Rita McKinnon



JUNE 24, 2021

Rita McKinnon, age 85 of Richmond B.C., passed away peacefully on June 24, 2021 at Evergreen Baptist Care in White Rock B.C. She was born on August 31, 1935 in Shanghai, China.

She was the beloved mother of Sharon Gulbranson, Douglas & William McKinnon; Daughter-in-laws Jackie Turner and Janet Weber and Son-in-law Lee Gulbranson and the proud grandmother of the Gulbranson's Allison, Kevin & Bradley and Andrew McKinnon. Predeceased by her devoted husband Robert, and sisters Marjorie and Lily.

Rita, the daughter of her Jewish parents Valdemar and Hannah Zimmerman, was raised with her siblings in Shanghai China. Her fondest memories were that of her passion for Chinese street food and at an early age setting the foundation for her generosity to others. She was a powerful swimmer and throughout out the 2nd World War her second home was the indoor pool at Shanghai YMCA. It was only when the Japanese troops occupied the city in 1943 and her father was incarcerated in a Japanese Concentration Camp the family became house bound until the war ended in 1945. Throughout her Shanghai childhood, Rita was raised by her Amah (Nanny) she dearly loved, and quickly learned as the youngest child the charismatic ways on how to get her own way.

When Rita was 16, the incoming Chinese communist government forced all Caucasians to leave Shanghai. Vancouver, Canada was to be their new home. Travelling by rail from Shanghai to Hong Kong and then by aeroplane (DC3) with 3 stops enroute, the family of 5 plus 2 dogs arrived in March of 1952.

It was not long before the local Dunbar boys sourced out the newly arrived Zimmerman girls in town and so Rita and Bob were united. By July of 1956 they had their first son William, Douglas in 1957, and Sharon in 1962.

Rita was very active over the years raising her children and became a very good cook for the big appetites of her family. She worked part time at a Garden Center along with some time at the local 7-11 and rest assured she was no push over. Her direct approach was fueled by her proud Russian Jewish heritage wrapped in kindness and generosity for others.

Always welcoming of others, Rita & Bob hosted many gatherings at their home and many will remember the legacy of how important connecting with others was to Rita & Bob.

Nana (Rita) absolutely adored her grandchildren and her interaction and love for them was unwavering. Rita loved her pets and was always welcoming to her grand dogs that received special treat(s)-ment!

Whether it was adding up a crib score, her bank balance, the casino loyalty points, or the complex knitting rows on the hundreds of scarfs she made, Rita was a whiz with numbers.

Rita in her later years never lost interest in keeping in touch with friends and family and while email and the internet never entered her world, she used her phone like a surgeon’s scalpel.

While Rita is gone, her legacy will remain in our hearts as a person of passion, honesty, and love.

We Miss You Mom.

To her many extended family & friends, a Celebration of Life will be held at a later date.

Messages of Condolence

When that border reopens I will make the casino trips again and will not surprised when I see a resemblance of you contributing to the native scholarship fund.

I always enjoyed hearing about your very successful bus trips and the neighbourhood chats when working outside.

dieter

— Dieter Momeyer

I’m so sorry to hear about your Mom’s passing, Doug, Bill and Sharon.
She was a very special lady. You wrote a beautiful tribute, that definitely speaks to her incredible life.

— Gail McLeod

My dear, sweet Rita - I will miss our chats, your stories about your family and your interesting life, your love for your garden, your smiling face selling eggs at the South Arm Fall Fair, your independence. You were always quick with a hug and generous with praise. Rest in peace.

— Jeanie Zdenek

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