



## Karen Maria Nelson

June 19, 1953 - November 3, 2025

Karen Maria Nelson June 19, 1953-November 3, 2025

Karen Maria Nelson died at home in rural Wilson County on November 3, 2025, surrounded by her family.

Karen was born Karen Maria Nelson on June 19, 1953, to Kenneth Herbert Nelson and Betty Louise Doores Nelson in Chanute, Kansas.

Karen graduated from Altoona-Midway High School in 1971. She received an AA from Neosho County Community College, a BS in journalism from the University of Kansas and an MA in Curriculum and Instruction: TESOL from the University of Kansas.

She was preceded in death by her mother, father and nephew, Kevin Nelson.

Karen is survived by her siblings Christine (Rocky) Swiger, Florida; Charles (Karen's twin), Lawrence, Kansas; Beth (Dan) Clarke, Toronto, Kansas; nephews, Nathan Clarke and Kenneth Nelson; niece, Kristen (Alec) Philip, Wamego, Kansas; and great-nephew, Evan Scott Philip, Wamego, Kansas.

Karen began her professional career as a paralegal VISTA volunteer in Grand Island, Nebraska. Her Peace Corps career began in 1978 as a recruiter in Kansas City, then she was off to Senegal as a Peace Corps Volunteer two years later. Karen's wide range of skills took her to Latin America: Guatemala, Belize, Ecuador, El Salvador; Africa: Senegal, Niger, Mauritania; Asia: China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Armenia; and Eastern Europe: Moldova. She also consulted for the USAID, (US State Dept., Peace Corps) while in Nicaragua and Iraq.

As part of her training Karen learned to speak French, Wolof, Spanish and Romanian.

After the Peace Corps, Karen came back to Kansas to accept a job at Pittsburg State University, beginning as a lecturer in the university's intensive English program and retiring in 2019 as the Acting Director of that same program.

Karen spent more than 40 years traveling the world, spreading knowledge and enabling others to do the same by: teaching resource management; teaching essential language skills; training people to adapt to new cultures so they could help others; and reaching across the barriers of language and culture to make a difference.

Karen always valued her rural background, which she said served her well in adapting to developing countries. Especially valuable, she wrote, were the life skills of problem solving, resilience and taking responsibility.

Karen traveled the world but came back to her roots after her retirement. She believed, "There's no place like home." Karen will be missed by family and friends across the globe.

A Celebration of Life will be held November 21st at 1:00 PM.

Location: The Turn at Stone Creek Restaurant, 511 South Country Club Road, Chanute, KS 66720

Parking and entrance on the South side of the building.

Arrangements have been entrusted to Countryside Funeral Home.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

NOV **21**. 1:00 PM (CT)

The Turn at Stone Creek Resturant  
511 South Country Club Road  
Chanute, KS 66720

*Parking and entrance on the South side of the building.*

# Tribute Wall



“ I have wonderful childhood adventure memories with Karen. And I am in awe of her contribution to the world.

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**Gloria Loucif (Olson)** - November 14, 2025 at 02:22 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Karen Maria Nelson.



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November 09, 2025 at 09:03 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Karen Maria Nelson.



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November 09, 2025 at 02:44 PM



“ From the Chira Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Karen Maria Nelson.

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**From the Chira Family** - November 09, 2025 at 02:44 PM



“ *Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of Karen Maria Nelson.*



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November 07, 2025 at 11:37 AM



“ *Shannon S. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Karen Maria Nelson.*

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**Shannon S.** - November 07, 2025 at 11:37 AM



“ *Barbara Koelzer lit a candle in memory of Karen Nelson*



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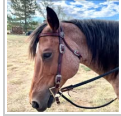
**Barbara Koelzer** - November 07, 2025 at 11:22 AM



“ *Karen and I met in Senegal when I was a volunteer there. She handed me her USAID project teaching women in Senegal how to make clay cook stoves using little more than clay from the ground and water. (Ban Al Suuf). We shared a small house in Thies (Senegal) for a year as I continued to do that work. She was a patient and kind person and a friend. She will be sorely missed by many.*

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**Cheryl Lynn Fattibene** - November 07, 2025 at 07:59 AM



*I will never forget Karen. We met in the Peace Corps in 1980. She was gentle, kind and that special type of person who made everyone feel good. Rest in peace, friend. I love you.*

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**Barbara Koelzer** - November 07, 2025 at 11:26 AM