



## Rita Aichlmayr

May 26, 1938 - December 19, 2020

Rita Lucille Aichlmayr (nee Hoeschen), age 82, passed away Saturday, December 19, 2020. Loving mother of Hans Thomas Aichlmayr, Mary Ann Aichlmayr (deceased) and Lisa Diane Hockensmith (Joseph Bucha). Former spouse of Ronald Lawrence Aichlmayr. Sister-in-law of JoAnne Bucklin (Ed) (both deceased), Patricia Perkins (Morris, deceased) and Gary Aichlmayr (Betsy Price). Dear friend of Frederick "Art" Strong (deceased). Family will receive friends in THE VODRAZKA FUNERAL HOME OF INDEPENDENCE, 6505 BRECKSVILLE RD. (RT. 21, S. OF ROCKSIDE), SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2020 FROM 2-4 P.M. Mass of Christian Burial Monday, December 28, 2020 at St. Michael Catholic Church, Independence, at 10 a.m. Interment to follow at Christ The King Catholic Cemetery, Browerville, MN.

Rita Aichlmayr lived an extraordinary life. Rita was born prematurely into a farming family in rural Todd County, which is located in central Minnesota, on 26 May 1938. Rita survived because her ailing grandmother, Anna Johannes, held her for hours while sitting in a rocking chair to minimize exertion. The bond between Rita and Anna was especially strong because Rita treasured an elaborate dollhouse given to her by Anna for her entire life.

Rita had a rich childhood growing up on a farm despite the privation brought on by World War II. She drove the tractor and learned how to connect with animals from her favorite uncle, Ray. Her connection to animals was evidenced by having many pets, entering animals into contests at the Minnesota State Fair, and even bringing a horse into the house once---which did not please her mother. She continued to have remarkable relationships with extraordinary pets throughout her life. She enjoyed Santa Claus' annual visits to the farm, but couldn't understand why Uncle Ray declined to participate in the festivities until one day Santa accidentally revealed his true identity by exposing his familiar sun-battered neck.

Rita's life underwent a major transition when her parents moved to Minneapolis in the early 1950s because her father developed an allergic response to cows. Her father became a welder and her mother was a short-order cook at the University of Minnesota medical school. Rita was initially shocked by the transition from the farm to Patrick Henry High School, but eventually excelled and made many lifelong friends that would

periodically reconnect at class reunions over the next 50 years. After graduating from Patrick Henry in 1955, she attended the University of Minnesota School of Nursing and received a Bachelors of Science in Nursing with Distinction in 1960. She continued post-baccalaureate studies at the University of Minnesota and graduated with a Master of Science degree in 1964. She acquired her first new car---a red Volkswagen Beetle---in 1965, but on taking delivery was horrified to learn that it was equipped with an optional AM radio that she could not afford. It turned out that her father had secretly purchased the radio using proceeds from his clandestine gambling hobby. The red 1965 Volkswagen was a prized possession for the rest of her life and was never exposed to the harsh winter conditions that destroy cars in the Midwest.

Rita's next life transition began with the acceptance of a Public Health teaching position in the School of Nursing at the University of Washington, Seattle in 1965. She eventually transitioned to counseling at Everett Community College and authored nine publications. Rita's background in public health and position at Everett Community College eventually led to a life-long relationship with the Tulalip Tribe and an insatiable fascination with the culture and art of all American Indians. Rita's relationship with the Tulalip Tribe was especially deep and remarkable because it was forged in a time of extreme racial tension. It is remarkable that although tensions approached the precipice of violence, she was never in danger because she had earned the trust and respect of the Elders and subsequently enjoyed their protection. Rita accomplished much for the Tulalip Tribe and her deeds have not been forgotten despite the passing of nearly 50 years and the generation of people with whom she worked.

Rita's next life transition occurred in 1968 when she married Ronald Aichlmayr and eventually settled in Kalama, Washington to raise three children. Rita was initially a working mother, but transitioned to more of a traditional home maker role to raise children in an enriched environment. She continued to occasionally work from home by writing proposals for government grants. In one of her most enduring accomplishments, she applied her research and writing skills to compile a history of the St. Joseph Mission in Kalama and successfully petition for its addition to the Washington State Register of Historical Sites, which essentially preserves the tiny church in perpetuity.

The Pacific Northwest chapter in Rita's life drew to a close in 1981 when the family moved to Naperville, Illinois. The move was motivated by a corporate job transfer, but the timing was fortunate because it provided an escape from a region where property values had been devastated by several Mt. St. Helens eruptions occurring after the 18 May 1980 cataclysm. Unfortunately, the Illinois episode proved to be a challenging and difficult time for the family and ultimately led to moves to Holstein, Iowa in 1983 and then Independence, Ohio in 1984.

Once in Independence, Rita was determined to get the family back on its feet. She initially worked jobs well below her education level to earn extra money, but rapidly found much

more lucrative and satisfying work in health care administration. She eventually saved enough money in 1986 to purchase a unique house situated on a large partially-wooded lot that would be her residence for the rest of her life. She doubled her property holdings in 1992 by purchasing the house next door when its 93-year-old original owner passed away. She initially became a landlord to service the debt for the new property, but soon acquired a taste for the rental property business and acquired two more houses.

Rita abandoned health care administration in the late 1990s and returned to the hospital bedside after a hiatus of more than 35 years. The Cleveland Clinic was initially unsure whether she was up to the job and assigned her to the Float Pool. She was given temporary assignments throughout the hospital and was typically handed the most difficult and challenging cases by the resident staff. But whenever they expected her to fail, she succeeded. She quickly acquired a reputation for being an extremely knowledgeable and capable problem-solver. Consequently her skills were in demand and she was offered virtually limitless overtime, which caused her to call the Cleveland Clinic her “gold mine.” Rita also became the favorite nurse of many VIPs and she even helped to thwart a potential assassination attempt while caring for a patient. She received many awards and accolades during her 20 year career at the Cleveland Clinic and was personally recognized by Dr. Cosgrove. She retired from the Cleveland Clinic in 2008 and occasionally worked shifts until 2015.

The mid 2000s through the early 2010s were perhaps Rita’s most enjoyable years because she reconnected with an old friend from high school after separating from her husband and had ample money from the “gold mine” to have a good time. She took cruises to Alaska and Italy and traveled throughout the U.S. She reconnected with the Tulalip Tribe and the St. Joseph Mission in Washington. She also visited her son in California several times and visited Yosemite, Hearst Castle, Santa Cruz, and attended Beach Blanket Babylon twice. She also fulfilled a wish to travel the Arctic by dog sled and witness the Aurora Borealis.

Mid 2015 marked the beginning of Rita’s decline. Over the next five years she became increasingly detached and lost the ability to manage her affairs. She also gradually lost the ability to care for herself, which caused her appearance to change. She ultimately succumbed to Acute Myeloid Leukemia on 19 December 2020, which was only 13 weeks after the initial diagnosis.

# Events

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**DEC**   **Public Viewing**   02:00PM - 04:00PM

**27**

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Vodrazka Funeral Home

6505 Brecksville Rd., Independence, OH, US, 44133

**DEC**   **Mass**   10:00AM - 11:00AM

**28**

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St. Michael Catholic Church

6912 Chestnut Rd., Independence, OH, US, 44131

# Comments

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“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Rita Aichlmayr.



December 23, 2020 at 04:54 PM

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“ Enduring Grace was purchased for the family of Rita Aichlmayr.



December 23, 2020 at 11:02 AM

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“ Your Allstate Family purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Rita Aichlmayr.



**Your Allstate Family** - December 22, 2020 at 01:13 PM