University while her husband attended Seminary there. Her husband decided not to continue with the ministry, and enlisted in the Army and was sent to serve in Korea. During that time Rae Ann lived with her in-laws Fran and Bill Briese in Highland, California, and worked as a Civil Service Secretary for the In-Service Electronic Engineering Group at nearby Norton Air Force Base. She always had amazing administrative talents, and could type 90 words per minute!

After Rae Ann's husband returned to the States, he was stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and in 1960 she gave birth to their first child, Deborah Kay, at the Ireland Army Hospital there. In 1961, his Army service was complete and they returned to Highland, California, where they lived in a guest house next to her in-law's house. Her husband started to work for the County Juvenile Justice System, and in 1962 she gave birth to their second child, Steven Michael, at Kaiser Hospital in Fontana. During the following year Ernie's brother Bob got married, and Rae Ann participated as a bridesmaid and, having been an only child, warmly welcomed her new sister-in-law.

They then started to look around at property for their own house to accommodate the growing family, and they purchased property in Yucaipa where Rae Ann helped her husband and the whole extended family on both sides build a new 10-room house from the ground up. She did most of the painting and decorating while

pregnant. They moved into that house in 1965, and during that year she gave birth to their third child, Denise Lynne, also born at Kaiser Hospital in Fontana.

She enjoyed being a stay-at-home mom, and the young family became very involved in their life in Yucaipa. They got to know their neighbors and did activities with them, and Rae Ann helped out a lot at the local schools her children were attending. She and her family were very involved with the Yucaipa United Methodist Church – she sang in the choir, participated in women’s groups, dance groups, and helped to lead various youth groups. She also encouraged the early musical talents of both of her daughters both in church and school. Rae Ann was a talented seamstress, and she made beautiful clothes for the entire family for all occasions, doing her part to contribute to supporting the teacher’s salary of her husband. Her clothes were featured in many school fashion shows and church events. She also had a flair for interior design, and redesigned and renovated many rooms in their house on her own. She worked very hard taking care of her family and making everything beautiful both indoors and outdoors, including good cooking, embroidery projects, furniture refinishing, and fancy candle and flower arrangements. She was also hostess of many large holiday and birthday parties for the extended family.

During all this time Rae Ann was still a wonderful mother, always helping her children succeed in all of life’s endeavors, and she remained that loving person for her entire life. She was a living example of how to be sweet, nice, and patient, as well as teaching her children how to be independent, hang in there, and never quit. She was encouraging in times of stress and said “relax and concentrate.” Rae Ann was always willing to help her children whenever they needed it for various reasons. She attended all important events as much as possible, and was proud of everything her children did throughout their lives.

Rae Ann’s family took a lot of long summer trips since her husband was a teacher, including a long one in 1968 to Oregon, Washington, Canada, and Alaska, as well as another long one in 1974 to Mexico and most of Central America. There were multiple other family trips to other states and to Baja California, mountaineering and scuba lessons, and she also went on trips to bike races when most of the family got into bike racing.

As the children got a little older, she also branched out and did other things. She was an official at their local polling place (which was just down the block) during every election, helping voters and counting ballots. She also continued her college education and pursued her talents in writing and art – she painted many beautiful pictures! The same year that her daughter Debbie graduated from high school, she graduated in 1978 from Crafton Hills College in Yucaipa. Everyone was very proud of her for accomplishing this while raising her family.

Rae Ann first took driving lessons in her twenties from her husband's brother, Bob, but she didn't get her license then. Her children got to spend a lot of time with all of their grandparents, who were nice enough to drive them and Rae Ann to various places, as they were growing up. In the early 1980s, she started working as an Office Manager for the Glen Wallich's Theater at University of Redlands, so she wanted to be able to drive to work. Her daughter Debbie, who had her license since 1977, gave her more driving lessons and Rae Ann finally got her license in the early 80s. She really enjoyed the new-found freedom and had a lot of fun driving around southern California taking advantage of all the wonderful shopping and cuisine opportunities. During this time, she also got into working out, and she got into shape and lost weight. In 1983, she visited her daughter Debbie in Europe, taking her own mother Rachel Canoles with her, and they all travelled the entire European continent and England during that summer. In 1986, she helped her son Steven with his move in Vallejo, CA. Most people couldn't believe all the places she had been!

Rae Ann and Ernie divorced in 1988, in-between the 1987 wedding of their son Steven and the 1988 wedding of their daughter Denise. She moved to an apartment close to her work in Redlands, and when her daughter Debbie returned from Germany in 1989, they both lived in that apartment for a year until Debbie got settled into work and found her own place, which Rae Ann helped her move into. She also started attending the Redlands United Methodist Church during this time. In 1990, Rae Ann purchased a condo in Mentone, still relatively close to her work at the University. During the 1990s she changed jobs a couple of times for better salaries, said goodbye to both parents, and had some injuries to her wrists and ankles, but she healed and kept going. She enjoyed spending time with her daughter Debbie who lived in Redlands, and with her daughter Denise who lived in the L.A. area, when they weren't working. Her son Steven also visited occasionally when he was in the area, but he was mostly living in the eastern U.S. During this time, she also started sophisticated collections of dolls and bears. She was a great lover of beautiful flowers, colors, clothing, and art, and this was reflected in how she decorated her home and her offices at work.

In 1999, she started a new position as the Executive Assistant to the Director of Information Management at the Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton. She had a bit of commute from Mentone, but she stayed in the position until she retired in 2012. She was always beloved at all of the places she worked throughout her life. During the 2000s she would often visit Debbie in Santa Cruz, San Francisco, and Monterey when they both had vacations, and they would travel throughout those areas. She broke her back in a fall in 2009, and Debbie took three months of family medical leave to help care for her. After Rae Ann retired, Debbie would visit her every time she had a vacation, and they would spend holidays together and take short vacations to

places such as Oceanside and Solvang. Rae Ann told her good friend Charlene, who spent a lot of time taking her places during the first half of this past decade, that she really enjoyed those little vacations. And Charlene also said that Rae Ann was a fun person to be with – they went out to eat and went shopping together, and sort of held each other up since they were about the same age.

In 2016 Debbie returned to southern California, and except for a few months in 2016 and 2017, Debbie mostly stayed with Rae Ann and helped her out, since she was slightly disabled regarding walking. After Rae Ann had the epidemic flu at the end of 2017, Debbie was taking even more care of her since that flu took away more of her strength and abilities. They still had fun spending time at home together when Debbie wasn't working, watching the favorite game shows and mystery movies. Denise also visited often, and helped a lot with getting things organized in Rae Ann's condo.

After Debbie started working at home in March of 2020, she kept Rae Ann protected from the new virus. However, after Rae Ann required surgery in May, she became too weakened for home care, and went to the hospital and a nursing home in June. Unfortunately, the nursing home exposed her to the virus, and the problems it caused made her spend the last part of June and most of July at Loma Linda University Medical Center. But she was strong and fought for her health, so they were able to save her life at that time, and she got better and got over the virus.

It was a blessing for all that she got to spend a few weeks back at her own home after being released from a different nursing home in mid-August. Once again, she enjoyed spending time with Debbie and watching her favorite shows and movies on T.V. What no one realized at the time was that she was starting to suffer from the aftermath that people get a couple months after getting over the virus. By the second week of September she had to go back to the hospital for treatment of those symptoms. She fought very hard to stay alive, but we now know that there is no way to stop the breakdowns caused by this aftermath of the virus. She talked to Debbie on the phone every day, and she was still very strong and brave to the very end, still conscious and able to see and talk with Debbie and Steven in a zoom session on the evening of September 26th. After she became unconscious and her heart rate slowed more and more as the day went on, she passed at Redlands Community Hospital on September 27th, 2020. Her fun-loving and creative spirit will be greatly missed.

She was strong all her life and to the very end: strong faith, strong kindness, strong gratitude, and strong hopefulness!

Rae Ann is survived by her three children, Deborah, Steven, and Denise, and her granddaughter Taylor.

There will be graveside services held at Hillside Memorial Park in Redlands, on October 19th at 1:00 p.m.

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