



Irene Matty Durda

June 29, 1927 - March 8, 2024

Irene Matty Durda passed from this life on March 7th, 2024, at her home in Annapolis, Maryland. She is survived by many who loved her: her sister, Betty; daughters, Kate (Kathy), Lori, and Judi, along with their partners, Steff, Mike, and Jim; beloved grandchildren Ethan and Zoe; and a handful of cherished nieces, nephews, and cousins. Irene's life will be honored, in a private ceremony, by her immediate family. And she will be remembered by family & friends, near and far.

Irene died, at peace, of that rarest of natural causes – old age. She was 96 and $\frac{3}{4}$. Irene once quipped, “The fractions only matter when you are under six or over 90.” It was a surprise because until just very shortly before her death, no one would characterize Irene as old. She was better recognized for her vitality, her energy, and commitment to living and giving.

There's no question that Irene loved to work. Irene worked full-time, inside, and outside of her home, caring for her direct and extended family. Her beloved husband, Paul Durda, who died in 2003, once remarked, “Everybody works, “I”, but you love it. That's just weird.” (Don't be misled by that remark; Paul was Irene's stalwart partner in life for over 50 years.)

Big “I.” That was one of Paul’s nicknames for Irene and no matter what one called her – mom, Aunt Irene, Miss Irene, or just Irene – in our heads we were referring to “Big I.”

Irene took great pride in her professional work. In modern terms, her work enabled an evolution of the traditional retail grocery business. She leveraged intellect and ingenuity to transform how the business was done. In her terms, she just did the very best job she could, each and every day. That’s an ethic she inculcated in her children, and it’s part of her legacy.

On the home front, her daughters experienced the perfection of their mother's efforts. Of course, the daughters helped (another inculcated ethic) but “Big I” was the master. Irene’s family enjoyed the meticulously maintained household, the manicured garden and yard, the handmade couture, and her support through all the crises and events of their young lives.

Any cousin, niece, nephew, or family friend remembers the fried chicken, cherry squares, blackberry pie, and potato salad of the Kennywood and Ohio-pyle picnics; the ham, kielbasa, hručka, nut rolls, and home-baked bread of the Easter brunches; the Eastern European Holy Suppers on Christmas Eve; five and twenty different kinds of Christmas cookies; the roast chicken, turkey, and beef of holiday and Sunday dinners; and the Beef Stroganoff, Chicken Kiev, and crab cakes of special occasions. Her sour cream tea cake recipe has been widely shared and is made in contemporary kitchens around the U.S. and Canada. And it is still called “Durda Cake” – a moniker acquired during the endless church socials and parochial school bake sales she supported during the 60’s and 70’s and 80’s.

In 2006, Irene moved from Brownsville, Pa (where she was born and raised) to Annapolis, Maryland to be closer to her two grandchildren. After what some would consider a full lifetime of being a loving wife, nurturing mom, caring daughter, active community member, and supportive sibling, aunt and cousin, Irene reinvented herself in Annapolis.

Irene did not shy away from any new experiences. In her early 80's, newly introduced to exercise 'classes', she declared "I love Pilates!" to one of her astonished children. Similarly, newly introduced to the personal computer, she promptly mastered email and bookmarked her hometown newspaper so that she could keep up with friends and the local news. She quickly mastered the ins and outs of getting 'the best deals' at any retail outlet in greater Annapolis. She made new friends. Once, a daughter who was frantic at not being able to reach Irene on the telephone for a few hours in the late afternoon was a little nonplussed at being told: "I was having drinks on my balcony with my neighbors."

Irene became the doyenne of her condo where she was respected and revered for her wit, wisdom, and generosity. She instantly kindled the best parts of everyone she met. Her charisma brought people together. "We didn't even know one another until Irene," said one of her neighbors. "She brought us together into a community." Another friend noted, "I learned so much from Irene. Her stories were funny, and insightful lessons about life."

Her time in Annapolis also allowed her grandchildren to build a special bond with their “Gramz.” She was there to pick them up from school, attend school parties and special events, share that “Durda cake” with a new cohort, watch them compete in sports, share the joy (and pride) in their achievements, and simply be a part of all the family gatherings, holidays, and picnics. She was the beloved extension of their nuclear family.

Irene will be missed, but not mourned. 'Big I's' life is a testament to her 'Big Heart.' She had a positive impact on everyone who knew her -- one of whom remarked, “I’m not sure there is a Heaven, but if there is, I’m sure Irene has already charmed everyone she’s met there.”

In lieu of flowers, or planting a tree, or charitable donations in her name, her family asks that you express your sympathy and respect by taking just one more action, each and every day, to help someone whose life you can enrich through your own generosity, wit, wisdom, or kindness.

Tribute Wall

LP

“ *Irene Matty Durda*

Laura Palmer - April 29, 2024 at 08:15 AM

MS

“ *Lori - please accept condolences from our family to yours. Over the years we have so enjoyed getting to know your mom through all of your musings and shares. What an incredible woman on so many fronts. We were so honored to “know” your mom. We celebrate her life with you all. Love, Mary, Alice and Waverly*

Mary Shea - March 31, 2024 at 01:11 PM

AD

“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Simplicity Cremation & Funeral Services*

A Memorial Tree was planted for Irene Matty Durda - March 10, 2024 at 01:19 PM