



## Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala

October 16, 1940 - December 27, 2012

Anne Thomas Ayala, wife of Kenneth J. Ayala died Thursday, December 27, 2012 peacefully at home surrounded by family after an 8 year battle against cancer.

A longtime resident of North Carolina , Anne was born in St. Petersburg , FL , daughter of the late Clifford and Eva Thomas. She attended local schools, graduating from St. Petersburg High School in 1958, and continued her education at Agnes Scott College , majoring in French and Spanish, and completed graduate work at Emory University . Enjoying a long career in education, she taught at Rollins College in Winter Park , FL , at Lenoir Rhyne University in Hickory , NC and at Charlotte Latin School in Charlotte , NC .

During her 25 year teaching career, Anne was also very active in community service, serving on the Board of the Florida Symphony and Loch Haven Art Center (now the Orlando Museum of Art) and was responsible for initiating a corporate lease program of contemporary art, which has grown substantially through the years since its beginning into a valuable collection. In Orlando , she was also host of a local PBS interview program, and did translation in Spanish of public school materials. After moving to Hickory , NC , she was active with the Children's Theater, and served her church as Lay Reader and Chalice Bearer. In Asheville she worked actively in her church pantry and served on the Board of MANNA Food Bank.

After retiring from teaching, Anne began a new career in the equestrian world, managing events at the Biltmore Equestrian Center , and initiating international competition on the Estate. She also served as an international endurance judge and steward, and competed actively more than 10 years throughout the US . In 2000 she and her Arabian were awarded the prestigious “Partners’ Award” from the American Endurance Ride Conference for competition excellence.

She is survived by her beloved husband of more than 50 years, Kenneth J. Ayala; a son, Steven Thomas Ayala, and grand daughter, Eva Claire Ayala, and many cousins and friends.

A Celebration of Life memorial service will be held 2:00 PM, Thursday, January 10, 2013 at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church with the Rev. Brent Norris officiating. A private burial of ashes in the garden of the church will be at a later time. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Mary’s Episcopal Church, 30 Macon Ave. #2 , Asheville , NC 28801 or a charity of one’s choice.

# Cemetery Details

## St. Mary's Episcopal Church

337 Charlotte Street  
Asheville, NC 28801  
mail@stmarysasheville.org  
<http://www.stmarysasheville.org>

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JAN 10. 2:00 PM (ET)

St. Mary's Episcopal Church  
337 Charlotte Street  
Asheville, NC 28801  
mail@stmarysasheville.org  
<http://www.stmarysasheville.org>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*

October 07, 2023 at 11:15 AM



“ *My condolences to Ken and Steve, and all Anne's family, from the Marthas at Grace Church in the Mountains, Waynesville. Those of us who knew Anne so well want you to know that she, and you, are still remembered as doing so much for our little church, and the community. What a wonderful life she had, though it makes us sad that she had an eight year battle with cancer. Fondly, Ann Overbeck*

**Ann Overbeck** - January 13, 2013 at 04:34 PM



“ *Kenneth, Steve and Claire: Mike and I will be here for you any way we can. Claire is a beautiful and brilliant young woman who has learned so much from her beautiful Grams. Know Ms. Anne we are here for your boy and sweet Claire. I am impressed with her insight on this post. We love them dearly and know they will miss the gift of you! You were a beautiful loving woman and an inspiration to many in your life! Regards to you Kenneth, our heart and prayers go out to you all in your loss. Love, Joy Lovoy & Mike Miller*

**Joy Lovoy** - January 09, 2013 at 08:27 AM



“ *Tricia Caldwell sent a virtual gift in memory of Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*



**Tricia Caldwell** - January 04, 2013 at 01:07 PM

TC

*We mourn, we cry, we remember! We were blessed by Anne's sunshine.*

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**Tricia Caldwell** - January 04, 2013 at 01:24 PM

CM

“ *Clara Mcfalls lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*



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**clara mcfalls** - January 03, 2013 at 08:42 PM

MM

“ *A true fighter and story-teller with a passion for getting things done the way they should be. I was probably the youngest (as in less time in her life... possibly in age as well) friend, but enjoyed each and every day and week I had with her in our 5 years together. I am grateful for her son, my best friend, bringing her into my life. It will forever be enriched with the helping hand of Miss Anne and forever indebted to Steve. May the memory and strength of Grams be with you forever, Claire Bear. Kenneth, I wish you peace and new light in this first time in over 50 years without your lovely by your side. I'm sure you will feel her presence until your day has come. My heart is with all four (Lucey too) of you. Sleep sweet, Miss Anne.*

*Monica Moore and Ben*

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**Monica moore** - January 03, 2013 at 09:23 AM

MB

“ *My thoughts are with the family and friends . All who met Anne will remember such a vibrant women who always was one of the highlights to any endurance ride she either managed or was a part of. Her presence was a reassurance to me that with her at the ride, all parts of the happenings were in place. She will be missed by me and many others, as no one could ever take her place . I am sure her spirit will continue to be with us at every ride !*

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**Mariann L Byknish** - January 02, 2013 at 04:21 PM

MB

“ *Mariann L Byknish lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*



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**Mariann L Byknish** - January 02, 2013 at 04:16 PM

ST

“ *Susan And John Thompson lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*



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**Susan and John Thompson** - January 02, 2013 at 04:15 PM

RS

“ *My thoughts and prayers to the Ayala family a this time. I have known Anne for the last 12 years through the annual Biltmore Endurance ride where I worked with her on race communications. She was a tireless worker and kind soul who had a knack for making you feel welcome and at ease. I will miss seeing her and know that the equestrian world has lost a champion.*

*Dick Smith*

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**Richard S. (Dick) Smith** - January 02, 2013 at 04:01 PM

“ *What I posted to the endurance community:*

*The endurance community has just lost a champion, advocate, ambassador with the death of Anne Ayala. She compiled a record of over 3700 miles in her remarkable partnership with Overlook Nuryev, better known as Beau. Beau and Anne were the recipients of the 2000 AERC Pard'ners Award given annually to a horse and rider team that best exemplifies the unique bond between horse and rider. She was the visionary and driving force behind bringing the trail system at the Biltmore Estate up to the par that one rider regarded as an endurance rider's DisneyWorld. Those trails have been the underpinning for the 3-day Western North Carolina 3-day 100, for multiple NATRC rides, for Mountin' Hopes Fall Fling, and for the Biltmore Challenge endurance ride. Not only was Anne a rider and trail master, she was an organizer par excellence -- Anne had the vision, energy, and determination that saw the opportunity for the Biltmore Challenge, and executed on it, creating one of the premiere endurance rides in the country, attracting competitors from around the world. That background brought the National Championship ride to Biltmore in the fall of 2012.*

*Anne supported the endurance community in other ways -- advocating International endurance competition, becoming a sought-after Judge, Technical Delegate and Steward in multiple countries. Anne used her recognized organizational and people skills to bring smooth operations in multiple venues -- and it certainly helped that she spoke English, French, and Spanish.*

*After being stricken with cancer in 2004 just before the spring Biltmore Challenge, Anne saw the ride through as ride manager, and came back the following year, in 2005, vowing that would be her final year managing the ride. After the 2004 and the 2005 rides, Anne wound up in the hospital, so this was a wise decision. After that sequence, she continued helping organize the ride using her extensive contacts with ride volunteers to ensure the smooth operation of the ride while not having primary responsibility. As ride manager during those subsequent years, I can attest that Anne's*

*focus and commitment to the success of the ride and its quality was unwavering.*

*Quite amazingly, from 2005 to 2011, Anne's cancer was in remission. During that period, in addition to her officiating at endurance events and helping organize those at Biltmore, Anne help found, and became treasurer of A Partnership for Endurance Xcellence (APEX). She did all the 501C3 paperwork to ensure that it would be a recognized not-for-profit entity, and did all the tax returns required each year. Anne identified clinicians who would be effective in the endurance community -- and to the sport horse community at large. She was instrumental in bringing Centered Riding clinics with Susan Harris to Biltmore Equestrian Center, helping burnish the image of the equestrian instruction of that facility. After over five years of operation, the Board of Directors of APEX decided to close down the organization, and transfer the assets to the Southeast Endurance Riders Association (SERA). Despite being ill with the resurgence of the cancer, Anne honchoed all the required paperwork to make the transfer of the assets to SERA fully successful.*

*I know Anne was a devoted wife, mother, and language educator, but I have known her as a friend and mentor of outstanding ability. I absolutely will miss her immensely.*

*A memorial service will be held in a couple of weeks. At this time, it is unknown what memorial recognitions will be suggested. I will follow up on the Biltmore Challenge web site (<http://www.biltmoreendurance.com>) when I know. Address for sympathy, to her husband of over 50 years: Ken Ayala, 5 Vaux Court, Asheville, NC 28803.*

*from Cheryl Newman*

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**Cheryl Newman (and Stagg Newman)** - January 02, 2013 at 10:46 AM

EA

“ *Eva Claire Ayala lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Anne Thomas Ayala*



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**eva claire ayala** - January 01, 2013 at 10:00 AM

TR

“ *Anne was someone we all could look up to and learn from.*

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**Terri Rice** - December 31, 2012 at 08:16 AM



“ *I met Ann many years ago on one of her trips to Florida. We became friends and every year at the Biltmore ride she would always give me such a warm welcome. She was a great lady and she did the best job ever of managing the ride. She will be missed.*

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**Roxanne Ciccone** - December 31, 2012 at 07:35 AM

HM

“ *I was a child when I met Anne many years ago at the Biltmore Barn. She was just getting started then but I will always remember how kind she was to me and the many trail rides she let me join her on. I am sorry to hear of her passing. What a great lady she was.*

*Heather Mull*

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**heather mull** - December 30, 2012 at 10:45 AM

TL

“ Anne was one of the greatest ride managers ever. Strong, independent, thoughtful, fair and honest. Everything she did, she did VERY well. She will be greatly missed by everyone who has ever come in contact with her. The memory of this wonderful lady will last a LONG time. My blessings to her and to her family who I am sure will miss her more than all those who ever met her!

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**Teddy lancaster** - December 30, 2012 at 10:12 AM

JC

“ To the Ayala family...Anne was a wonderful friend and had such a spirit. She was the one who really taught my husband to ride. They would safety ride at the NATRC rides and I would secretary. She would just ride him into the ground. It was great. We had a wonderful trip to Colorado. What fantastic memories I have of just the "girls". She fought a long battle and I pray that you all find comfort in her life well-lived. Rest in Peace my friend. Happy trails.  
Julie Capaldi

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**Julie Capaldi** - December 29, 2012 at 07:25 PM

BR

“ steve and claire,our prayers and thoughts are with you all at this sad time.tim,betty jo and skye ruff

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**betty jo ruff** - December 29, 2012 at 09:37 AM

JS

*Dear Ayala family: Many thoughts and prayers for you for the beautiful life of Anne. At many rides at Biltmore she was the staunch encourager - she held the gate for me as my fractious stallion and I charged into the ride stream one year; she gave me the lovely opportunity to ride safety (one year with Jim Capaldi, and another with John Denton); she came to supervise the trails after suffering a broken leg and few days before; I'll never forget her standing in front of the assembled riders holding up the blue and red arrow markers for the trail - she showed such organization and concern for our safety. We've lost a true friend. As a language educator, I also admire her career in teaching. She gave much to our world. Know she was deeply loved everywhere.*

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**Judith Shrum** - December 30, 2012 at 10:01 AM

EA

*thank u all including you betty jo thank you for your support*

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**eva claire ayala** - January 01, 2013 at 09:40 AM

EA

*My grams was truely a great person and a great grams. She will live forever in our hearts. She is in a much better placr now.*

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**eva claire ayala** - January 01, 2013 at 09:46 AM



*Dear Family Members-*

*Though I did not attend (SPHS) St. Petersburg High School, (I attended another school where I served as Student Council President my senior year) I did have the good fortune of meeting the attractive, talented, poised and astute Anne Thomas, in 1958. Anne and I served together on a committee while attending the Pinellas Countywide, High School Student Council Forum, held at Clearwater HS. In that short two day session in the spring of 1958, I gained a deep respect for this engaging and insightful young lady. Needless to say, when all of us were young kids we were unable to comprehend how long-lasting certain impressions would remain with us through the years. My only regret is I have not had the opportunity to personally tell Anne how she was perceived by an admiring fellow council member. Anne clearly was a gifted individual. She will never be forgotten by the many who were honored to know her!*

*"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel" Maya Angelou*

*Dr. David & Elizabeth (Hollingsworth '59) Hutchinson*

*Proverbs 3:5&6- Trust Him with childlike faith- Matthew 18:2-6*

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**Dr. Hutchinson** - January 01, 2013 at 04:34 PM