

Irene Violet (Bailey) Sellers – July 2024



Irene Sellers made the world a more joyous place. Although she was many things, she was born to entertain, a gifted dancer and performer, and her artistic passions anchored her life. Irene studied tap dancing, ballet and figure skating in England as a young girl, becoming a professional ice skater at the age of 12. A remarkable young talent, she skated with the Spanish Circus at the age of 15. In 1958, at the age of 18, she was hired by the **Ice Capades** and brought to the U.S. on board the HMS Queen Mary. As a featured ice dancer, she toured widely in North America until her marriage to Merwin Ernstein in 1960. Settling in Canoga Park and starting a family, she hung up her skates to become a homemaker and mother with the birth of daughters Bonnie in 1962 and Heather in 1967.

Born Irene Violet Bayley on October 18, 1940 to Violet “Vi” and George “Bill” Bayley in Brighton England, her family endured the privations and terrors of World War II. A target of opportunity for German aircraft on London bombing missions, Brighton suffered fifty-six aerial attacks between July 1940 and February 1944. Among the fortunate, Irene’s immediate family members survived the conflict. During the go-go years of raising her family, she participated in PTA and Girl Scouts.

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After her marriage ended in 1979, she worked full-time in manufacturing for Litton Industries in Woodland Hills. Subsequent employment in a San Fernando medical office and later with Baxter Medical Supply in Irvine supplemented her resume. Irene married Michael Sellers in 1980, her true love and forever life partner. They settled in a new home in Canoga Park, blending his three boys and her daughters into a new family. Michael’s work brought the couple to Mission Viejo, where they’ve resided since 1985. As empty nesters, when their busy schedules allowed, they enjoyed multiple cruise ship adventures to Alaska, Hawaii and Mexico. Rekindling her passions, Irene enrolled in acting, singing and modern dance classes at Saddleback College in the late 1980s, before embarking on a second career in the performing arts. Her comeback was the subject of an Orange County Register article in 1998. Joining Marge’s Tappers Dance Group in Orange County in 1995, she became the lead choreographer and principal dancer. Performing with the Tappers for over 20 years, they entertained at Disneyland, Leisure World, the Orange County Fair, Children’s Hospital of Orange County, and Marine Corps Air Station El Toro among other venues. Her exceptional energy and radiance were her trademarks. A member of the Screen Actors Guild for many years, she performed professionally, animating Disney characters Pluto and Eeyore, before retiring in 2002. Another talent relished by family, friends and neighbors was her artistry in the kitchen. Collecting and improving on recipes, Irene transformed ordinary cuisine into fine dining experiences. Being her guest for dinner was an invitation to cherish. Diagnosed

with Parkinson's in 2021, the last years of her life were a struggle. It was only through the extraordinary devotion and care of Michael that she was able to remain at home. After a brief stay in hospice, Irene passed away on June 22, 2024 at age 83. Irene is survived by three nieces, Lynn (Rob) Slade and Tracy (Russell) Hill, East Sussex, England, Dawn (Richard) Preen, Norfolk, England and sister-in-law Maria Bayley, Brighton, England, husband Michael Sellers, daughters Bonnie (Scott) Bourdon, Lake Elsinore, CA, Heather Malik, Simi Valley, CA, stepsons Matt (Tracy) Sellers, Etiwanda, CA, Mark (Ann) Sellers, Kitty Hawk, NC, and Patrick (Kendra) Sellers, Lake Elsinore, CA, ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. In her memory, the family requests donations be made to the American Parkinson's Disease Foundation at apdaparkinson.org. A celebration of life is planned for August 24, 2024. Contact Bonnie Bourdon for details at blbourdon@hotmail.com.

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