



Ira L Collins

June 30, 1937 - December 13, 2024

Ira L. Collins, age 87, of Knoxville, Illinois formerly of Kankakee, Illinois died at 8:33 AM on Friday, December 13, 2024, with his family by his side in Knoxville, Illinois.

He was born on June 30, 1937, in Olathe, Kansas, the son of Ira L. and Mary Ruth (Ayers) Collins, Sr. He married Gay Keating on December 30, 1956, in Nevada, Missouri.

Mr. Collins leaves behind his wife of 68 years of marriage on December 30 th , Gay Collins of Knoxville, Illinois; four sons: Rick (Gina) Collins of Kankakee, Illinois,

Randy (Cristal) Collins of Tuscola, Texas, Ronnie (Lauren) Collins of Everett, Pennsylvania, and Roy (Jessica) Collins; two brothers, Bill (Ginnie) Collins of Missouri, David Collins of Missouri, and one sister, Cathy Spurgeon of Oklahoma;

ten grandchildren and fifteen great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents and one sister, Shirley Franklin. He also leaves several nieces and nephews.

He received his Bachelor Degree in Human Relations/Psychology and

Master's

Degree in Special Education/Administration; then received his Illinois
Licensed

Nursing Home Administrator.

Mr. Collins' work experience began as an entry level hospital attendant at a
Missouri

State Operated facility in January 1956. During his first five years, he
functioned as a

direct care worker and based on personal initiative and leadership skills, he
received a

promotion to an activity therapy position which involved performing
supervisory

responsibilities and providing direct services for individuals.

In 1961, Mr. Collins was recruited and subsequently transferred to another
State

Operated facility that served over 3,000 individuals. At this time, he received a
promotion and served as the Assistant Director of a large multifaceted Activity
Therapy Department. From this point on in his career he had been enhanced
with

numerous promotions that involved increased responsibility for evaluating,
planning,

implementing, and directing services for people.

In 1964, Mr. Collins' career emphasis expanded when he was selected to
serve in a

dual role as a Residential Services Director responsible for administrating and
directing a 400-bed residential unit and serving as the overall Program

Director for

three Missouri State Schools. Mr. Collins' responsibilities as the Program
Director

included directing all programs and services for the individuals who lived at
these

three state schools.

During the last nine years of employment for the State of Missouri, Mr. Collins

worked full-time to support his wife and four sons and attended college on a part-time

basis in order to earn his Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees.

Mr. Collins' 15 years of work for the State of Missouri culminated with the role

as

State Director of the Special Olympics in 1969 and 1970. Mr. Collins had the

privilege of organizing, implementing, and directing the first Special Olympics

program for the State of Missouri. Mr. Collins' work as State Director of Special

Olympics for the State of Missouri and the successful outcomes of this

organization

were highly publicized in the news media including television interviews, radio

interviews, and newspaper coverage. Mr. Collins was successful in involving

over

6,000 individuals with developmental disabilities from across the State of

Missouri in

these Special Olympics programs. Special Olympians participated in the 10

regional

Special Olympics, the state tournament, and the Chicago International games.

In 1970, Mr. Collins was recruited by the State of Illinois Department of Mental

Health and Developmental Disabilities and selected to serve as the Illinois

State

Program Coordinator for individuals with a developmental disability. Mr.

Collins'

responsibilities involved the provision of administrative direction to State

Operated

Developmental Centers pertaining to organizational structure, program

development,

habilitation planning, accountability systems, staffing, budget, and business practices.

In 1971, his leadership skills and accomplishments were recognized by receipt of the

Governors Superior Achievement Award.

Mr. Collins positive involvement with service providers throughout the state, with

DMHDD leaders, parents, and individuals along with the achievement of established

outcomes led to greater responsibilities. In 1971, the Department of Mental Health

and Disabilities requested that Mr. Collins accept another assignment that involved a

promotion. This assignment was to assist DMHDD address overcrowding conditions

and a waiting list consisting of individuals with a developmental disability who were

not receiving services. Mr. Collins' assignment was to develop specialized residential

units at the Kankakee State Hospital to serve people with a development disability.

Mr. Collins accepted this promotion and left the DMHDD Central Office to accept an

assignment as the Director for developmental disability services at the Kankakee

State Hospital.

On May 10, 1973, Dr. Leroy P. Levitt, the new Director of DMHDD came to Kankakee to determine the future of the Kankakee State Hospital. At this time the

mental health services at Kankakee were recognized as grossly inadequate.

The

hospital staff encouraged Dr. Levitt to interview Mr. Collins before making a decision on the Hospital's future. Dr. Levitt and his staff conducted a lengthy interview with Mr. Collins and offered him a challenge to convert the Kankakee State

Hospital to a residential and training center that served people with developmental disabilities. This conversion was to occur within a 12-month time period. Mr. Collins was charged with the responsibility of successfully and appropriately relocating 1405 persons with a mental illness and, during the same time period successfully and appropriately transferring into Shapiro 830 individuals with developmental disabilities from other inappropriate settings. This major challenge involved a total reorganization of the facility, retraining all staff, developing and implementing policies and procedures, accountability systems, implementing program development systems, habilitation planning, staffing plans, and much more. The DMHDD Director indicated that if a successful transition did not occur in a 12-month period he would close the Kankakee facility and explore other options. With the full support and commitment of the Kankakee employees they met the challenge of successfully completing the conversion of the Kankakee facility in the required 12-month time period. At this time, Dr. Levitt appointed Mr. Collins as the Acting Director of the

newly converted Kankakee facility. A nationwide search was initiated to identify candidates for the vacant Kankakee Facility Director position. Subsequently interviews were conducted by a large panel of representatives from parent groups, community groups, and major disability organizations. The panel's role was to recommend a candidate to fill the vacant facility director's position. The panel recommended Mr. Collins for the Facility Director position and Dr. Levitt appointed him to the Facility Director position in 1974.

In conjunction with my responsibilities at Shapiro, in 1986 Mr. Collins was assigned simultaneous duties which included serving in a dual role as the Center Director for Shapiro Center and the Howe Developmental Center. At that time, the Howe Center had been decertified, denied federal reimbursement, and the department of Justice was investigating complaints regarding the safety and well-being of the individuals who resided at the Howe Developmental Center. With the full support and commitment of the Howe staff in 1986, they were successful in regaining federal recertification and the return of Federal funding for the operations of the Howe Center. In doing so, the Department of Justice investigators indicated that they were satisfied that the Howe Center was moving in the right direction. The Department of Justice closed their case against the Howe Center at this time and a new Center

Director was appointed and Mr. Collins returned to Shapiro Center. From 1987-1991, Mr. Collins was promoted and served as the Deputy Director for the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. This included the responsibility for achieving improvement at the Mental Health facilities and the Developmental Centers located in Northern Illinois. Major improvements were achieved at the Developmental Centers and the Mental Health facilities during my tenure. All the developmental centers had achieved federal certification and were receiving federal reimbursement to the State Treasury. A number of the Mental

Health facilities also achieved accreditation standards. In addition, accountability standards in all the facilities were dramatically strengthened, and services to individuals were greatly improved.

From Mr. Collins' return in 1991 to his retirement, he served as the Center Director for the Shapiro Center. In addition to all the other assignments and responsibilities over the years, Mr. Collins had successfully provided administrative direction for operations at the Shapiro Center for over 42 years. After the conversion of the facility, Shapiro achieved and has maintained continuous and full compliance with Federal and State regulations that are required for federal certification and reimbursement for services. Shapiro has also achieved and maintained continuous National and International accreditation standards of excellent.

He moved to Knoxville, Illinois in March of 2021 to live with his son and daughter-in-law who became his caregiver for the past thirty-two months. Visitation will be held from 4:00 to 7:00 PM on Friday, December 20, 2024, and 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM on Saturday, December 21, 2024, at Schreffler Funeral Homes in Kankakee, Illinois, with a funeral service at 1:00 P.M. He will be laid to rest at Limestone Cemetery in Limestone Twp, Illinois. Rev. Zachary Hunter will officiate. Memorials may be made to Alzheimer's Association.

Cemetery Details

Limestone Cemetery

Kankakee, IL 60901

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 20. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Schreffler Funeral Home - Kankakee Chapel
1900 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-2421
<https://www.schrefflerfuneralhomes.com/>

Visitation

DEC 21. 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Schreffler Funeral Home - Kankakee Chapel
1900 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-2421
<https://www.schrefflerfuneralhomes.com/>

Funeral Service

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

Schreffler Funeral Home - Kankakee Chapel
1900 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-2421
<https://www.schrefflerfuneralhomes.com/>

Tribute Wall

AT

“ Alfred (Aldo) And Rosella Thomas lit a candle
in memory of Ira L Collins



Alfred (Aldo) and Rosella Thomas - December 29, 2024 at 09:07 PM

HF

“ Mr. Collin's was a man who cared about people, his leadership of
Shapiro Center was exceptional, I myself will always remember him.
RIP Sir

Henry Fry - December 20, 2024 at 07:33 PM

MB

“ Mary Bulliner lit a candle in memory of Ira L
Collins



Mary Bulliner - December 19, 2024 at 10:25 PM

AD

“ Ira was a good person. We didn't always agree on everything, but
he always put the people he served first. Our thoughts and prayers
are with you.

Art Dykstra - December 19, 2024 at 04:03 PM

BD

“ *Bob Dean lit a candle in memory of Ira L Collins*



Bob Dean - December 18, 2024 at 09:11 PM

DB

“ *Darrell And Melody Benoit lit a candle in memory of Ira L Collins*



Darrell and Melody Benoit - December 18, 2024 at 01:17 PM

LW

“ *Lorraine Watson lit a candle in memory of Ira L Collins*



Lorraine Watson - December 18, 2024 at 09:39 AM

JC

“ *John And Judy Cooper lit a candle in memory of Ira L Collins*



John and Judy Cooper - December 18, 2024 at 07:28 AM

TR

“ My condolences to the entire Collins family. When I worked at Shapiro Mr Collins main focus was to make sure the individuals were well cared for. Mr Collins left a great legacy, may you rest safely in the Arms of the Almighty God...



Terry RobicheauxLloyd - December 18, 2024 at 12:12 AM

DM

“ My deepest sympathy to Gay and family. Words can't convey how much Mr Collins meant to me and the families of the individuals that lived at Shapiro. He cared so much for the individuals that lived at Shapiro. He taught us to lead by example and to always expect the best. Although I'm sad at his passing I'm sure he resting in peace and making rounds.

Donna Morris - December 17, 2024 at 10:32 PM

ML

“ Being your Administrative Assistant; when I heard those boots coming up the steps I knew I better snap to it! Lol

michelle jaeger lavine - December 17, 2024 at 06:41 PM

AW

“ RIP Mr. Collins. I would like to say thank you for the beautiful letter you sent for my mother in law Sarah Walker's Homegoing Services. When I called and ask for a letter about what she meant to her unit 103. You said "No problem"

Adrienne Walker - December 17, 2024 at 03:49 PM

CO

“ *Uncle Corky will be missed for sure. He was loving, yet funny and ornery, in the best of ways. Loved him so much. Hated that the family lived so far away. May the Lord give you Peace (Aunt Gay, Rick, Randy, Ronnie, Roy, and Daughter in-laws, grand children and great grandchildren). Love you all.*
Carolyn

Carolyn Otter - December 16, 2024 at 10:31 PM

WG

“ *Sending our sincere condolences...*



Walt & Maria Gwaltney - December 16, 2024 at 10:26 PM

MM

“ *My heartfelt prayers and condolences to Mrs. Collins and the family. Rest in peace, Mr. C.*



Michael & Rita Morris - December 16, 2024 at 06:27 PM

ST

My condolences to your family and friends, may we ALL find COMFORT, in your own PERSONAL memories 🥰❤️

Shari L Thomas - December 16, 2024 at 07:03 PM

ES

We were so very sorry to learn of Ira's passing, and we extend to Gay, Rick & Gina, Randy & Crystal, Ronnie & Lauren, and Roy & Jessica, together with all family, our very sincerest and genuine sympathies and condolences. Ira's lifetime service to the mentally and emotionally challenged was a legend not only in the local community, but State-wide. In addition to his many and considerable professional accomplishments, Ira and Gay always impressed us as great and welcoming neighbors who enjoyed life. Our deepest sympathies, Ed & Jean Smith

Ed & Jean Smith - December 22, 2024 at 10:53 AM

DG

“ Mr Collins was truly a legend



Dr. Hany M Girgis - December 16, 2024 at 05:58 PM

EL

“ My deepest condolences to Mr. Collins' entire family. He dedicated his life ensuring that the individuals received the best care and that all their needs were being met. Mr. Collins left a great legacy and his leadership will be truly missed. Rest easy Mr. Collins in the arms of the Father 🌸🙏🙏.



Ethel Lee - December 16, 2024 at 04:11 PM

CS

Deepest condolences, first and foremost, to Mr. Collins' beautiful and dedicated wife, Gay. Although I am saddened to learn of your loss, this is another opportunity to say thank you for years of faithful service alongside your husband. Mr. C, as we affectionately referred to him, was, without dispute, a legend. The leadership and oversight that he administered throughout his career was driven by his passion to treat the people and families we served with the utmost dignity and respect. The foundational structures that he laid remain in place today. He loved his family and was a proud husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather! You should all be very proud of his accomplishments! May he rest in peace and rise in glory!

Cheryl Seymour - December 16, 2024 at 06:52 PM

MZ

“*Gay, and Family,
You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers. I as well as the rest of my family worked at Shapiro Center for 32 years before retiring, it wasn't a easy job but someone had to lead us. I enjoyed working under the supervision of Ira and Lynn, I learnt alot made friends that became my work family. I learnt alot working with persons with Developmental Disabilities, to be more patient, compassionate understanding and to help others. I am a better person working and knowing Ira Collins. I was always a bit nervous to talk with him but got over that, because of Gay saying, he ain't nothing but a big ole teddy bear. He made a difference in many lifes, and that's what life is about. Rest in Peace now Mr Ira L. Collins, your journey on earth is done.*

MaDonna(Mazzuchi) Zasada - December 16, 2024 at 03:57 PM

ML

I was terrified of him! But, it was an honor to be his Secretary and it was some fun times; especially Friday morning meetings when I did my nail polish when you guys were gone! Rip Mr C

Michelle Jaeger Lavine - December 17, 2024 at 06:46 PM

CW

“ *My Condolences, sending Prayers.*



Cheryl Wilson - December 16, 2024 at 03:52 PM



“ *My condolences to the Collins family at this difficult time. May his memory be a blessing.*



Bob Schneider - December 16, 2024 at 02:28 PM

KP

“ *Thinking of you gay and family at this time .
Our prayers and condolences to all of you!
We had the joy of being neighbors with Ira
and gay for over 15 years and also know the
family thru the years, my kids grew up with
them and we all loved them and their family he will be dearly
missed,*



Kristie, Dave , Brent,and Brooke Panozzo - December 16, 2024 at 02:20 PM

RP

To Mrs. Collins and the Collins family. I truly admired Mr Collins. He had a heart for the individuals at Shapiro as well as the employees. It was an honor knowing and working with him. You all are in my prayers

Richard Powell - December 16, 2024 at 08:18 PM