

RAMONA MONROE**September 8, 1937 - August 4, 2023**

Ramona Monroe, 85, of Newberg, Oregon, entered eternal life while in the company and companionship of her beloved son, Gavin, on Friday, August 4, 2023, at

Mercy Medical Center, in Roseburg, Oregon, from complications arising from a Sepsis blood infection. Her spirit is carried on by her five children, two grandchildren, and an extended family of much-loved relations and friends from every walk of life. "Mona" was born in September 1937, at home, on a little farm in Verden, Oklahoma, United States. Mona was the third child and the daughter of Raymond and Margaret Frey who would eventually have five children- Joe, Nita, Mona, Phillip and Mary.

Mona's father, Raymond Frey, was a farmer who came from a large, hard-working, German farming family. Mona's mother, Margaret (Boone) Frey, was a Native American from the Oneida and Wyandotte (Huron) Tribes, who had graduated as Valedictorian at the top of her class from the Oklahoma College for Women in Chickasha, Oklahoma. Margaret and her children - Joe, Nita, Mona, Phillip and Mary - were all enrolled Tribal Members of the Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin. Mona's parents, Frey grandparents, and numerous Frey aunts and uncles were farmers who raised crops and cattle on neighboring farms and Mona and her brothers and sisters enjoyed a wonderful childhood growing up on their farm, surrounded by dozens of beloved family members, dear cousins and wonderful friends.

Mona attended St. Joseph's Academy in Chickasha, Oklahoma, graduating as Valedictorian in 1955. During her years at school, she joined the 4H Club raising cattle, and joined the Girl Scouts, where she enjoyed working at summer camps teaching swimming and being a counselor to younger girls. Mona especially loved horseback riding after school, on weekends and during the summer holiday on her beloved horse, "Daisy", accompanied by her sister, Nita and her cousin Joanie. Upon graduating from high school, Mona attended the St. Anthony School of Nurs-

ing in Oklahoma City, where she earned her nursing diploma in 1958 and graduated as a Registered Nurse.

Not long after receiving her nursing diploma, Mona celebrated her 21st birthday, and joined the Air Force where she served as an Officer, Second Lieutenant, at both Beale Air Force Base, near Yuba City, California, and then Travis Air Force Base, near Fairfield, California. During those years she was able to gain experience as a medical nurse and to travel to Hong Kong, Hawaii and other bases to see the world. While stationed at Travis Air Force Base, Mona met, fell in love and married Lieutenant Colonel Ralph "Roger" E. Monroe, a Pilot from Sidney, Ohio, whose service included five foreign tours throughout Europe, Asia and Africa, who was at that time serving as the Commander of Travis Air Force Base Strategic Air Command (SAC).

Married life brought five wonderful children (Marci, Michele, Mark, Gavin and Maggie). Together, they raised their five children in various locations, as they moved throughout the United States - eventually settling in California for ten years. Although they divorced in the early 1970's, Roger and Mona maintained a cordial relationship so that the Monroe's could remain a family with both parents present in their children's lives. After her divorce, Mona went back to school to update her Nursing Degree and was a student at the University California, Irvine, where she was able to broaden her horizons by taking additional classes in other subjects such as History, Humanities, Classics, English and Writing. During this period, Mona also had an opportunity to renew her love affair with horses.

In the fall of 1979, Mona moved the family to a lovely, old and elegant home that overlooked the town of Roseburg, Oregon, where she lived and worked as an RN for the next eleven years. In 1989 after her youngest child had gone off to college, Mona's beloved fiancée' Lou Sequella passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack, and Mona decided to sell her beautiful home and set off to see the world.

Mona travelled first to Egypt to visit her dear friend, John, who was working at an Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and from there she headed out to explore various sites and museums in the city of Cairo and several ancient Egyptian archaeo-

logical sites including Giza, Valley of the Kings and Luxor. During her stay in Egypt, Mona became aware of the humanitarian catastrophe that was unfolding in Iraq as more than one million Iraqi Kurds flee to Turkey and Iran. In response, a U.S. - led coalition began to carry out Operation Provide Comfort and Ramona, an American nurse, then headed to Ankara, Turkey, where she was a Volunteer with the United Nations refugees 1991 - 1992.

It was now 1992 and the crimes against humanity / "ethnic cleansing" by the Serbs in the Bosnian War in former Yugoslavia (1992 - 1995) was well underway. Ramona travelled up to former Yugoslavia where she was smuggled across the border by a Catholic priest and became a Health Volunteer at the Caretas Organization in Split, Croatia. From there she made her way to the Regional Dialysis Unit in Mostar, Bosnia Herzegovina region (winter of 1992), where the medical personnel had not had a day off in more than a year. Mostar was the most bombed city in the 1992 - 1995 Bosnian War. Over 2,000 Bosniaks / Bosnian Muslims (the principle victims of the war) died in this small city alone during the Siege of Mostar and over 6,000 were injured. Mona and her fellow medical personnel were working in the basement of a bombed-out War Hospital without electricity, water and basic medical supplies, while having to navigate their way to and from work under sniper fire.

One night in the spring of 1992, Mona was part of a medical team that was transporting a patient by truck under cover of darkness, to another town that had the medical equipment needed to save the life of this patient. The next day, they found out that intense Serbian artillery attacks on Mostar suburbs had begun and that much of Mostar had been overrun by the Serbs, so it was not safe for them to return. This battle would later become known as the First Siege of Mostar (1992 - 1993). At this point, Mona and the Mostar medical team joined a Russian helicopter crew, and they began to MEDIVAC patients out of Sarajevo during the Siege of Sarajevo and transport them to various towns with make-shift hospitals.

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Mona then spent part of 1993 working in a hospital in the mountain village of Medjugorje which remained safely in the hands of the Croatian Defense Council.

In June of 1993 - April of 1994 the battle of the Second Siege of Mostar broke out. Mona had returned to Mostar where she continued to work as a Volunteer now at Velmos Hospital on the east bank of Mostar. Mona searched for many of her dear Bosniak friends that she had known and worked with in 1992 but was informed that almost all of her friends had been killed in the First Siege of Mostar when they had been overrun by the Serbs. This Second Siege of Mostar was a prolonged military assault, including intense and uninterrupted gunfire and shelling that caused many casualties, including the deaths of numerous civilians and representatives of international organizations, and a cut-off of humanitarian aid. Over 100,000 shells were launched into East Mostar. The whole city of Mostar was a battlefield and suffered heavy destruction and human losses on an everyday basis. Through it all, and for almost a year, Mona and her fellow medical personnel worked valiantly around the clock to save as many lives as they could during the Siege.

After the Siege was over, Mona gave away what possessions she had to her friends and headed off to Zagreb, Croatia, where she spent time with her dear friends Tosna and Felix.

From Zagreb, Mona made her way back to Turkey, where she spent a year exploring the beautiful Turkish cities of Istanbul, Antalya, Izmir, Bodrum, Kusadasi and Kalkan, and various archaeological sites such as the ancient underground city of Derinkuyu, before heading off again to explore parts of Europe.

Mona then returned to the United States where she first settled in Boston, Massachusetts, and then St. Petersburg, Florida, for a while as she worked as a dialysis nurse, before moving on to Chickasha, Oklahoma, where she worked in a nurse dialysis unit while she was able to enjoy a nice, long, visit with her mother and siblings before permanently moving back to Oregon. She worked until she was 71 years old, and her last position was working on the Med Surgery Floor of Willamette Valley

Medical Center, a hospital in McMinnville, Oregon.

We are all given the gift of life, and someday we will have to give it back. This is hard. But Mona was a fortunate woman, who led a full life. She loved travel and adventure, helping others, creating a beautiful home, celebrating holidays, witty conversation, long walks in nature or just exploring a new city, gardening, feeding the birds and the playful squirrels, corresponding with loved ones, good books, good food and good company. She traveled, chased her dreams, worked in a profession she loved even if she had to go to work under sniper fire, fell in love more than once, mended a broken heart more than once by throwing herself into helping others, and still put one foot in front of the other battling what she suspected from the start might be a metastatic melanoma cancer that had spread too far before she received treatment. She did so with grace, dignity, integrity and courage. She battled cancer to the very end; cancer did not beat Mona. Mona faced cancer head on, unafraid.

We were blessed to learn many valuable lessons from Mona during her 85 years, and some of the most important life lessons that she imparted to us through her actions, are to always remember that obstacles in the path are not obstacles, they ARE the path... and as long as you try, there is hope.

At any rate, Mona is at peace now, and enjoying a reunion with family and friends that she has not seen in a long time. Ramona takes her mortal leave of this world with the memory of the smell of new mown hay, the soft whinny of a horse who is happy to see her, the nuzzle of a newborn calf, the laughter and love of family and friends, the comfort and love of a dog who runs up to greet her and a cat who cuddles up beside her, the view from a window seat on a plane that is taking her off on a new adventure, and the memory of a child's hand in hers.

Ramona was preceded in death by her loving parents, Raymond and Margaret Frey, her dear brothers and sisters, Joe, Nita, Phillip and Mary; and her beloved in-laws, Anna and Paul Monroe, her brother in law, Paul Monroe Jr., and her former husband and the father of her children, Lieutenant Colonel Ralph "Roger" E. Monroe, whom

she cared for in his last years so that he was able to be with his family, until he passed away. She is survived by her five children: daughter Marcella Monroe (Tam Davage) of Michigan & Kansas, daughter Michele Monroe of Virginia, son Mark Monroe (Kristie) of Oregon, son Michael "Gavin" Monroe of Oregon, and daughter Margaret Monroe Anderson (Raymond) of Guam. Also, her dear grandchildren, Jack and Katie Monroe of Oregon. And many much-loved cousins, neices, nephews, sisters in law and friends.

Mona would want her beloved friends and family to know how precious you all have been to her. Knowing and loving each one of you was one of the highlights of her life. Mona would tell you that we will meet again, joyfully, on the other side.

And on that upbeat note, we want to let Mona know that she did a great job and wish her a safe and happy journey. We will remember her smile, her warmth, her energy, her love for life, family and friends. She worked very hard all her life, up until the very end. She made a difference in the lives of many using her gifts... those gifts that make each of us special: the ineffable mystery and extraordinary beauty of the simple human heart.

Services for Family and Friends are being held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Trappist Abbey in Lafayette, Oregon, on Sunday, October 15, 2023, and a larger Celebration of Life for Family and Friends is scheduled for August 4, 2024, in Newberg, Oregon.

Instead of flowers, her family requests that you might consider doing an unexpected and unsolicited act of kindness for someone, in Mona's name. To send flowers or a memorial gift to the family of Ramona Monroe please visit our Sympathy Store.