



## Roy Austin Blakey

July 19, 1930 - August 23, 2024

"Lucky, lucky, lucky" is how Roy Blakey, 94, described his life, which ended peacefully, surrounded by love, in his Minneapolis studio home on August 24, 2024. He was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on July 19, 1930, to Bernard and Josie Blakey, whose strong roots helped give him wings to follow his bliss - professional figure skating, traveling the world and photographing both.

Roy's love of skating was inspired by ice skating Olympic champion and movie star, Sonja Henie, but lack of an ice rink turned him into a champion roller skater. Drafted in the Army, he was sent to Germany in 1952, where he taught himself figure skating, eventually landing his first professional job performing in an ice show in Garmisch at the Casa Carioca, a U.S. Military nightclub.

Returning to America to study photography under the GI Bill, Roy landed a job skating in the Conrad Hilton Hotel's Boulevard Room in Chicago, performing there for five years before traveling twice around the world with Holiday on Ice International. Roy honed his photography skills by making portraits of fellow skaters. Roy's camera got him detained for questioning in Russia, enabled him to photograph royal dignitaries who visited the show (including the King and Queen of Thailand), and photography helped him explore his new love of Asian culture, arts and people.

In 1968 Roy settled in New York City to launch his career as a photographer to the stars of stage and screen. Debbie Allen, Blossom Dearie, Shirley MacLaine, Tommy Tune and Barry Manilow shared the limelight with downtown artists Candy Darling, Jackie Curtis and Divine - all frozen at the height of their beauty and careers in Roy's studio.

Considered a pioneer of gay male photography, Roy was a regular contributor to *After Dark* and *Dilettante* magazines. His self-published photography book of male nudes entitled "HE" was the first book that featured only male nudity (including full frontal!) to legally circulate via the U.S. mail after it first became legal to send nude photographs of men and not be deemed obscene by postal inspectors. "Roy Blakey's 1970s Male Nudes" (Goliath 2002) took a new look at the '70s photos. The book tour included exhibitions in NYC and San Francisco.

In 1993 Roy moved to Minneapolis, settling in a NYC-style loft building, sharing the studio side with niece and fellow photographer, Keri Pickett. With additional space and nostalgic for his time in the ice shows, Roy resumed collecting the history of theatrical figure skating, a hobby he started when he was 11 years old. Roy Blakey's IceStage Archive ([www.icestagearchive.com](http://www.icestagearchive.com)) is now the largest treasure trove of costumes, posters, programs and memorabilia from the ice show world ranging from his beloved Sonja Henie's shows to Ice Follies, Ice Capades, Holiday on Ice and Disney On Ice.

Roy's life and collection helped inspire and inform Keri Pickett's documentary feature film, "The Fabulous Ice Age" (72 minutes, 2013), covering the century of the great American touring ice shows and Roy's efforts to save its history. Keri is currently in production on a documentary chronicling Roy's extraordinary life entitled, "Uncle Roy."

Roy is survived by his sister B.J. French of Key West and Minneapolis, along

with her daughters and Roy's nieces, Kim Mahling of Senegal, West Africa and Arlington, Virginia, and Keri Pickett of Minneapolis. He was preceded in death by his parents and sister, Marian Spencer. A memorial service will take place Saturday, September 7, (9am visit time and 10am service) at Lakewood Cemetery Chapel in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In lieu of flowers, the family prefers donations to the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection Fund at the University of Minnesota Foundation, PO Box 860266, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55486-0266. Donations may also be made on-line at <https://z.umn.edu/givetretter>

# Cemetery Details

## Lakewood Cemetery (Minneapolis)

3600 Hennepin Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

# Previous Events

## Visitation

SEP 7. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CT)

Lakewood Memorial Chapel  
3600 Hennepin Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

## Memorial Service

SEP 7. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Lakewood Memorial Chapel  
3600 Hennepin Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408

## Graveside Service

SEP 7. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Lakewood Cemetery (Minneapolis)  
3600 Hennepin Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408



# Tribute Wall

BD

“ Today is my friend Matthew Dyke's Heavenly birthday. I knew about Roy from Matthew. I was looking through some of the photos I have, and I found this one of Matt and Roy. When I searched for Roy, I found this page. I am delighted to hear that Keri is working on another documentary. I cannot wait!  
-- Becky Branham Dimon



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**Becky Branham Dimon** - January 23, 2025 at 03:32 PM