Memorial Service & Celebration of Life
for
Erika Gates

October 23, 1942 · December 14, 2021
Gone too soon,
but forever in our hearts
Eulogy
for
Erika Gates

We are told that the formative years of a child's life are from 0-8 years. To truly understand and celebrate Erika's life, we need to look at that time in her life. Erika came into the world in the middle of a war. A few months before she was born, her father was taken captive and sent to a POW camp in Canada. The war had been over for two years before he was able to return home and Erika met her father for the first time when she was five.

Many considered the aftermath of the war to be worse than the war itself. Although the bombings had ended, starvation, disease and atrocities continued. Erika considered herself lucky to have survived because her chances of survival were very high. Her older brother (who took her birding when she was eight) died at an early age of an incurable disease.

These were chaotic times. Erika's mother recalled a bitterly cold night when soldiers ransacked the family home, stole their meager food rations, took their blankets and left them to freeze. Even the baby Erika had her blankets taken.

Some time after the war ended, a team of British officers, known as the British Control Commission, made their headquarters on the ground floor of the family home. This proved to be a Godsend: these officers were kind, decent men who treated them like their own family. Food and medicine became available and the children were protected from the violence around them. Erika always realized that without the British officers, her life could have had a different ending. Perhaps it was those early childhood struggles in a country suffering the aftermath of a war that inspired Erika to embrace life to the fullest, and gave her the drive we all saw in her.

The friendship between the family and the British officers was to last many years after the war. The officers, their wives and children often visited and Erika spent time in Bournemouth as their guest.

Erika came to Grand Bahama in the seventies to teach tennis. Eight courts were built at Arawak Hotel for her to use and this is where she ran her programs and tournaments. Pictures and details of that time are available in her autobiography. She often spoke about those early years and how it was where she met her passions and commitments.

Erika gained a reputation in the tennis community as a hard-working person who was always friendly and approachable. She always had time for her players and was known for her fairness and integrity.

For the next twenty years, she was involved with tennis and other business enterprises. More than an average player, she won at least one Bahamas National Ladies Championship. But because she was always involved in other business ventures, tennis was always a part of her life. She never stopped playing and always had time for her young players.

Erika visited Wimbledon many times in the seventies. First as a spectator and then in an official capacity. The tennis world was her playground and she loved being there. She often spoke about those early years and how it was where she met her passions and commitments.

Erika Gates
for
MEMORIAL SERVICE & CELEBRATION OF LIFE

PASTOR CLIFFORD LEWIS

OFFICIATING:

MEMORIAL SERVICE & CELEBRATION OF LIFE

FOR

ERIKA GATES

SERVICE HELD ON

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2022

AT

3:00 PM

THE GARDEN OF THE GROVES

FREEPORT, GRAND BAHAMA

Freeport, Grand Bahama

Pastor Clifford Lewis
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In 2011, though Erika’s connections in Germany, Kayak Nature Tours leased the world-famous tall ship, the Alexander von Humboldt. In 2016, Kayak Nature Tours leased the world-famous tall ship, the Alexander von Humboldt. The Green Lady, as she was known because of her famous green sails, provided a refreshing new slant on tour operators. The ship was returning to Germany.

The company was one of the first to recognize the importance of Ecotourism. The Executive Director of the BTVA suggested that Erika head to Bahamian waters and explore the Caribbean. Erika was delighted and began her journey to explore the unchartered waters of the Bahamas. She quickly became enamored with the beauty of the Bahamian Islands and the wildlife that called them home. She spent three days in August of each year and almost every country is represented by its birding experts. When Erika discovered that the Bahamas was only represented by a desk handing out brochures, it became her mission to correct that.

Over the last five years, Erika made self-funded trips to the annual British Bird Fair, which had been seriously damaged by Hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in 2004. The process had to be repeated following Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2019. Most people would have given up at some point, but because of Erika’s tenacity and love for the Garden it is still in business today.

In 2018, Erika restored the Garden of the Groves, which had been repaired by Hurricane Dennis in 2005. The process had to be repeated following Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2019. Most people would have given up at some point, but because of Erika’s tenacity and love for the Garden it is still in business today.

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During those years, Erika became enthusiastic about birds and joined her pilot friends as a member of the IATF Tournament Organization to play exhibition matches. She was also invited by the prestigious ITF Futures Tournament organization to host tournaments for young women players from all over the world. These events meant important international exposure for Freeport. She hosted tournaments for consecutive years with over 150 entrants each year.

Despite the hurricanes and downturn in business due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kayak Nature Tours has been continuously in operation with a number of employees for more than 30 years. The company has also been contributing to the local community through its support of community events. Despite the hurricanes and downturn in business due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kayak Nature Tours has been continuously in operation with a number of employees for more than 30 years. The company has also been contributing to the local community through its support of community events.

Over the years, Kayak Nature Tours has received numerous awards and accolades including the Caribbean Award, the Number One Caribbean Operator and Carnival’s award for Sustainable Tourism. Over the years, Kayak Nature Tours has received numerous awards and accolades including the Caribbean Award, the Number One Caribbean Operator and Carnival’s award for Sustainable Tourism.

In 2016, Erika was named a World Birding Expert by the British Bird Fair. In 2017, she was named a Global Birding Expert by the Bird Watcher’s Digest. In 2018, she was named a World Birding Expert by the British Bird Fair. In 2017, she was named a Global Birding Expert by the Bird Watcher’s Digest. In 2018, she was named a World Birding Expert by the British Bird Fair. In 2017, she was named a Global Birding Expert by the Bird Watcher’s Digest.

On another occasion, she was asked to create a birding environment near Congo Town, South Andros. It was hot and the mosquitoes were biting, but she made three multi-day trips and created boardwalks, blue-hole viewing platforms and signage to identify the various bird species.

More recently, she was tasked with designing new activities for guests who were interested in birding. She spent two weeks on the ground with birding experts, evaluating the potential for various birding activities. She then worked with the design department to create new activities for guests who were interested in birding. She spent two weeks on the ground with birding experts, evaluating the potential for various birding activities. She then worked with the design department to create new activities for guests who were interested in birding.

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Thanks for the memories. Some said “You made me feel like I was there.” Those words said it all. Erika would have been happy to know that someone referred to her as part of the “fabric of Freeport.” She loved Freeport and her adopted country. Within the scope of her expertise and abilities, she was often at the forefront of any worthwhile endeavor for Freeport. She loved Freeport and her adopted country. Within the scope of her expertise and abilities, she was often at the forefront of any worthwhile endeavor for Freeport.
Memorial Services and Celebration of Life
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Opening Hymn

"You Raise Me Up"...performed by Angel Russel, Grand Bahama Choir
Piano by Kevin Tomlinson, Director

Pastor Cliﬀord Lewis
cousin of Erika Gates

Selection
"Time to Say Goodbye"...performed by Johannes Reichert, cousin of Erika Gates

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Pastor: The Lord be with you.
All: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray:
O God of grace and glory, we remember before You today our wife, our aunt, and our friend, Erika. We thank You for giving her to us to know and to love, to laugh and to cry with, to grow old with, and to share life's journey with. 

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Sung by Congregation

"You Raise Me Up"...sung by Javan Hunt

Message
Ms. Sarah St. George
Chairperson of Grand Bahama Group of Companies

Message
Lisa Sorenson, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Birds Caribbean

Message
Mrs. Christina Stoecker
Sister-in-law of Erika Gates

Message
Pastor Andreas Reichert
Cousin of Erika Gates

Message
Ms. Elizabeth Tip Burrows
Executive Director of The Humane Society of Grand Bahama

Message
Mrs. Yvonne Smith
Pilot

Message
Pastor Cliﬀord Lewis

Closing Blessings

Pastor Cliﬀord Lewis

Gatherings for Cocktail Reception at the Café Deck

Thank You.
The family sends heartfelt thanks to all who have sent loving thoughts & prayers, cards of condolences, letters and phone calls. Your support is deeply appreciated.
German sailors are pleased to see their new commanding officer.

I never got my cake!

Wimbledon 1974

Tennis with Bud Collins

Florida Panthers Chair Leaders

Indian Muscial

Not my duck.

Our Abaco Trip on Castaway Cay

Castaway Cay Staff

German sailors are pleased to see their new commanding officer.

Our Abaco Trip on Castaway Cay

Castaway Cay

Garden of the Groves

Opening 2008

Florida Panthers Chair Leaders

Chair Umpire 1976

Chair Umpire 1976

Wimbledon 1974
Andros Bird Park
British Bird Fair
Birding Group with Certificates
Red Tail Hawk
Protecting Birds
ATV Tour
Kayaking
Trip to Abaco
First Plane Flying to Florida
GONE TOO SOON,

BUT FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS