



JULIA M. (FOSTINI) DEVERS

July 15, 1934 - October 28, 2021

Julia Mary Devers passed away on Thursday the 28th of October, 2021, at the age of 87. She resided in Syracuse in the house that she designed and was built by her husband, Art, and where she lived for the majority of her life.

Julia was born in Harrisburg, PA in 1934 to Carlo and Luigia (Massari) Fostini, who soon returned to Europe with their new baby. Julia spent the formative years of childhood in the Tyrol region of Italy and in Leipzig, Germany. With Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia, it became clear to Carlo that they needed to depart Europe, and so he purchased tickets for his wife and daughter on one of the last overcrowded passenger ships to leave Europe before the war began, the Rex (April 1940.) Carlo soon followed on another ship and the three of them made their way to Grand Rapids, Michigan, where the prospects for a professional knife grinder like Carlo were good. It was on that trans-Atlantic journey that Julia met her lifelong friends, sisters Bianca (Sabene) and Bruna (Oman), who hailed from a town further up her Tyrolean valley, and who still reside in the Syracuse area today.

Due to her mother's illness and subsequent long-term hospitalization, and Carlo's profession which required him to drive his truck over various routes, Julia took on responsibilities as a caretaker and homemaker from an early age. She developed character and wisdom beyond her years, aided by the kind but firm tutelage of the Sisters who ran the Marywood boarding school she attended, as well as from her blind neighbor, Grandmother Elizabeth, who served as a surrogate mother.

While Julia's primary language was a regional dialect of Val Rendena, she learned English as a second language in the American school system, and "standard" Italian as a third from a visiting relative. She was incredibly intelligent and discerning, and had a love of reading and of the library, which she utilized and cherished her whole life. She achieved a Bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and a Master's in Home Economics Education from Syracuse University.

In her early 30s, when she resided with her father in Solvay and was teaching Home Economics in the Baldwinsville School District, she met the love of her life, Arthur Robert Devers (or Art, as she fondly called him), through mutual acquaintances. The two shared many common values. She often joked that he must have thought he'd be getting an orderly, efficient homemaker, and perhaps had signed up for a little more than he bargained for. Nevertheless, they created a beautiful life together, building a house, raising three beloved daughters, and living a good, Catholic life. When Art developed a cancer that was fatal, she stayed by his side and took precious care of him throughout his battle, helping him pass with dignity, love, and compassion.

She devoted herself wholeheartedly to her five grandchildren; any rough edges of motherhood had been rounded away, and only pure love, compassion, and an abundance of wisdom remained. She transformed from being Julia and "Mom to "Nonna," the latter of which seemed to be a life calling for her.

Sharing food was one of her greatest expressions of love. No meal was too daunting, no dietary challenge too confounding. She would happily labor all day in the kitchen, slowly browning items on the stove, adding stock, preparing the vegetables, checking the oven, and so on. She brought the cuisine of Val Rendena to central NY, with traditional meals such as polenta with chicken and puciu (gravy) or risotto with salamini and mushrooms. She loved the challenge of honing her skills by entering culinary contests at the NY State Fair, where she won the grand prize in 1977, and later served as a culinary judge for the same contests.

She was unfalteringly practical and ahead of her time, from taking on the volunteer role of a LaLeche League consultant in the 1970s to support new mothers in their efforts to nurse, to dragging her young daughters to local carpenter shops and horse stables to shovel sawdust and manure to bring back to her compost piles for her organic gardens. She had the amazing ability to design solutions to problems using common materials, such as the booster seats she created from stacked foam rubber and fabric for her own daughters. Over the decades, she focused more on landscape design than vegetables, implementing a grand scheme for a landscape of contrasting colors, textures, shapes and sizes. She loved going to garage and estate sales to find things that might be useful someday, and to her family's great surprise, they often were. Even in these last weeks of her life, she attended several garage sales and walked along her property, admiring the "fruit" of her grand plan.

She had the good fortune of being supported at her home in recent years by her grandson Morgan, whose presence enabled her to live her last years somewhat independently, happily, in the home she loved. She was surrounded by family members she loved, and who deeply loved her.

Julia is survived by her three daughters; Liz Whitman, Sue (Matt) LeBlanc, and Maggie (Billy) Khan; and five grand-children, Keenan, Morgan, Peter, Mia, and Grace.

Julia was a life-long parishioner of St. Charles Borromeo Church. She was a long-time supporter of her local public tv and radio stations, WCNY and WRVO.

Family and friends may call Mon. November 1st from 9:15-9:45 am at St. Charles of Borromeo Church with a Mass of Christian Burial to be celebrated at 10 am.

Burial will be in St. Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Hospice of Central NY.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Cemetery-DeWitt

DeWitt, NY

Previous Events

Calling Hours

NOV 1. 9:15 AM - 9:45 AM (ET)

St. Charles of Borromeo Church
417 S. Orchard Rd.
Syracuse, NY 13219
(315) 468-1803

Mass of Christian Burial

NOV 1. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. Charles of Borromeo Church
417 S. Orchard Rd.
Syracuse, NY 13219
(315) 468-1803

Tribute Wall



“ *JULIA M. (FOSTINI) DEVERS*

January 21, 2023 at 02:11 PM



“ *Liz , Sue,& Maggie, your wonderful moms passing was very sad to hear ... I met her years ago thru the Mangano s ... she was so kind and caring ... I pray that God sends you the peace and acceptance only He can give ... you will all be in my prayers 🙏🌹*

rosemarie Emmi - November 01, 2021 at 09:45 PM