



Betty "Bets" Ramsey

June 9, 1923 - May 3, 2026

Betty June (Bets) Miller Ramsey, daughter of Oscar Lee and June Winter Miller, was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on June 9, 1923. She attended elementary and high schools in Oak Park, Illinois, and obtained degrees of Bachelor of Arts (Art), cum laude, from the University of Chattanooga (later the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga) and Master of Science (Crafts) from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Bets was known nationally and abroad as a fiber artist, author, curator, and quilt historian, and as an exhibiting artist who not only taught, wrote, and lectured on textile arts and quilts for a wide audience, but also enjoyed teaching children's art classes. She initiated the annual Southern Quilt Symposium (1974-1991) at the Hunter Museum of American Art in Chattanooga and contributed approximately 850 weekly columns on quilt-making to the Chattanooga Times during the same period. She was a member of the American Crafts Council, the Southern Highland Craft Guild and a founding member of both the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists and the American Quilt Study Group. She was the 2005 Honoree of the Quilter's Hall of Fame, Marion, Indiana. In 2009, she received the Tennessee Governor's Award in the Arts. Her work is owned by many private collectors, as well as by such institutions as the Tennessee State Museum and the International Quilt Museum in Nebraska.

Annually over the past 12 years, Bets created 15-20 original works of textile art wall hangings for sale at an art exhibit she arranged, with all proceeds donated to the Episcopal School of Nashville. In honor of her 102nd birthday last year, the Episcopal School of Nashville created the Bets Ramsey Art and Creativity Award to celebrate her remarkable life of creativity, generosity, and the impact that she continued to share with the world.

She was married first to Michael Kopcha; her second husband of 43 years was the writer, professor and poet Paul Ramsey. Paul and Bets lived in Chattanooga for many years, where they were active parishioners of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. After Paul's death, Bets moved to Nashville in 1998, where she became a member of St. George's Episcopal Church. At St. George's, she was a mentor for Companions in Christ classes, served on the vestry, was an active participant in a Centering Prayer group and led a writing class. She was also a lay minister for healing prayer for 40 years.

Bets was well-known for her hospitality and generosity to family, friends, and charitable causes. She is survived by four children: Starr Elizabeth Ramsey (Bill) Helms of Athens, Georgia; James Graves (Jan) Ramsey of Nashville; Lee Winter Ramsey of Nashville; and Sarah "Sally" Walden Ramsey (Jeff) Stillings of Richardson, Texas. Surviving her also are six grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and many beloved cousins, nieces, nephews, and extended family. Her brother, Ward Winter Miller (Nina) of Lagrangeville, New York, preceded her in death.

A memorial service will be held at St. George's Episcopal Church in Nashville on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 11:30 am, preceded by a Visitation with the family at 10:00 am. A private burial service will be held at Larkspur Conservation at Taylor Hollow.

Memorial gifts may be made to: The Episcopal School of Nashville, 1310 Ordway Place, Nashville, TN 37206 OR The American Quilt Study Group, 1610 L Street, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Cemetery Details

Larkspur Conservation

155 Bear Carr Road
Westmoreland, TN 37186
<https://larkspurconservation.org>

Upcoming Events

Memorial Service

MAY **15**. 11:30 AM (CT)

St. George's Episcopal Church
4715 Harding Pike
Nashville, TN 37205