Sossoman
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Karen Lee Schwengel Achilles

Aug. 23, 1939 - April 19, 2023

Karen Lee Schwengel Achilles passed away Wednesday, April 19, 2023. Karen was born in Chicago, IL on August 23, 1939 to Harry S. Lee and Elizabeth L. Lee. She graduated from The Loring School for Girls in 1957. She attended the University of Iowa and graduated in 1961 with a degree in Elementary Education. On August 12, 1961, she married Kenneth J. Schwengel. Ken passed away April 1, 1988. Karen's first teaching assignment was at College Community Schools in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She went on to receive a Master's Degree in Special Education from Bowling Green State University and a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Appalachian State University. She taught children and adults with special needs and ended her career in 2nd grade at Hillcrest Elementary in Morganton, NC. On April 27, 2005, she married Charles M. Achilles in Geneva, NY, Karen's interest were many. First and foremost, she was always available to volunteer for activities that included "her boys". The Lord was number one in her life. She enjoyed Bible Studies, needlework, gardening, tennis, Mahjong and Bridge. Singing was her true love, but her cancer left her with one vocal cord unable to carry the load. Karen was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Morganton.

Survivors include her three sons, Kent, Kris, and Kirk and their wives, Tanya, Janet and Bonnie; granddaughters, Talon, Alyssa, Mia and Emma; grandsons, Tyler (Candis) Mays, Trevor (Tori) Mays, Kyle Butitta; and great-grandchildren, Tallulah, Thor, Ava and Kaynon.

A memorial service to honor Karen's life will be announced at a later date at First Presbyterian Church.

Memorials may be made to Ebenezer Institute of Learning, Nkhoma, Malawi thru the Presbytery Office at 110 Silver Creek Road, Morganton, NC or to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund at First Presbyterian Church, Morganton, NC

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

The Grace Ridge Retirement Community family would like to express their sincere condolences to Karen's family. She was a leader in our community and loved helping others. She will truly be missed.

–Lisa Miller

It was an honor to serve with Karen as educators of children at Hillcrest Elementary. She was a master teacher who exemplified the servant philosophy. Karen was one of the pioneer teachers in the reduced class size program and was a champion of its effectiveness. Mrs. Achilles was such an exceptional teacher that she presented for the US Department of Education. Even beyond her extraordinary commitment to teaching children, Karen was a tremendous person who loved the Lord, her family, and community. Prayers and thoughts go out to her family and friends through whom her legacy continues.

–Susan Pollpeter



I loved Karen and enjoyed knowing her. She was so young at heart and full of life. She most definitely made purpose in her everyday living to the fullest. Our conversations were always interesting and humorous at times. She was a good friend , a real person, a light in the darkness. Now her light has been taken into more light, and she is in the arms of God. I will miss her.

–Amy Asbury



My sincere condolences to Karen's family. I worked with her at Hillcrest Elementary School. May God bless each of you during this most difficult time in your lives.

–Diann Thomas Tate