



Dana Daisy Kennedy

September 23, 1935 - September 29, 2023

Averill Park - Dana Daisy Kennedy, 88, a dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, Broadway and Chicago musicals, and wife of novelist William Kennedy died Friday, surrounded by family after battling Alzheimer's disease for seven years.

Born September 23, 1935, in Ponce, Puerto Rico, she began dancing at 11, rose spectacularly through the Manhattan dance world became celebrated as dancer, actress, model, and cultural star in Puerto Rico. Her parents were Fermin Segarra and Celia Irizzary.

She attended New York's High School of Performing Arts. Robert Joffrey, her ballet teacher, chose her for his first ballet company, so Dana danced at Jacob's Pillow as a high school undergraduate. While in the Joffrey company she took the stage name of Dana Sosa.

At 18 she auditioned for Rogers and Hammerstein's "Me & Juliet" -- 300 aspirants for two dance roles. Richard Rodgers himself chose Dana as one of the two. The musical premiered in 1953, ran a year, and Dana went with it on the road. She danced with Olson & Johnson's "Pardon My Antenna", in Chicago, with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet in Detroit, and did Summer Stock in Highland Park, Chicago. She later danced in "Pajama Game" on Broadway replacing Shirley MacLaine, then danced and sang in "News Faces of 1956."

When that show closed in 1956, she went to Puerto Rico to see her family and at a party for her in December, she met William Kennedy, a San Juan newspaper editor. They married a month later.

The Miami Herald hired him as a reporter and less than a year later they left Miami for San Juan. He pursued novel writing and Dana resumed her theatrical career -- as actor, singer, model, and dancer on two weekly TV shows and a third that was aired in America. She had starring roles in Little Theater musicals, "Auntie Mame", "Fiorello," "Bye Bye Birdie" – in the latter co-starring with the young Raul Julia, later a Broadway and film star. Dana became such a cultural icon that William was sometimes called Mr. Sosa.

The Kennedys had two daughters born in Puerto Rico, Dana and Kathy. William was hired as managing editor of a new daily newspaper, The San Juan Star. In 1963 when a crisis in his family arose, they moved to Albany. William reported part-time for the Albany Times Union where he had previously worked. In 1970 the family expanded with the birth of Brendan.

To enhance family income Dana taught ballet in their Averill Park home and throughout the Averill Park School District. For 12 years her students danced with the New York City Ballet in Saratoga, and she choreographed musicals for Averill Park High School.

In 1973 Dana opened Grand Rags in a West Sand Lake mall, a women's sportswear boutique, aided by her brother William Segarra, an apparel manufacturer. She divided the storefront space with her dance school. The boutique's success prompted Dana to open another Grand Rags (again sharing space with dance) at Tamarac Plaza, Cropseyville. Her daughter Kathy helped her in teaching, notably during the disco craze when by popular request Dana (and Kathy) gave lessons. To stay abreast of the craze Mother and daughter took dance lessons in Manhattan, coincidentally choosing

Deney Terrio, one of John Travolta's dance coaches in "Saturday Night Fever" which started the craze. A 1980 fire destroyed several stores in the mall, with Grand Rags and the dance studio. Dana never re-opened.

William began publishing novels in 1968. In 1983 he published 'Ironweed', his fourth, earning him a lavish MacArthur Foundation grant, several literary prizes and movie contracts, and the insolvency that Dana had kept at bay, was ended.

She was a magnificent cook and gracious host who illuminated countless dinner parties at the Kennedys' rambling 19th-century Averill Park farmhouse. Even as Alzheimer's fogged her memory, Dana moved with a balletic grace and exuded a timeless beauty. The "Latin from Manhattan" lived a full, rich and magnificent life.

She is survived by her husband of 66 years, William Kennedy, and her three children, Dana Kennedy Nelson (the late Earl Nelson Jr.), Katherine Kennedy Caruso (Phillip Caruso), Brendan Kennedy (Tracy Kennedy); her grandchildren Casey Rafferty (Elizabeth); Shannon Rafferty; Sarah and Vincent Caruso; Annabella, Scarlett and Evelyn Kennedy; and her great-grandchildren Natalie, Calvin and Audrey Rafferty; her siblings, Ana Julia Segarra Foster, Oliva Segarra, many nieces and nephews; her cousin Emma Sbarra. She was predeceased by siblings William Segarra, Nelson Sosa, Manolo Segarra, Carlos Segarra, Estela Segarra Negron, Bienvenida Segarra Hagarty, and Gumita Cordero.

The Kennedys wish to thank Dana's loyal health aides for years of loving care: Mary Ann Conroy, Colleen McGovern, Leslie Milhouse, Cindy Novak, Hina Chaudhry, Stephanie Lamont, Shanice Bennett, Kim Ashley, and Dacia Brown; thanks also to Community Hospice for extraordinary attention to

Dana's final months.

In lieu of flowers make donations to Alzheimer's Association.

Relatives and friends are invited to visit with Dana's family on Tuesday, October 3, 2023, from 4:00 to 7:00 pm in the McVeigh Funeral Home, 208 North Allen Street, Albany, NY 12206. A time to reflect on her life and legacy will be held at 6:30pm. Please only enter the funeral home from the rear parking lot entrance.

She will be buried at St. Agnes Cemetery, Menands.

To leave the Kennedy family a message on their guestbook, obtain directions, or view other helpful services, please visit www.mcveighfuneralhome.com

Cemetery Details

St. Agnes Cemetery

48 Cemetery Ave
Menands, NY

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 3. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc.
208 N Allen St
Albany, NY 12206
(518) 489-0188
info@mcveighfuneralhome.com
<http://www.McveighFuneralHome.com>

Service

OCT 3. 6:30 PM (ET)

McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc.
208 N Allen St
Albany, NY 12206
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Tribute Wall



“ *Dana Daisy Kennedy*

October 08, 2023 at 09:24 PM



“ *So touching to learn more of this amazing couple and what I can only imagine as the wind beneath Dr Kennedy's wings all these years. Dana is finally home, free from Alzheimers, dancing for eternity. My deepest sympathies to the entire family during this time of grief and loss.*

Michael Camoin - October 05, 2023 at 03:08 PM



“ *I was fortunate to be a guest at Dana and Bill's home in Averill Park in the 1980s. It was a professional visit. I was a television reporter and hoped to gain some insights from Bill on a story that I was working on. But while I was an invited intruder, Dana and Bill made me feel like a close friend. They couldn't have been more welcoming. Dana was a marvelous hostess and participant in the afternoon. Years later, we crossed paths again. Dana and Bill were as gracious as they were when they invited me into their house. Some rare couples are just that way, I suppose. Their own happiness radiates with such a glow that it brings in others. God bless. Thank goodness we had her here with us. Phil Bayly*

Phil Bayly - October 05, 2023 at 07:32 AM

Pat
Reilly

“ *Bill, Kathy, Dana, Brendan, and all the children, especially Shannon, who is lit with the likeness of her grandmother, you are all in my mind and heart as you release this beauty into the universe. Pat Reilly*



Pat Reilly - October 03, 2023 at 05:35 PM

TC

“ *Kennedy and Caruso Family,*

We are sorry for your loss. Dana was a great person and lived a tremendous life. She was always so gracious and interesting to talk to when we were together at Averill Park Education Foundation events. May she rest in peace.

Tom and Maureen Cetrino

Thomas Cetrino - October 03, 2023 at 02:08 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Dana Daisy Kennedy.*



October 02, 2023 at 09:46 PM

SW

“ *Dana, Kathy, Brendon, William and family. I am so sorry to hear of the passing of your Mom. She was such a Beautiful Lady. Cherish the good times you had with her! Prayers, Hugs, and Love sent to all.*

Sherri Wait - October 02, 2023 at 09:20 PM

FC

“ My deepest sympathies are with the family. I am saddened by the passing of Mrs. Kennedy who was a dynamic and personable lady that I met when I became good friends with Kathy in my freshman year of college. My last memory of her was a beautiful evening I spent out and about with her and Mr. Kennedy to celebrate Kathy’s birthday not too long ago. You blazed an awesome trail, Mrs. K, .. a light which will burn brightly for a very long time. 💖 ~ Felicia Collins

Felicia Collins - October 02, 2023 at 07:26 PM



“ Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dana Daisy Kennedy.



October 02, 2023 at 03:34 PM

TB

“ Dear Kennedy family:

I was sorry to hear of the death of Dana Kennedy. It is a great loss to you all, and I convey my deepest sympathy.

From the few times I met Dana Kennedy, I was always impressed by her openness, her courtesy, and her wit and wisdom. Individuals with all these qualities are few and far between. She clearly led a blessed life, and blessed those in her life by her loving presence.

In "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People," Stephen Covey argues that the truest measure of an individual's life is the legacy they leave behind to the rest of us. Dana Kennedy left a legacy that anyone would be proud to have, and very few could attain.

Shakespeare always says it the best. When Mark Antony dies, Caesar says about his death, "The breaking of so great a thing should make a greater crack...The death of Antony is not a single doom" (Antony and Cleopatra, V.i.14-8). Dana's name could easily replace Antony's. She will always live on in spirit, in your hearts and your memories.

Tom Bulger

Tom Francis bulger - October 02, 2023 at 11:15 AM

SV

“ While I did not have the opportunity to know Mrs. Kennedy, I did have the wonderful opportunity to work with her kind daughter Dana. I know she must've been very proud and I offer my sincere sympathies to the whole family. Suellen Vance

Suellen Vance - October 02, 2023 at 10:15 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Dana Daisy Kennedy.*



October 02, 2023 at 09:44 AM



“ *I'm so sorry for your loss. I have lots of memories with Dana. I took ballet and disco lessons from her. Dana and mom were the best for each other.*

Tina jahn - October 01, 2023 at 03:09 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Dana Daisy Kennedy.*



October 01, 2023 at 02:11 AM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dana Daisy Kennedy.*

October 01, 2023 at 02:11 AM

JB

“ Dana was a shining light of vitality and grace. Angel and I shared so many wonderful moments with Dana and Bill in Madrid, Ubeda, Almería but one of the most memorable happened in Averill Park when Dana and Angel went at each other with all their ferocious creativity over a Paella Bake-off. Their stiff competition was an amazing show of Hispanic feistiness, talent, passion and much cariño. There was total consensus amount the guests that the contest resulted in a splendid tie of which we all got the best part. We'll miss you Dana! ¡Hasta siempre, Guapa!

Joan Berenguer - October 01, 2023 at 01:57 AM

SE

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



susan k segarra enneper - October 01, 2023 at 12:45 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Dana Daisy Kennedy.

September 30, 2023 at 06:51 PM



“ Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Dana Daisy Kennedy.



September 30, 2023 at 06:51 PM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc. - September 30, 2023 at 03:07 PM