



## Lydia Maria Kniahynycky

June 3, 1949 - April 21, 2024

Lydia Maria Kniahynycky was born June 3, 1949, in Ellwangen, Germany. Her parents, Maria and Seweryn, were displaced from western Ukraine during WWII. They met and married in 1947 while living in Germany at the DP Camp for displaced persons. Her parents were searching for a sponsor and fulfilling requirements that would allow them to immigrate to the United States. In December of 1949, they arrived with baby Lydia in New York on a flight from Paris. This was arranged through the International Refugee Organization (IRO). Their first home was on a farm near Auburn, New York. Their personal belongings came by ship, in three wooden crates, across the Atlantic Ocean.

The family eventually settled in Flint, Michigan in the late 1950's. By this time, Lydia had two younger brothers and a baby sister on the way. As a child, Lydia loved Nancy Drew mysteries. As a teenager, Lydia was very active in school activities and sports. She was a summer lifeguard at Dibrova Ukrainian Camp in Brighton and participated in the Ukrainian Olympics in Brighton and Toronto. Lydia graduated from Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Flint, Michigan in 1967. Upon graduation, Lydia aspired to learn to fly airplanes and get a pilot's license, which was an unusual career path for a young woman in the 1960's. She enrolled at Rangely College in Colorado for their flight program, and successfully completed training to obtain her private pilot's license. Lydia's eventual goal was to advance her pilot's training and obtain a commercial pilot's license.

Lydia was smart, bold and daring. At the young age of twenty-three years in the year 1973, Lydia worked with a travel agency to plan a month long trip to Europe. She visited England, France, Germany, Italy and Czechoslovakia. The last week of her trip was traveling to Ukraine, her parents' homeland. This required going behind the "Iron Curtain", since Ukraine was then part of the Soviet Union. Maybe the most remarkable thing is that Lydia went by herself, and traveled alone. Upon returning, she continued to work the night shift at the Ann Arbor Post Office and took classes related to meteorology at University of Michigan while living at home in Manchester, Michigan. Lydia also had a strong interest in music, and was talented in this regard. Lydia played the piano and guitar, composed music, and enjoyed singing. She performed often at the Summer Ukrainian Ethnic Festivals at Hart Plaza in Detroit.

Sadly, within a few months of returning from the overseas trip, Lydia began having symptoms that disrupted her life and ultimately led to a diagnosis of schizophrenia. For the next few years, she continued to do many ambitious things including teaching Ukrainian dance in Ann Arbor, singing and performing music with her guitar, and completing a Masters in Voice at Eastern Michigan University in 1979. Over the years, there were many ups and downs with the progression of the disease and eventually, Lydia came to live in a group home in Ann Arbor with wonderful staff that cared for her and a handful of other residents for almost thirty years.

Lydia contracted Covid in December of 2020 and barely survived, spending a month at St. Joseph Hospital in Ann Arbor. She was too weak to be placed back at her group home. This began a very difficult period with social workers and family members trying to find Lydia a new home. Lydia was finally accepted at Majestic Care in Columbus, Ohio and stayed until she died on April 21, 2024. Lydia was preceded in death by father, Seweryn and mother,

Maria. She is the eldest of six children, and is survived by brother, Manny (Jan); brother, Adrian; sister, Christine; sister, Mary Ann (Kim); and sister, Teresa (Brian).

A private Funeral Mass will be held at St. Thomas Aquinas Church in East Lansing on July 10, 2024. The Inurnment will take place on Thursday, July 11th at Resurrection Cemetery in Clinton Township, Michigan.

# Previous Events

## Private Funeral Mass

JUL 10 (ET)

St. Thomas Aquinas Church  
955 Alton Rd  
East Lansing, MI 48823

## Inurnment

JUL 11 (ET)

Resurrection Cemetery  
18201 Clinton River Rd  
Clinton Township, MI 48038