

Rita Elaine Ryser

OCTOBER 4, 1946 – NOVEMBER 18, 2025



Rita Elaine Ryser (Simshauser), 79, of Katy, Texas, passed away on November 18, 2025. She passed peacefully in her memory care facility from Lewy Body Dementia. Born on October 4, 1946, in Portland Oregon, Rita lived a full and wonderful life with adventures, service to her country, hard work in the nursing profession, tons of volunteer work, woodcarving, and a deep love for family and friends. As her nephew Erik said – “Rita represented everything that is good and beautiful.”

The daughter of Art and Betty Simshauser, Rita spent her childhood days growing up on a 150-acre dairy farm in Deer Park Washington (north of Spokane). She grew up like all country kids doing chores before and after school. The youngest of 4 siblings, and the only daughter, she learned to be tough, never quit, and work hard every day.

Rita attended the University of Washington in Tacoma. When she met with her college counselor, she told him that she wanted to be an Archeologist and major in Archeology. He told Rita that women are not Archeologists, and they don't major in Archeology. Women are nurses and secretaries, so she chose nursing.

There are thousands of men and women that are glad she did as she became a nurse in the Air Force (first Lieutenant), a RN nurse, an Emergency Room nurse, a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and testified in court, a Cardiovascular Nurse Specialist, Critical Nurse Specialist Instructor for the VA, Administrative Physician Liaison, a Patient Advocate, and an Assistant Director of Volunteer Services. She worked in WA, OR, GA, CA, NM, AZ and TX. She was nurse of the month several times and was Caregiver of the year at one hospital.

Rita loved donating any spare moment of her time to the service of others. She loved volunteering at the Salvation Army thrift shop in Emory TX (8 years) and in Bend OR (6 years). She was also a Salvation Army Bell Ringer in front of the grocery store during that time. She volunteered at the local libraries in Texas and Oregon. She served at our HOA and as President, VP and Treasurer for 3 years. She also volunteered at the Center for Abused Women. Her experience and compassion for women that were struggling to rebuild their lives allowed her to change the lives of many women and their children. She volunteered at the Texas Woodcarvers Guild as a judge, an on-site nurse at woodcarving events, and even as security guard for one year to watch over everyone's carvings in Fredericksburg Arena (she slept in her Explorer inside the Arena).

Rita learned woodcarving in 1991 and kept at it until the end. She joined the Texas Woodcarvers Guild and was very active in competing, judging, volunteer nurse on site, and just involved with anything she could to help with. She became exceptional at this skill and credited it to the wonderfully skilled woodcarvers that taught her over the years. They would become her best of friends and remain so. Her favorite time was carving for hours with them. The time spent sharing in each other's triumphs and challenges were some of her most cherished memories. She started a woodcarving group in Oregon that still meets and carves together today. She won numerous blue and red ribbons, from competitions all over the United States, but her proudest award was being selected by her peers from the Texas Woodcarvers Guild for the Charles "C-Max" Winstead Award in 2010. This award is presented to the person that most embodies the spirit of the guild through fellowship, learning, and teaching. In addition, several of Rita's woodcarvings are exhibited in the Texas Woodcarvers Museum located in Cleburne, Texas.

Rita loved reading, antiquing, thrift store shopping, hiking, camping, gardening, and traveling. We joked that she knew every antique store and thrift store west of the Mississippi river. But hiking and camping in the mountains in Colorado, Utah, and Oregon with her husband and youngest son were her favorite hobbies. She could hike forever and completed many trails that could challenge very

experienced hikers. Her love of hiking was the main reason that she and her husband moved to Oregon. Their eight years in the Pacific Northwest allowed her to fill her soul with countless hours in the mountains, passing the time enjoying the beauty around her. Hiking to a waterfall and just sitting and smiling were her favorite hikes.

Rita treasured the special bond she had with her brothers and their wives – Duane and Julie (deceased), Gene and Sara, and Rex (deceased) as well as her nieces and nephews. Her family was scattered throughout the country, but Rita made sure that they stayed connected. She was the glue that held the family together and she nursed them when they were ill.

More than anything, Rita was a family person. In 1984, her husband Rick accepted a match making blind date and it was love at first sight for both. They got married 7 months later in Sun Lakes AZ. Rita was a proud mother of three sons – Cade Wilson, Drew Ryser, and Max Ryser. We often wonder how did a mother that was so busy, have the time to raise 3 boys? She made it seem easy. She involved them as much as she could, but mostly it was her boundless determination to care for the needs of others and to feed her servant's heart. She taught the boys that same toughness, never quit attitude, and steely determination through her actions and love. Rita was blessed with two wonderful daughters in laws – Rheana Wilson and Allison Ryser. Her grandchildren brought her endless happiness. She loved reading to each one, playing games, going to parks and museums, watching them play sports, and just growing up.

Rita will not have the products of her life's work carved into stone, but who she was and what she stood for will forever be woven into the lives of those she touched.

Rita chose not to have any funeral or memorial service. She simply wanted her youngest son Max to put her ashes on their property in Colorado where Max lives. Rita loved donating to either the local Salvation Army or the Disabled Vets (DAV) should anyone choose to donate in her name.

The family would like to extend special thanks to the dedicated staff at Woodcreek Bend Memory Care and to the Bayou City Hospice for the compassion, kindness and dignity they showed Rita in her final days. They are very special, and words can't express what they meant to us.