

Oonagh Kater



KATER, OONAGH

Agnes Cuthbertson McIntyre "Oonagh" Kater, 83, died peacefully on Friday, May 8, 2009, at Palm Garden of Gainesville. Formerly, she lived in Keystone Heights and in Gainesville. She was born on March 23, 1926, in Dunoon, Argyll, Scotland, the daughter of Andrew Kater and Gordon Letters Kater, and from childhood was called Oonagh, the Scottish Gaelic form of Agnes. She grew up in Clarkston, Glasgow, completed school and college studies in business, and received music and art awards in Scotland. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as a Royal Air Force radar mechanic, and later worked for the London, Midland & Scottish Railway.

Oonagh Kater moved to the United States in 1947 (soon followed by her beloved Bechstein grand piano), and was naturalized in 1960. In Spokane and Seattle she worked for Pan Am and the Canadian Consulate General, and wrote for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer. She sang with the Seattle Philharmonic Chorus, Women's Musical Club, Gilbert & Sullivan Society, Civic Opera Company, University of Washington Symphony and in Seattle churches, and was a consistent winner in the International Music Festival competitions held in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Miss Kater came to Gainesville in 1968, and became staff assistant in the Departments of Anatomy and Neuroscience in the College of Medicine at Shands. Later, as Editorial Assistant and Word Processing Supervisor for the Department of Pediatrics, she provided major editorial assistance for medical research publications. In 1986 she became Executive Secretary in the UF Office of Instructional Resources, retiring in 1991. A staunch Christian, she was a frequent soloist and chorister in Gainesville churches, most recently Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, where she was a soloist and section leader, and also a member of St. Elizabeth's Circle. She sang in the University Choir, Gainesville Civic Chorus, Willis Bodine Chorale, Melrose Musical Theatre and Lake Area Singers, sharing dressmaking-design and organizational skills in addition to her vocal gifts.

Miss Kater served over 2400 hours as a volunteer "Pink Lady" with the Alachua General Hospital Auxiliary, and also served at Shands Starke. She cared passionately for her cats and Scottish terrier, "McGregor," and gave unstintingly of her time and resources to friends in Gainesville and Keystone Heights. Famous for her Scottish shortbread, Empire cookies and Dundee cake, she was an active member of the Transatlantic Brides & Parents Association. She always put into practice her favorite Robert Burns lines, "Man to man, the world o'er, shall brothers be..." and added, "And it will come to pass if we will just get off our high horse, listen to other people and cultures, and TRY to understand."

Miss Kater was preceded in death by her parents and sister, Mary "Maybeth" Kater Phillips. She is survived by her niece, Elizabeth Ann Phillips Rowe (David), Megan, David and Dawson Rowe; a brother-in-law, Robert Frank Phillips (Gena), all of Newberry, Florida; nephews Robert Gordon Phillips and Michael Allen Phillips; by her Scottish cousins, Agnes "Nessie" Kater, Mary Kater Bassett (Arthur), Colin and Martin Bassett; Mary Innes and Pauline Innes; Andrew Colin Innes of London; and by a host of musical colleagues and friends in the Gainesville community and around the country.

Memorial services are at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, 100 NE 1st Street, Gainesville, on Saturday, May 16, 2009, at 11:00 a.m. In keeping with her generosity and wishes, her body has been donated for scientific study to the Florida Anatomical Board. Cremation will follow, with interment in the Memorial Garden of Holy Trinity Church. Arrangements are under the care of WILLIAMS-THOMAS DOWNTOWN FUNERAL HOME of Gainesville.

In lieu of flowers, donations in her memory may be made to the Holy Trinity Music Fund, 100 NE 1st Street, Gainesville, FL 32601; or to Haven Hospice, 4200 NW 90th Boulevard, Gainesville, FL 32606.

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