



Barbara Ann Rager

August 7, 1935 - December 24, 2025

Barbara Ann Rager, beloved mother and educator, died Wednesday December 24, 2025, at her home in Zionsville, Indiana. She was 90 years old.

Barbara was born at home on August 7, 1935. She was the only child of her parents Walter and Grace C. (Fites) Waechter. Barbara was the namesake of her great great grandmother Barbara Ann Waechter who emigrated from Germany to Akron Indiana in 1851.

Barbara graduated from Akron H.S. and earned both a B.S. and a M.A. in Education from Ball State University. While at Ball state Barbara was a member of the Pi Beta Phi Sorority. Barbara thrived as an elementary teacher and taught in both the Michigan and Indiana public school systems. Barbara met her husband 1st Lt. Neil McKinney when he offered her a ride home from college. She and Neil were united in marriage on June 26, 1960 in Akron Indiana. Neil's military career took them on adventures across the south/southwestern United States. In 1963 Neil was declared Missing In Action in Vietnam. Barbara along with their one-year-old daughter Christa returned to Akron, IN.

Barbara resumed her teaching career and met Dean Rager who shared her love of education. They were united in marriage April 2, 1969, in Anderson IN.

Barbara enjoyed giving back to her community by serving with many organizations such as the Akron Carnegie Library Board, Akron Las Donas Club, A.A.U.W, and Delta Theta Tau Sorority to name a few. As a 79 year member of the Akron United Methodist church, she organized and directed many children's programs and taught Sunday school and Vacation Bible School.

Barbara enjoyed a very active lifestyle. As a member of the Plymouth Country Club, she enjoyed playing golf with her friends and late husband Dean. She would say "there is nothing like a walk down the fairway on a beautiful summer day". She would tell you that she never mastered the game of golf, but she did enjoy playing in both the 9 and 18-hole women's leagues.

She shared her love of being on the water by sailing with Dean in Y-Fyler Regattas across the Midwest. She learned to sail by being a crew member but was quickly winning numerous trophies as the skipper of both their Y-Fyler and C-Scow sailboats.

Barbara was deeply artistic, expressing her creativity through oil painting, pottery, interior decorating, and floral arranging. A true fashionista, she was known for her impeccable sense of style and eye for beauty in all things.

Barbara was a "lifelong learner" and had an innate curiosity about the world. Once her formal education was completed, she vowed to never let her curious spark die out. She was an avid reader and enjoyed Podcasts that broadened her knowledge and understanding of the world. Some of her greatest learning experiences came from the numerous European trips with her beloved daughter Christa.

Guided by a lifelong respect for nature, she invested in solar panels for her

home as one small way to care for the world around her.

Barbara passed peacefully in the arms of her beloved daughter Christa Mckinney Smith (Keith Grossman), of Zionsville, IN. She is also survived by her step-children Pam (Michael) McFarland of Akron, IN, Rene (Shauli) Rosen-Rager, of Hemet, CA, Delmar (Rheadawn) Rager, of Sebring, FL and her sweet cat Ebby.

Barbara was preceded in death by her loving parents, husbands and step-daughter Judith Rager.

There is a proverb that states “When an elder dies, a library burns to the ground.” A precious library that taught many lessons about life, kindness, and the importance of family was lost today. Barbara will be dearly missed by those that knew her so well.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made in Barbara’s memory to the Walter D. and Grace C. Fites Waechter Fund at the Northern Indiana Community Foundation, P.O. Box 807 227 East 9th Street. Rochester, IN 46975. This fund benefits the Akron Carnegie Library and the Akron Cemeteries.

<https://tinyurl.com/yvc3w9xv>

Donations may also be made to Indiana Public Broadcasting to further their educational programming. <https://tinyurl.com/4jdfmnnx>

A Celebration of life honoring Barbara will take place at a later date. Details will be shared with family and friends when arrangements are complete.

Cemetery Details

Akron Cemetery

S 1075 E
Akron, IN 46910

Events

Details are pending.

Tribute Wall

PR

“ *What can you say about a beautiful lady that had such a great impact on your life growing up . Thank you for your grace, patience and love . I'm sure there were many times Christa and I were well let's just say a challenge and you so wonderfully put up with us . The memories I have of growing up around you have been flooding my thoughts these past days and what wonderful times they were . I will always love you and feel so honored to have had you in my life .*

Christa and Keith and the rest of the family my thoughts and prayers are with you .

Pamela Romine - January 05 at 09:27 AM



“ *So sorry to hear of the passing of Barbara. My Mom, Anita Barnett McMillan, cherished her cousin and talked fondly of times spent with her. I know she was well loved and spent so much time giving to her community. The loss of these elders, this generation is great. Hold the memories and their stories tightly.*

Patti Schmidt - January 01 at 02:30 PM



“ *Barbara was a dear friend of our family. I always enjoyed her company very much. We had many talks about history—simple moments but full of meaning—and I learned a lot from her stories. She would tell the truth straight and clear. Her heart was always kind and warm.*

I will miss her, her strong spirit, and those conversations that stayed with me long time. Thank you, Barbara, for being an amazing friend in my life. Rest in peace.

The Hovy Family

Natasha Hovyadinova - January 01 at 10:12 AM



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Natasha Hovyadinova - January 01 at 10:10 AM

SE

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Sergei - January 01 at 10:05 AM

KS

“ I took care of Barbara's mother for a short time. Barbara was very sweet. She took loving care of her mother and her daughter. A very nice person.

Katrina Swihart - December 31, 2025 at 08:02 PM

MM

“ My Cousin Barbara was a beautiful person on the inside and outside many people have said I looked like her made me very proud cause she was a beautiful lady loved her 🙏🏻 Madonna Weirick McCombs 🙏🏻❤️🌸

Madonna Weirick McCombs - December 30, 2025 at 07:29 PM

SB

“ Barb was a great friend to me, ,She will be missed by all.



Shirley Bickel - December 30, 2025 at 06:18 PM