



## Margaret "Mika" Tirs

July 26, 1946 - December 4, 2025

Margaret (aka Mika) Tirs died at the Kroontje Health Care center in Blacksburg, VA on December 4, 2025.

Mika was born on July 26, 1946 in Germany to George and Emilia Tirs while the family lived in a WWII resettlement camp. As a child she accompanied the family as they relocated first to Newark, NJ; then to Pacific Grove, CA, where she had fond memories of being a Butterfly Girl in the Butterfly Parade; and, finally to, Richmond, VA where her father and mother taught the Russian language in the Richmond school system. Mika graduated from George Wythe High School in 1964 and received a BA degree in history from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Professionally, Mika was a supervisor for Aetna Insurance and, later, a top fund raiser for Defenders of Wildlife in Washington, DC.

Mika pursued a goal of reuniting an extended family that had scattered after WWII. To this end she taught English in Estonia, for two years, reuniting with family there and in Latvia. Travel to Australia solidified relationships with relatives who immigrated there. Later, with her husband, James G. O'Neill III (Jim), whom she married in 2005, she traded host duties with family in frequent visits to/from the U.S., Estonia, Latvia, Australia, and Scotland. Mika was known in the Richmond Russian community for hosting lavish parties with

endless zakuski, caviar, all day eating, multilingual conversation and merriment.

Mika's fluency in Russian allowed her and Jim to go native as they crossed off some "bucket list" items; such as entering Red Square right after the Victory Day celebration in 2012 and taking a Trans-Siberian Railroad trip to Lake Baikal.

Mika is survived by her husband and adult stepchildren; Katherine O'Neill (Ron Nolen) of Blacksburg, VA; and James G. O'Neill IV (Ai Le) of Sydney, Australia. Mika was the beloved Babushka of Samuel O'Neill Nolen and Stephanie Le O'Neill; the devoted aunt of Alexandra Whitehurst, Jaqueline Fisher, Arthur Fisher, and Rebecca Tirs; and a great aunt or cousin for an extended large family across several countries. Mika was preceded in death by her parents; her sisters, Veronica and Helen; and her brother, George.

The family requests that, in lieu of flowers, a donation be made to Defenders of Wildlife. The family also wishes to thank the nurses of the Kroontje Health Care Center and of the Medi Home Health and Hospice for the loving care they provided to Mika/Margaret in her final days and for a million kindnesses. Friends and family will celebrate Mika's life in a "Celebration of Life" gathering in Richmond next year when the weather warms and all are a little less sad.

# Tribute Wall

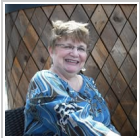


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**James O'Neill** - January 12 at 01:47 PM

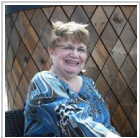


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**James O'Neill** - January 12 at 01:44 PM

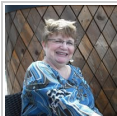


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**James O'Neill** - December 13, 2025 at 08:50 AM



*Phyllis Shaw on June 12, 2009*

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**James O'Neill** - December 13, 2025 at 01:53 PM

PS

“ *“The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.”*

*William Wordsworth*

*So it will be with Mika, my beloved friend for over 50 years.*

*Phyllis Shaw*

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**Phyllis Shaw** - December 13, 2025 at 12:25 AM



“ *When she left a piece of my heart went with her. I'm not okay. I loved her. So many memories. I am so thankful that God allowed her to be apart of my life. Allowing me to care for and love on her. She will be missed by me and so many others.*

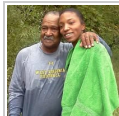
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**Tiffany Sherman** - December 12, 2025 at 06:48 PM



“ *6 files added to the album BALTIC*



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**James O'Neill** - December 11, 2025 at 05:18 PM



*Thank you so much for sharing these photos.*

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**Tiffany Sherman** - December 12, 2025 at 06:49 PM

MS

“ U were very dear to my heart. I loved everything about you. Your smile, sense of humor, your outspoken opinions... never a dull moment. May you rest peacefully beautiful and sending prayers of strength and peace to your family and loved ones 🙏 my favorite lady it was a pleasure taking care of you.



Madell Stanley - December 11, 2025 at 04:09 PM

AR

“ I am so sorry for your loss. May Mika rest in peace.  
Kind regards,  
Ann Ruple

ANN B RUPLE - December 11, 2025 at 09:36 AM



“ 9 files added to the album VISITS



James O'Neill - December 09, 2025 at 04:57 PM



“ 14 files added to the album *Travels*



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**James O'Neill** - December 09, 2025 at 10:44 AM



“ Yuriy O. purchased the *Beautiful in Blue* for the family of Margaret "Mika" Tirs.



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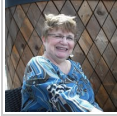
**Yuriy O.** - December 08, 2025 at 09:28 PM



“ *Dear Jim,  
Our deepest condolences about Mika's passing away.  
Mika left behind a very bright memory.  
We will always remember our warm meetings in Tallinn and Richmond,  
Lake Caroline and Montpelier, and Germantown.  
Our thoughts are with you and your family at this difficult time .  
With love,  
Valeriya (Lera ) and Yuriy (Yura) Olman*

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**Yuriy Olman** - December 08, 2025 at 09:11 PM



*Thank you. It's Mika's and my good fortune to have Lera and you as friends.*

**James O'Neill** - December 11, 2025 at 11:46 AM

ST

*“ I met Margaret because I married her wonderful brother George. At our first meeting I adored her! We would call each other often and I thought she was so intelligent, witty, talented, humorous, and I loved how she cherished her Russian heritage. Easter celebrations shared at their home were amazing. She would bake Russian delicacies I couldn't even pronounce but savored sampling each one. Once I tried making Kulich and it took me hours! It never compared to hers. The table would always be elaborately set, and the food was endless. George, Rebecca (daughter) and I always looked forward to being with Jim and Margaret in their beautiful home. We would have rousing political discussions and thank goodness we shared the same views! She was feisty I'm a good way. I felt she embraced me which was a huge honor. It warmed my heart to see the rapport and compatibility between Margaret and Jim. They were kindred spirits and they shared so many incredible experiences together. How blessed I was to know this phenomenal woman, whose spirit will touch us forever.*

**Sally Tirs** - December 08, 2025 at 04:54 PM

IA

*“ May she rest in peace.  
Margarita Georgievna was a fun and loving person. Love company and was fun to talk to.  
With love,  
Antonovs family.*

**Igor Antonov** - December 08, 2025 at 04:25 PM