



Kathleen Isabel Black

October 25, 1939 - May 28, 2026

Kathleen Isabel Sullivan Black, 86, of Maple Grove, Minnesota, passed away on May 28, 2026.

Born October 25, 1939, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, to Michael Francis Sullivan and Susan Ellen Doran Sullivan, Kathleen was raised in North Minneapolis as the sixth of seven children. Her Irish roots ran deep. Her father, Michael, had come to America from Ireland, building a life through his work on the Burlington Northern Railroad before founding his own roofing company. Her mother, Susan, was Minnesota-born but proudly and fully Irish. Family and faith in the Roman Catholic Church were the twin pillars of the Sullivan household, and both would shape Kathleen for the rest of her life.

Kathleen graduated from St. Margaret's Academy in 1957 and went on to the University of Minnesota, earning a degree in English in 1961. Active in the Newman Club and the Council of Religions, she lived her faith as a bridge between communities from an early age.

After college, Kathleen joined Northwest Orient Airlines as a stewardess in Minneapolis. Over time she earned the seniority to fly international routes out of Seattle, carrying passengers across Asia and flying Northwest Orient flights that transported military personnel to and from Vietnam during the war. She explored wherever her routes took her, absorbing cultures, cuisines, and ways

of life she would carry home. Visiting family, she arrived with stories, gifts, and unmistakable style, including the GTO that made her the undisputed cool aunt to a generation of nieces and nephews.

In 1968, Kathleen married Marine aviator David R. Black in Omaha, Nebraska.

Together, Kathleen and David raised four sons: Clayton, Colm, Alex, and Kevin. The family moved through military postings in Texas, North Carolina, Virginia, Iwakuni, Japan, and Okinawa before settling in Minnesota when David retired in 1979. After years of raising her boys far from home, she wanted her sons surrounded by the extended family she had grown up with. With a pilot for a husband who was often away, she was the steady center of the household, managing everything and doing it with warmth, humor, and an open door. Whatever anyone's circumstances, her home was a place where everyone was welcome and had something to eat.

In Minnesota, she was the class mother her school communities relied on, present for Cub Scouts, sports, and every activity her boys were part of.

Her time in Japan and visits to Paris shaped a kitchen unlike any on her block in Robbinsdale. Her Eggs Benedict became family legend, the centerpiece of Easter and Christmas brunches. When she and David settled in Minnetonka in 1994, she was a constant presence for her grandchildren as they grew up.

In retirement, they biked through France, spent time touring the United States in their RV, and eventually made their home in River Falls, Wisconsin, where Kathleen spent her days reading mystery novels, cooking, gardening, and making sure there was always room for ice cream.

Her Roman Catholic faith was the foundation on which she built everything.

Devout from childhood to her final days, she was instrumental in bringing David into the faith and ensured her sons were fully engaged in parish life. She sang in the church choir, taught religious education, and gave generously of her time to her parish and community.

In her later years, Kathleen faced a gradual loss of memory that deepened over time. David remained devotedly at her side, making his home with her in memory care so they would not be apart. When he passed in December 2024, her health declined quickly. She spent her final year in hospice, surrounded by those who loved her.

Kathleen is survived by her children: Clayton (Rhonda) Black of St. Paul, MN; Colm (Becky) Black of Minneapolis, MN; Alex (Jennifer) Black of Maple Grove, MN; Kevin (Kelly) Black of Maple Grove, MN. Her legacy lives on through her grandchildren: Molly Lewis, Seamus Black, Madisen Black, Isabella Black, Noah Black, Finnegan Black, Josephine Black, Katherine Black, Logan Black, and Lauren Black, as well as great-grandchild Thomas Lewis-Manning. She is also survived by her brother, John Sullivan; her sister, Eileen Hedberg; and sister-in-law, Marilyn Sullivan.

Kathleen was preceded in death by her beloved husband of 55 years, David R. Black; her parents, Michael and Susan (Doran) Sullivan; two sisters lost in their earliest years; her sister, Mary Sue Riley; her brother, Michael Sullivan; her brothers-in-law, James Reed, Carl Hedberg, and Edward Riley; her sisters-in-law, Helen Reed and Susan Sullivan; her parents-in-law, Parker and Reta Black; and nephews James Reed II, Edward Reed, and Thomas Reed.

May the road rise up to meet you, Kathleen, and carry you home to David, your memories whole and your joy restored.

A Memorial Mass of Christian Burial will take place Monday, June 15, 2026, at 10:30 am at St. Therese Parish (18323 Minnetonka Blvd) in Deephaven. Visitation will be held from 9:30 am until the time of Mass. A luncheon will follow. Burial will take place at 1:30 pm at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis.

If you are unable to attend in person, join the live stream: <https://st-therese.org/live>

Please consider a memorial to a non-profit organization of your choice.

Upcoming Events

Visitation

JUN 15. 9:30 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

Church of St. Therese (Deephaven)
18323 Minnetonka Boulevard
Deephaven, MN 55391

Mass of Christian Burial

JUN 15. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Church of St. Therese (Deephaven)
18323 Minnetonka Boulevard
Deephaven, MN 55391

Reception

JUN 15. 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM (CT)

Church of St. Therese (Deephaven)
18323 Minnetonka Boulevard
Deephaven, MN 55391

Graveside Service

JUN 15. 1:30 PM - 1:45 PM (CT)

Fort Snelling National Cemetery
7601 34th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55450

Tribute Wall



“ *Meet Alex & Jen through my daughter & son in law as next door neighbors. Kathleen raised thoughtful & sons. So sorry for your loss.* ”

Connie - Yesterday at 01:14 PM