



Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

NOV 15, 1960 - JAN 22, 2026



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Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Denise Kathryn Hays, better known as Mema to her kids and grandkids, on January 22, 2026. She left this world in the same way she lived much of her life - calm, cozy, and probably telling Eric to "just let me rest a minute."

Denise's story was one of humor, warmth, and a remarkable ability to feed an army with a single casserole dish. She was the loving mother to three sons she adored (and occasionally threatened to disown during their teenage years): Steve (Melinda) Hays, Eric Hays, and Nathan (Samantha) Hays. Each of them carries her stubborn streak, her generous heart, and her uncanny skill to make anything happen even when it seems impossible.

She is also survived by her brothers Danny (Margaret) Casey, David (Kelly) Casey, and RJ (Dawn) Burch; her stepsister Lisa Plisinski; her stepmother Mary Casey; and stepfather Ross Hoffman- all of whom knew better than to argue with her when she had "that look."

Denise, or "Mema" as her grandkids proudly called her, was a woman who never left a room without making it brighter (and probably rearranging the furniture just a bit). She had a gift for laughter, a passion for people, and a soft heart that could hold the whole world. Her love was the kind that showed up with cinnamon rolls and a hug that lasted just long enough to fix whatever was wrong.

We'll miss her wisdom, her love for music, and her world-class eye rolls - but mostly, we'll miss the way she made all of us feel endlessly loved and impossibly full (of both food and joy). A celebration of Denise's life will be held at a later date. In true Mema fashion, please wear something comfortable, share something funny, and for heaven's sake, do come hungry - she'd never forgive us if you did not.

Rest easy, Mema. Heaven just got a little louder, a little brighter, and a whole lot better fed.



Events

Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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Cemetery Details

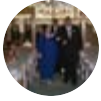
 Cremation



Tribute Wall

Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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Eric Hays shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

Mema loved her grandkids.

March 30 at 3:13 PM



Eric Hays shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

March 5 at 5:48 PM



Steven Hays March 8 at 1:51 PM

Not her, hair is too short. Lol.



Eric Hays shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

February 14 at 7:07 PM



Steven Hays March 8 at 1:51 PM

Good times!!



Tribute Wall

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Hillary Hays Romano shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.



I grew up in a different world, one where family was everything. Holidays, weekends, summer days... they all revolved around being together. From my earliest memories, it was always my grandma, my aunts, and my cousins. Aunt Denise was a steady, familiar part of my childhood and a meaningful part of who I became. Some of my favorite memories are the ordinary ones, visits to the farm, days at the Armada Fair, and summers spent in Caseville. At the time, it was just life. Looking back now, I see how special those moments were and how much Aunt Denise helped shape that sense of family and belonging. Aunt Denise was a proud boy mom of three which is something I understand on a whole new level now. When life didn't go the way it was supposed to, she stayed. She raised her boys with strength, love, and persistence, and she never stopped caring for them or showing up for them. Her devotion to her sons was constant and unquestionable. As life moved forward and changed, as it does, I carried those early lessons with me. The way she loved, the way she held her family together, and the example she set as a mother stayed with me, even when we weren't in each other's daily lives. I will always remember Aunt Denise as a strong, loving presence from my earliest years. Her impact on my life, and on the lives of her sons, will never fade. She will be missed and always remembered.

January 27 at 12:00 PM



Steven Hays March 8 at 1:52 PM
Halloweens at Grandma Betty's were legit



Samantha Shelton posted:

My mother in law was a force to be reckoned with. Taking care of three boys she had to be. I've heard so many stories throughout my time with the Hays family about Denise. But the one constant was how much she loved her boys. Her number one priority always. She was a mother and father to them, always putting them first. We didn't see each other often but when we did you could see the love she had for her family. I'm so grateful for the woman she was because I gained the best partner and father to our children. And I know that's because of her. We will always tell our girls about Mema and how much she loved them.

January 31 at 8:20 PM



Heather Hays Lemanski posted:

I did not know Aunt Denise very well after her divorce from my Uncle. I do know that anyone who can raise 3 Hays boys to become such kind, respectful, loving men must've been a saint. ☐

January 31 at 3:54 PM



Tribute Wall

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Julie Pyrzewski posted:

I am so sorry to hear of this. Denise helped take care of my parents when she worked with Visting Angels a few years back. Although a challenge. Denise always took it with Grace. She was my teammate until it was too hard to take care of both of them. Rest in peace, Denise. Julie

January 30 at 5:44 PM



Dan Casey posted:

I loved my sister and will miss her with quiet desperation. She was part of the Rumble clan, a chip off the block of the strong women that for generations have raised our family. I remember that Denise was willful in her teen years and not around very much. She had a boyfriend that infuriated my mom. She and her guy, whose name I have long since forgotten, would ride snowmobiles during the winter. God knows where they went. I always worried that she might get hurt, but she never did. When I went away to college, I lost track of my sister for a number of years. Eventually, she wed and began having children. I remember babysitting Steven one night so she could have a date with her hubby. I was happy to help out because it just didn't feel like I had done enough to be part of her life. In later years, I marveled that she took the same path into nursing as my mom. Frankly, they didn't get along well when Denise was younger, but I think that's because they were so much alike. Denise's mission was to help people. She had a kind heart and the patience to match. So many people were blessed to feel her caring hands. Denise was doing God's work and not receiving a lot of compensation in return, but she didn't complain. I wish I could have been there at the end. So many regrets. I will miss my big sister. We have lost an angel. Dan Casey

January 29 at 4:13 PM



Tribute Wall

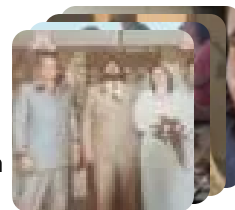
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Eric Hays shared 4 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

I really was not sure how to write this about our mom because I can recall so many memories that I could probably write a book (that she would definitely read), but here it goes: "Mema" as she grew to love to be called, fought through adversity and hardship to create an amazing legacy that will carry on long into the future. She made sure no matter what that we were taken care of first, other people second, and herself last. That selfless devotion to her work and us Hays Boys is something I will never forget. She would do anything for us, and she was proud to tell people our accomplishments, but not many people know about hers. Mom worked at Medilodge for over 20 years. In that time she called off of work 4 days total. All 4 were because they did not grant her vacation time to take us to The Armada Fair. A wonderful tradition I loved that she started. Mom saved up to do so many special things for us. I do not really know how she did it half the time. As a Social Scientist at heart I could give you the statistics on single mother's from low income households and the success rate of their children, but even mom would say I am saying too much. Let's just say she shattered any normal expectations in raising us. Mom raised two amazing, smart, wonderful boys, and one quirky oddball who has a hard time forgetting things. More than us boys though Mom loved her grandkids even more. She was always talking about them and you could tell how proud she was. Mom, I know you're looking down on us and will be checking in from time to time, so again I will say "Mom we had a great run, say hi to Papa Casey, Grandma's Donna and Hays, Uncle Chuck, Uncle Roger, Aunt Kathy, and finally make sure you give Doug the finger from us three he should know why."



January 27 at 12:00 PM



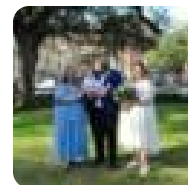
Jessica Ann posted:

My aunt Denise had a strong personality and plenty of opinions, and she was never shy about sharing them. While we weren't super close, we always got along, and I respected her honesty and straightforward nature. She cared a lot about her mother and spent most of her time caring for her when she was still with us. She was quirky, a little unpredictable, and very much herself. She loved animals and never missed a chance to help them. She could be blunt and spirited, but it was part of what made conversations with her memorable. She lived life on her own terms, and that's how many of us will remember her. Most of all, she loved her sons and grandchildren, and my thoughts are with them as they remember her and carry her memory forward.

January 27 at 6:35 PM



Nate H shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.



January 27 at 4:20 PM



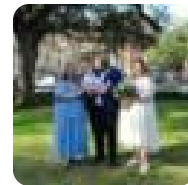
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NH

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Mom was the type mother who always went above and beyond to ensure the well being of her children. Working two, sometimes three jobs she always made time for little league games, football practices or dropping us off at a friends house for the weekend. Regardless of how far away she needed to travel she made sure it happened and still somehow had dinner ready when we got back. She always gave us over the top Christmases and cooked exactly what we wanted for our birthdays, even if thats what was going to be for dinner the following day(corn beef and cabbage 😊).Mom was the kind of person who gave the shirt off her back to help somebody else out, even if it was her last shirt. Her patience was unrivaled especially while dealing with us three yahoos and our neverending shenanigans. Earth may have lost one of the greatest mothers to ever live but heaven gained somebody truly special, unique and one of a kind.I love you mom and will forever draw inspiration from everything you did to provide me with the best life a mother could.

January 27 at 4:19 PM

LS

Laura Stocks posted:

My Aunt Denise was first and always a mother. From a young age, it was clear how deeply she loved her three boys, and how fully she gave herself to that role. They challenged her, shaped her, and loved her fiercely in return, and she loved anyone who loved her sons. Though distance and circumstance meant we weren't always close, her devotion was unmistakable. Like my mom, Denise spent her working years caring for others, modeling a quiet, steady kind of compassion. In her later years, that care was returned, especially by Eric, whose devotion reflected the example she had lived every day. Denise's legacy lives on in the love she gave so freely and in the men her sons became because of it.

January 27 at 1:42 PM

SH

Steven Hays shared 7 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.



Denise "Mema" Hays. Why is her nickname "Mema" everyone asks? Well, her first (and currently only) grandson (my son) Justin called her that when he was a baby and it just stuck, lol.

January 27 at 12:00 PM



Media

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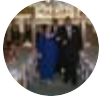




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Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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March 5 at 5:48 PM



Steven Hays March 8 at 1:51 PM

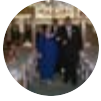
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February 14 at 7:07 PM



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Hillary Hays Romano shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

February 4 at 5:24 PM



Steven Hays March 8 at 1:52 PM

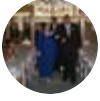
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Media

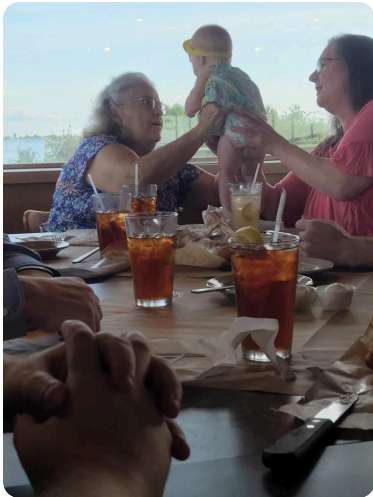
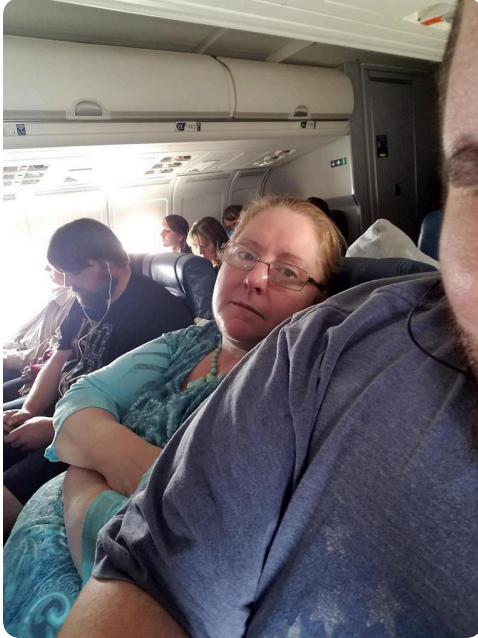
Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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Eric Hays shared 4 photos to the **Tribute Wall** album.

January 28 at 1:41 AM





Media

Denise Kathryn Hays (Mema)

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Nate H shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

January 27 at 4:20 PM





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January 27 at 4:19 PM





Media

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January 27 at 12:00 PM





Media

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Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Denise by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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