



Virginia Kane Rice

October 31, 1934 - March 17, 2021

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Virginia Marie Agnes “Ginger” Kane Rice passed away in her Shelby Township home at the age of 86 on the morning of March 17, 2021, St. Patrick’s Day, with her daughter Kristine by her side. She had suffered a stroke 10 days prior, entered hospice, and because of the COVID-19 pandemic, she was brought home so that she could be surrounded by her children and grandchildren the evening before her passing.

Ginger was born at home in Hamtramck, Michigan, October 31, 1934, on Halloween, at the height of the Great Depression – the eldest of three daughters. She was the bilingual child of parents who were both second generation immigrants; all of her grandparents immigrated from Eastern Europe in the early years of the 20th Century. While she was still a very young child, the country was immersed in a second World War, which took her father away from the family for the four years of the U.S. direct involvement in the war while he served in the Marines in the Pacific Theater, a time and situation that deeply affected her for the rest of her life and that she spoke of often. The shared values of personal sacrifice, conservation, repair, recycle, and make-do that were impressed upon nations at that time also stayed with her for the

rest of her life and informed the way she lived. Ginger attended Our Lady Queen of Apostles elementary school, graduated high school from St. Ladislaus Catholic School, and briefly attended the Jesuit college University of Detroit Mercy where she studied accounting and had contemplated entering the convent until she met the man who would become her husband.

She embodied strength, resilience, perseverance, and compassion, qualities that she passed on to her family. She never stopped placing others' needs before her own: to the last days of her life, she went without to make sure we did not, and our gratitude for this can never be measured.

She had endless curiosity, a natural inquisitiveness, a love of learning, and was a patient and encouraging teacher. Her warm and welcoming smile was ever-present, and she was extraordinarily generous with her time to her family, friends, and community. She could always be counted on to volunteer for any task. As a young wife she baked for PTA functions, and as a retiree she baked for senior community bingo games.

She was a proud and adored mother and grandmother who loved being involved with her children and grandchildren. Like her first husband Bill, her greatest joy was being surrounded by children. She was a Brownie leader, a baseball scorekeeper, coach, and equipment manager. Working with Joe Delia in the early 1960s, she and Bill helped create and expand the Sterling Township (later Sterling Heights) Parks & Recreation youth sports programs. Bill was Commissioner of the boys' baseball league, and she filled the counterpart position for the girls' league. She was also secretary and treasurer of the combined baseball leagues. In the mid-60s, they started the Sterling Heights Parks & Rec basketball programs, which included one of the few girls' basketball programs at the time, greatly expanded the summer baseball program, and brought boy's flag football to the city.

There was nothing she would not do for her children and grandchildren, and she loved them deeply. She was at our side through every scraped knee, broken heart, graduation, and surgery. Even when we were in our 50s, she sat watch at our hospital bedsides, asking questions of medical staff, holding our hands, stroking our foreheads, trying to relieve our pain and suffering, telling us to breathe through our nose.

She was a firm believer in the handwritten thank-you card, and she sent cards to family and friends for every occasion: birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, Christmas, and Easter, for celebrations and condolences. When texting technology arrived, she kept a carefully curated distribution list to remind everyone of each family member's birthday and anniversary.

She was an expert seamstress, talented hand quilter, embroiderer, and artist. In the early 1960s, she sewed and hand-embroidered altar cloths and vestments for St. Lawrence Catholic Church in Utica. She loved to paint with watercolors and draw in charcoal and pastels. She enjoyed refinishing any piece of furniture she could get her hands on, from sanding and staining to custom reupholstery.

She was an extraordinary cook, always experimenting with new recipes and techniques in the kitchen. For nearly 15 years, she was locally famous for the candied apples she made as Halloween treats each year, and as a result, her house was the most popular one in the subdivision for Trick-or-Treaters of all ages: even high school football players would don their varsity jackets as a costume and come calling for the confectionery treats. Above all, she loved cooking for family gatherings. She always cooked far more than was needed and made sure she sent everyone home with ample supplies of leftovers.

She loved music, especially the songs of Harry Belafonte and Ella Fitzgerald, with Belafonte's "Matilda" possibly her favorite tune; she had a lovely soprano

voice and sang in choral and acted in plays in high school and was part of the church choirs at both Our Lady Queen of Apostles and St. Ladislaus Catholic Churches in Hamtramck. Once, for a solo performance in high school, she sang the popular Judy Garland song “That Old Black Magic,” much to the chagrin of the school’s nuns.

Her interests and hobbies were many and varied. She preferred mysteries over comedies, especially political thrillers and the films of Alfred Hitchcock. She was a dedicated supporter of local libraries. Because her father built early IndyCars (“Midget-S”) and later Formula One cars that raced the annual IMS speed races and Indy 500 in the 1930s up until his death in the 1960s, she religiously listened to the radio broadcast or watched the televised broadcast of the race every year of her life, with the exception of the war years from 1942 – 1945 when the races were cancelled.

At a time when none of the other neighboring “housewives” worked outside the home, she worked for more than 25 years, first as a bookkeeper and then as office manager supervising a staff of clerical workers.

Ginger was preceded in death by her parents Virginia Regina and Edward Ignatius; the love of her life and much adored husband of 19 years William Anthony Kane, Sr.; her cherished second husband of 33 years John Rice; and a much beloved grandchild, Steven Wray, Jr.

As a much beloved mother, she is survived by all six of her children, as well as four of her stepchildren, seven grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, her younger twin sisters Antoinette (Richard) and Joan (Robert), several cousins, dozens of nieces and nephews, and lifelong friend, sister-in-law Betty Dolan.

We count ourselves lucky beyond words to have had her as our mother.

She will be deeply and forever missed.

Ginger's family would like to extend our deepest thanks to William Sullivan & Sons Funeral Home for their care of our mother after she passed away.