

## Mylan Baringoltz Roloff Hawkins

### AT A GLANCE:

**Born:** September 25, 1938, Chicago, Illinois

**Died:** August 26, 2022, Reno, Nevada

**Maiden Name:** Mylan Baringoltz

**Race/nationality/ethnic background:** Jewish

**Married:** Henry Roloff, Prince Hawkins

**Children:** Kevin Roloff Hawkins  
Ari Roloff

**Primary City and County of Residence and**

**Work:** Reno, Washoe County

**Major fields of work:** Political activism for women's and health issues



**Mylan Hawkins**

Photo from the Neptune Society

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### Activist fought for women's equality, health issues

Mylan Hawkins was a self-proclaimed “political junkie” who worked tirelessly for women's rights and health equality for everyone from diabetics to premature babies. Her volunteer work spanned the country from Chicago to Miami to Philadelphia to New York to Reno.

Born in Chicago to Harry Baringoltz and Ruth Kromelow. The family later changed their surname to Barin. Mylan attended the University of Chicago and the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts. She paid her way through school by working as a fashion model. She loved producing art, but after working for an importer and a jeweler, selling cosmetics and working in construction inspection, she found her true calling in activism.

After marrying Henry Roloff in 1959 in Cook County, Ill., and moving to Miami in 1966, she gave birth to a son three months prematurely in 1969. She learned that there was not adequate, organized care for preemies in the area, so she founded the group "Project Survival," which helped build a neonatal center at the University of Miami Jackson Memorial Hospital. That project led to her working as Director of Medical Programs for the United Way of Dade County. It was the beginning of a lifetime of working for women's and children's health.

The family moved to Philadelphia, where she worked with former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop to raise funds for the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. In New York, she raised funds for Sloan Kettering Memorial Hospital.

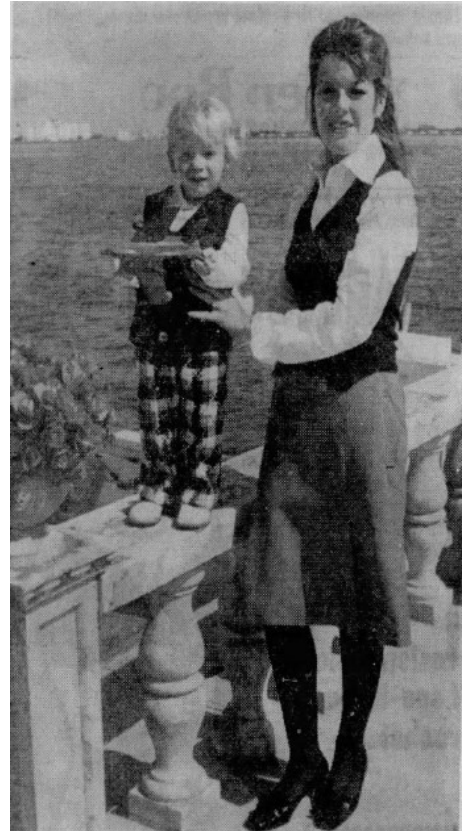
After first moving in 1976 to Las Vegas, where the Roloffs were active in the United Jewish Appeal and the American Civil Liberties Union, Mylan and her family moved to Reno, where her husband worked as project manager of the new MGM Grand Hotel Casino and was the first vice-president of Temple Sinai. She very quickly got involved with the National Organization for Women and was soon named coordinator for Northern Nevada for ERA, pursuing ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. At one point, she was so confident the ERA would pass, she told a reporter she was happy the Justice Department extended the deadline for ratification, even though she said Nevada didn't need the extension.

In her fight for the ERA, she was not afraid to call out opponents by name. One was Nevada's Catholic Bishop Norman McFarland, who had been accused in 1978 by a member of Washington D.C.'s Sisters of Mercy of using intimidation against church officials who supported the measure.

Hawkins worked so hard that she later called the failure to pass the ERA her worst defeat.

In 1979, Mylan Roloff was at a conference on Women and Politics and shared the stage with Bella Abzug to discuss the topic "The Politics of Reproduction," part of her ongoing fight for reproductive rights in Nevada. She played a pivotal role in passing Question 7 with 63% of the vote, which still protects women's right to choose. She later called it her biggest victory.

She was awarded the 1979 "Women Helping Women Award" by Soroptimist International of Truckee Meadows for her work "improving the status of women through political activity."



**Kevin, age 2, and Mylan Roloff**  
Photo from *Miami Herald*, 1971

She divorced Henry Roloff in 1981. A year later she married Prince Ashton Hawkins of Reno. She and her new husband co-founded the Diabetic Educational Center to address the lack of available diabetes support services. It grew into the Nevada and California Diabetes Association (NDA/CDA), which by 2021 had donated \$6.5 million in emergency medical supplies and helped more than 20,000 people.

She went into business with Hawkins, founding the now-closed Interface Computer Associates, which she blamed for her addiction to computers from then on.

In July 1983 Mylan Hawkins emceed a presentation in Reno on Nevada Women in Politics, which included such Nevada female luminaries as Reno Mayor Barbara Bennett; legislators Mary Frazzini, Mary Gojack, and Sue Wagner, University Regent Frankie Sue Del Papa; and activist Maya Miller. Mylan told the crowd, “A feminist is an individual who feels a woman has the right to reach her potential, and not only the right, but the ability.”

In 1985, she admitted that “women still have not learned how to play team sports” in politics, urging them at a Women’s Equality Day celebration to support not only women in politics, but also men who support women’s issues.

For those who did not support women, especially in reproductive rights, she had no patience. She said in 1990 that there are a handful of Nevada doctors who opposed a pro-choice referendum, saying, “They distort facts and work from their own emotions.” And she reluctantly cancelled a pro-choice rally at the University of Nevada Reno because of safety concerns after a man threw eggs at a group outside the venue.



Mylan Hawkins loved to urge women to stay active with one of her favorite sayings, “Get your asses out in the streets!” She helped co-found Northern Nevada Marches Forward, which supported diverse people and communities. She helped launch the Reno Women’s March in 2016, one of the largest protests in Reno history, drawing 10,000 people.

Mylan Hawkins, 2019

Photo courtesy of David Calvert

In addition to her political activism, Mylan was passionate about her husband, children, grandchildren, gourmet cooking, travel, and wine. In one of several posts, she made online and in the *Reno Gazette-Journal*, she said, “My Patron Saint is Joan of Arc. She inspired me to get off the cross, get up on the horse, and not be afraid to take on a challenge.”

Mylan Hawkins passed away in Reno on August 26, 2022, at the age of 83, surrounded by family and friends. She is buried in the Masonic Memorial Gardens, Reno, Nevada, beside her husband Prince Hawkins.



**Researched by Patti Bernard and written by Kitty Falcone**

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