



## Donald Warren Rude

December 1, 1936 - March 4, 2023

Donald Warren Rude loved his family and friends, Shakespeare, opera, and anything that bloomed, especially irises, throughout his life until his death March 4, 2023.

His father read Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare* to him when he was 6, and his mother read to him constantly. He bought his first opera recording at age 12, which he paid for by selling flower seeds door to door. He enjoyed opera performances throughout the United States and Europe—New York, Santa Fe, London, and more. At 12, he also planted his first iris rhizome and had about 400 different varieties in his Blacksburg garden. He served a term as president of the Region 4 Iris Society and was a certified judge of irises.

For most of his distinguished career, Don served as a professor of English at Texas Tech University, where he taught Shakespeare and other authors, served as Director of Graduate Studies in English, and directed a number of dissertations. He edited the international journal *Conradiana* for 12 years. Don joined the faculty at Virginia Tech in 2004. He shared his love for Shakespeare beyond the university classroom through the courses he taught for seniors at the Blacksburg Community Center—a 17-year commitment faithfully upheld through Fall 2022.

Don met his wife of 54 years, Carolyn, when they were graduate students at

the University of Illinois. They shared a love of music, travel, teaching, and their children. Their older son, Benjamin, was killed in a skiing accident in 1987. Grief from that loss prompted an outpouring of poetry writing, some published in various journals and in a self-published collection, Legacy. Their precious younger son, Jonathan, is husband to Leah Lambert, and father to Sydney, Avery, and Ryan. Don shared a love of mystery novels with Leah and loved to read to or watch classic movies with the children.

Friends and family described Don as generous in mentoring, kind, and able to uplift the spirits of a room. They remarked on his sense of humor and commitment to social justice. They praised his teaching and scholarship and were awed by his deep knowledge of opera and irises.

Don was born on December 1, 1936, to Robert Maurice Rude and Nellie Jackson Rude in Great Bend, Kansas. He is a graduate of Wichita State University (B.A., M.A.), where he edited both the yearbook and the newspaper, and the University of Illinois (Ph.D.). He is survived by Carolyn; Jonathan and his family; his sister, Roberta, with whom he shared his love of Shakespeare, theatre, and gardening; his sister-in-law Martha Sue Moll and brother-in-law Charles Kettell and their families; and by cousins and their families.

A memorial service and celebration of Don's life will be held Saturday, April 15 at 11 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 1301 Gladewood Dr., Blacksburg.

Don was generous in supporting educational and community groups. Scholarships in his name and in Benjamin's are endowed at Texas Tech University; funds in his name are also endowed at the Moss Arts Center and at the Community Foundation of the New River Valley. He was also a contributor to the endowment fund of the Lifelong Learning Institute at Virginia

Tech. Memorial contributions to any of these funds would be welcome. Or plant a flower, take a walk, listen to some favorite music, or read a book, and reflect on the life of a gentle man who loved beauty.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

APR **15**. 11:00 AM (ET)

Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
1301 Gladewood Drive  
Blacksburg, VA 24060

# Tribute Wall

NO

“ I also have iris' growing in my yard, courtesy of Don. Thank you, Don.

Norman Orr - June 14, 2023 at 10:53 AM

SJ

“ Don Rude was the best teacher and most respected man I have known. His teaching method and humorous class remarks were helpful to me when I became an English teacher. I'll leave all with a test question, presented as extra credit, on the hardest test I ever took from Don. Tho it was written in a foreign language I could not read, it came from a Persian proverb that I will leave with his friends and family: " And this too shall pass." Sally Clark Johns

Sarah Johns - April 16, 2023 at 04:20 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Donald Warren Rude.



April 13, 2023 at 04:54 PM

GA

“ To the entire Rude family, I send my deepest sympathies. I am so very sorry for your loss.

Gillian Andersen - April 12, 2023 at 03:10 PM

JC

“ Don took a couple of my LLI classes. What I remember so vividly was the intensity that he brought to the classes (even over Zoom). Don was passionate about learning and it was infectious. Thanks for that gift to all of us, Don.

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**Jack Call** - April 03, 2023 at 09:51 AM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Donald Warren Rude.



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March 29, 2023 at 01:56 PM

KB

“ When I started as junior faculty at Texas Tech in 2000, Don and Carolyn opened their home and hearts to make me feel welcome. Don was the quintessential English literature professor--dramatic and funny when the occasion called for it, but always soft-hearted and kind.

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**Ken Baake** - March 27, 2023 at 10:04 PM

LS

“ As the brother of my best friend, Don was very dear to me as well. We didn't spend a lot of time together but the time we did was special. What a fine, intelligent, artistic man he was. I will remember him dearly when his iris blooms in my yard again.

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**Linda Scribner** - March 21, 2023 at 04:07 PM

JS

“ I attended Don's Shakespeare classes for several years at the Recreation Center in Blacksburg, and afterwards we were classmates in some of the Lifelong Learning classes, one of which was Bonsai. He was a wonderful person to know, and I enjoyed his classes. My condolences to the family.

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**Janet Spahr** - March 19, 2023 at 07:52 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Tribute Wall two



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**Catherine Quillman** - March 19, 2023 at 02:46 PM

RR

“ *"His life was gentle; and the elements  
So mixed in him, that Nature  
might stand up  
And say to all the world, "this was a man.".....  
William Shakespeare, Julius Caesar  
I will hold you in the garden in my heart forever, Big Brother*

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**Roberta Rude** - March 19, 2023 at 12:51 PM