



Mrs. Rita Mary Dudak Dwyer

January 31, 1934 - June 24, 2022

Rita Mary Dudak Dwyer passed away on June 24, 2022 at her assisted living facility in Fairfax, VA following a long illness.

Rita was born in Hibernia, New Jersey on January 31, 1934 to George S. Dudak and Mary M. Dudak (nee Luba). She excelled in school both at her high school, Academy of Saint Elizabeth, and later in her college years at College of Saint Elizabeth. She studied Chemistry in college and later took a job in 1956 at Reaction Motors Inc. (RMI), an early American maker of liquid-fueled rocket engines, located in Rockaway, New Jersey.

At Reaction Motors, Rita put her chemistry knowledge to use researching experimental rocket propellants in the lab. Rita was one female chemist working amongst 75 men. She received a number of patents for her innovative chemical compounds. In the words of her Department Supervisor, Murray S. Cohen: "Rita was hired to work on the chemistry of rocket fuels and oxidizers. Very early in her employ she demonstrated an almost ferocious drive to know and to do almost everything in rocket propellant chemistry. Her work in liquid monopropellants was significant and most dangerous. She performed some of the earliest experiments on the reaction of olefins with tetraflourohydrazine to make vicinal diflouromines. She was one of the early researchers to synthesize high heat of formation fuels by incorporating the acetylenic bonds into the structure of both liquid and solid propellants."

In 1959, Rita was involved in an explosion in the lab where she was severely burned in the resulting fire. After hundreds of plastic surgeries and months in

the hospital she recovered and was determined to still aim high and make a difference in the world.

During the fire, Rita's life was saved by a man who had dreamed repeatedly of the fire and how he would save her well before it actually happened. The revelation of his precognitive dream and the fact that her life was saved by it, led her to the study of dreams and dream therapy. Rita was a co-founder of IASD, the International Association of the Study of Dreams. Her work in that arena coupled with the pastoral counseling degree she later earned with her church allowed her to provide support and kindness to many people who were in need of her guidance. In addition, it took her around the world to many Dream Conferences in places like Moscow and Copenhagen.

In 1963, Rita married James (Jim) W. Dwyer of Chateaugay, NY. Jim also worked at Reaction Motors as a Physicist. Together they moved to Vienna, VA and raised three children.

Rita was a wife, mother and grandmother. She was the family cheerleader, event planner and networking queen. Whether it was beach trips, ski trips, birthday parties, swim meets, or silent auctions at her church, Rita was there directing the fun and making everyone smile and enjoy life. She knew no strangers and if you met her, you likely were welcomed with a hug and became her friend forever.

She volunteered her time for numerous charity organizations, her church and her neighborhood.

She was also a wonderful writer and editor. She regularly wrote free-lance for the Washington Post and Catholic Herald and conducted writing workshops for young writers.

Rita is survived by her husband of 59 years, James, her three children Michael Dwyer (wife Piedad Hoyos Dwyer), Damian (wife Lynda Allen Dwyer) and Dulcie Miller (husband Mark Miller). Rita is also survived by her 10 grandchildren: Kathleen Dwyer Maurer (husband Anthony Maurer), Sophia Dwyer, Genevieve Dwyer, Jacquelin Dwyer, Claire Dwyer, Adelaide Dwyer, Mason Mahmud, Shane Mahmud, Christian Mahmud and Marcus Miller, and

also one very special great-grandson, Giovanni Maurer. She also leaves behind her beloved siblings: Monsignor George Dudak, Dr. Michael Dudak (wife Jennifer Allen Dudak) and Mary Ann Dudak as well as many other living family and friends.

In her own words written in an autobiographical article she once wrote years after her accident in the lab: "I have always had the idea that anyone could be happy who had no difficulties; real

living was a study in being happy in spite of difficulties." Rita always lived her life with that "cup half full" perspective and her optimism was infectious.

The family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations are made to the organization "So Others Might Eat", one that Rita volunteered with throughout her life.

Calling hours were held at Money and King Funeral Home in Vienna VA on Tuesday, June 28th from 6:00pm-8:00pm.

Calling hours will be held on Thursday, June 30 from 6:00 to 8:00 at Chateaugay Funeral Home in Chateaugay, New York.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at Saint Patrick's Church in Chateaugay, New York on Friday, July 1st at 11:00 AM.

Burial will be held in St. Patrick's Cemetery, Chateaugay.

Cemetery Details

St. Patrick's Cemetery

Chateaugay, NY

Previous Events

Calling Hours

JUN 30. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

Chateaugay Funeral Home
36 Church Street
Chateaugay, NY 12920
(518) 497-6781
hwilcox2@twcny.rr.com
<https://www.chateaugayfuneralhome.com/>

Mass of Christian Burial

JUL 1. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

St. Patrick's Church
132 West Main Street
Chateaugay, NY 12920