



Nancy Ludwig

January 30, 1932 - April 20, 2026

This is Nancy's Story

Nancy Mathews Reed Ludwig's story began on January 30, 1932, in Papillion, Nebraska. An only child of James Walter and Marybelle Mathews Reed, her early years, during the Great Depression, were marked by movement across small Midwestern towns—David City, Saint Paul, Central City—and later Grand Island, where she finished high school. Each place shaped her in quiet ways, building a foundation of resilience and curiosity that would carry her throughout her life.

Nancy continued her education at Hastings College, earning her B.A. in Nursing, and completed her R.N. at the Lincoln General Hospital School of Nursing. Always committed to learning, she pursued further studies at the University of Nebraska and Iowa State University. It was in Lincoln that her professional life began to take shape—and where, on October 20, 1957, she married Robert “Bob” Gail Ludwig, beginning a 60-year partnership that would take them across the country.

Nancy's career in nursing began with promise and leadership. In 1954, she stepped into the role of assistant director of nursing service and house supervisor at Lincoln General Hospital, and just two years later became department chair at its School of Nursing. The friendships forged during these

years endured throughout her lifetime. The “Round Robin”, a collective newsletter shared annually between classmates, was always received with great anticipation and often spurred reunions. But her life was never defined by career alone. From 1959 through the early 1970s, she set aside her professional work to focus on raising her daughters, Ann and Amy.

Those years were filled with constant motion and deep-rooted family life. The Ludwigs lived in places as varied as Aberdeen, South Dakota; Nespelem, Agency, and Grand Coulee, Washington; and Tahlequah, Oklahoma, before returning to the Midwest. Wherever they went, Nancy created a sense of home—through hand-sewn clothes, family camping trips, vacations, and the steady companionship of cats, which she loved and always kept close.

As her daughters grew, Nancy returned to her career with renewed energy. In Keosauqua, Iowa, she developed and established an in-service program at Van Buren County Hospital. In Webster City, she planned and implemented educational programming for Hamilton County Public Hospital, and she taught clinical nursing at Iowa Central Community College in Fort Dodge. Her work consistently focused on education, communication, and improving care for both healthcare professionals and the people they served.

Always forward-thinking, Nancy embraced innovation. At Buena Vista College in Storm Lake, she developed and taught a “Computers in Nursing” course—an early recognition of how technology could transform healthcare. In 1982, she deepened that interest, teaching herself about computers and imagining a future where nurses could spend less time on paperwork and more time offering compassionate, hands-on care. Later, in Oklahoma, she served as Education Coordinator for the Northwest Oklahoma Area Health Education Center, sharing emerging fiber-optic technologies with those working in rural healthcare. She was, in many ways, ahead of her time.

After their daughters graduated from college, Nancy and Bob settled for a time in Guymon, Oklahoma, before eventually returning to Lincoln, Nebraska, when Bob retired. Together, they embraced a season of travel and exploration, continuing the pattern of movement that had always been part of their lives.

Family remained at the heart of everything Nancy did. She was a devoted mother to Ann Ludwig Matthews ((formerly Ann Louise Elliott) and Amy Elizabeth Ludwig Bakke, and a welcoming mother-in-law to Dave Bondarenko and Dave Bakke. Becoming a grandmother brought her deep joy. Emily Ann Bakke Owens was born in 1985, followed by Ari Grace Ludwig Bakke in 1991 and Mya Kay Elliott in 1998. Nancy cherished each of them and made many trips to be part of their lives. In her later years, she delighted in welcoming great-granddaughters Zoey Elizabeth Bakke Owens and twins Maddie Grace Bakke Owens and Audrey Judith Bakke Owens.

In the final chapter of her life, Nancy lived near Topeka, Kansas, with her daughter Ann. There, she was lovingly cared for, with frequent visits from Amy —surrounded by the same warmth and devotion she had given so freely throughout her life.

Nancy's story centers on her mindset; an idea that things can become better through effort. She modeled strength and forward vision, creativity, and a thirst for knowledge. She balanced a meaningful career with deep dedication to her family, leaving behind a legacy of purpose, intelligence, and care that continues in the lives she touched.

Graveside service will be Noon Saturday, May 9, 2026, in Harris Cemetery in Barada, Nebraska.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Bryan Health Foundation (for the Lincoln General Hospital School of Nursing Alumni Association), please add Nancy's name in the memo line, and sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614.

Upcoming Events

Graveside Service

MAY 9. 12:00 PM (CT)

Harris Cemetery
717 Road
Falls City, KS 68355