



*Rita Monica McLean*  
*(nee Gillis)*  
*May 12, 1927 to July 6, 2023*

Our loved, respected and appreciated family matriarch dead at 96. Rita McLean passed away on Thursday July 6, 2023 in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

Rita was born at home in Indian River, Prince Edward Island and grew up on the farm. She was one of Hubert and Monica Gillis' 6 children. Her teenage years were during the war so while her father was away Rita worked the farm using horse pulled implements. At the age of 22 she moved away to work as a telephone operator in New Brunswick. With a good head for numbers she was known for recalling many telephone listings frequently asked for without having to look them up. This skill she retained and used throughout her work life as cashier and finance clerk.

On the ferry ride to New Brunswick Rita met her future husband John Robert McLean, a fellow Islander. Two of their eight children were born in Moncton, NB. This was a start of a life following her husband across Canada where work was available. The next residence was in Wanapitei, Ontario where 2 more children were born in the Sudbury Hospital. Work being finished, the family moved back to PEI. While driving from Ontario to PEI Rita gave birth to

their fifth child in Bangor, Maine. Rita and her family lived in PEI until 1966. During this time she gave birth to 3 more children. In 1966 Rita and John with their eight children drove from PEI to Yellowknife then flew on a single otter to Discovery Mine, NWT. Following the mine closure in 1969 the family made their home in Yellowknife, where Rita made many friends and started a career working outside the home.

Rita worked at the original Kentucky Fried Chicken, and at various clerical positions until she was hired as a cashier in the Yellowknife Inn coffee shop, a popular local meeting spot for Yellowknife "Oldtimers". Rita was always ready with the hockey scores from the previous nights game, the current temperatures as well as any messages that were left with her to pass on to the regulars. After many years at the Inn, Rita went to work at Mackenzie Management where she remained until her retirement at the age of 75. Rita walked to work every day, summer and winter and never had a sick day.

Rita enjoyed an active social life and was a strong supporter of all of our local musicians. She liked all genres of music but really enjoyed a Saturday night at the Legion or Elks when a local band was playing. If they had a cassette or CD of their music available for sale she bought one. Rita was honoured with a lifetime membership in the Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary. Rita also supported the NWT Pipe Band from the beginning and introduced her children to the annual Burns Suppers. As Curling was the winter pastime in Discovery, she played in the mixed recreational leagues in Discovery and Yellowknife and thought it was great fun. When she could no longer curl herself she was a dedicated fan of the Scotties Tournament of Hearts and the Brier. When local Yellowknife teams won berths in these events she was elated.

Ever youthful and with a great sense of humour and fun Rita was a favourite with her grandchildren, remaining so as they grew into adults and had children of their own. She was always current on the latest pop culture and enjoyed their visits. It seems that the gatherings were always around the table with a full tea pot. She loved to pour tea for her family and friends.

Rita was predeceased by her parents Hubert and Monica Gillis of Indian River; siblings Victor, Hubert jr, Dolores, Angela; her spouse John Robert McLean; her daughter Heather Lalonde; her grandchildren Kyle Jardine, Jonathon Lalonde.

Left to mourn her loss but to also celebrate her life and legacy are her brother David Gillis; her son in law John Lalonde; her children Linda Jardine (Les), Jacqueline McLean, David McLean (Cheryl), Bradford McLean (Amy), Malcolm McLean (Cindy), Juanita Rocher (Jeff), Laurie McLean ( Sean). Her grandchildren, Scott Jardine, Kathryn Deeter, Rebecca Russell, Parnell Lalonde, James Lalonde, Terrence Smith, Pauline Michelin, Morgan Gebauer, Marc Michelin, John Cleary, Megan Russi, Shannon Cleary, Garrett McLean, Carson McLean, Warren McLean, Daniele Rocher, Renee Rocher, Christopher McLean, Alyx McLean.

Also missing her are her great grandchildren, nieces, nephews and many friends.

The family would like to thank the healthcare professionals, staff and volunteers at Stanton Territorial Hospital and Avens cottages who kindly and compassionately cared for Rita.

A funeral Mass will be held in Yellowknife in late August.

We are so grateful to have had the pleasure of her love and company for so many years. In the spirit of Rita's love for her family, please consider spending time with loved ones and let them know how much they mean to you.

*"I pray thee, then, write me as one that loves his fellow men." Abou Ben Adhem - Leigh Hunt*