

JUDITH GAIL PERMANN (May 7th, 1940 to November 4th, 2021)

At 2:14 PM on November 4th, Judith Gail Permann passed away, surrounded by her loved ones, at Tacoma General Hospital in Tacoma, Washington. A few months prior she was diagnosed with a rare and painful disease called Calciphylaxis. She bore her pain with her usual calm and good humor.

Judith was born in St. Paul, MN to William (Bud) a local pharmacist and Lucille, a homemaker. Judith joined her father and grandfather working at the family pharmacy and soda counter at age 13. She loved to tell the story of the time she learned tipping the whipped cream canister at an angle was not a good idea as the cream bounced off hot cocoa and onto a dismayed customer's tie. She was a smart girl – so smart, she skipped the second grade and graduated from Humboldt High School at age 17.

Her favorite job, outside the family business, was working on the Ramsey County Public Library's Bookmobile. Judith was part of a crack-team of three intrepid librarians that braved snow, sleet, and school children to share the joy of reading around St. Paul. She was cast in the lead role of Abigail in *The Crucible* at Simpson United Methodist Church in Minneapolis, MN. There she caught the eye of a young seminary student playing the role of Reverend Paris – Delbert Permann. The two began their courtship and on a frigid December 21st, 1963, they wed at St. Paul United Church of Christ.

After Delbert graduated from seminary, they moved to Waukesha, WI where he served as Associate Pastor and Youth Director. Each summer they took the youth of the church to South Dakota to volunteer in service projects for the Sioux Tribes. After the shortest pregnancy on record (she found out at 6 months), Jennifer was born.

The small family moved to Sparta, WI in late 1969. Three years later, Rachel made her first appearance to the musical theatre tune, *I Enjoy Being a Girl*. During their time in Sparta Judith joined the PEO. Del and Judith fostered a number of teens; Rachael, Jeanette and Lynette became close members of the family. Judith enjoyed watching these kids grow into adulthood and have children and grandchildren of their own.

Cold weather months seemed to be moving months for the Permann family as they moved to River Falls, WI in February 1983. This is the town they considered home and lived the longest. Judith enjoyed being close to her aging parents, aunt and uncle, cousins, and beloved St. Paul. With their children grown, Judith and Del served the following UCC congregations in interim positions: Tucson (AZ), Albuquerque (NM), Prescott, Sheboygan, Roberts, and Ellsworth (WI). At the end of 2018 Judith went on ahead to Tacoma (WA) while Delbert finished selling and packing their River Falls home. They became West Coasters to be close to Rachel, Jennifer, and Jennifer's daughter Elena. Elena was her precious girl, gum-stealer, and favorite make-believe partner.

Judith's love of music and immense talent for playing the piano was evident early in life. She started playing the piano for her Junior High and High School choirs as well as local musical theatre productions. In Sparta, she began her love affair with playing piano and organ duets for the church that continued throughout her life. She was often found at the front of the church

behind the piano – lending her talents to choirs, soloists, and musicals. She even let her daughters and granddaughter turn pages for her sometimes -- but you had to be quick.

She served as President for the Sparta Arts Council – that helped bring quality programming to the small town. She played for student ensembles in the Sparta and River Falls School Districts as well as accompanying soloists and small groups for competitions, and performances. Many students got to State Solo and Ensemble competition with a little help from her. Judith's reputation for excellence quickly spread and she was called upon to play for university students and choirs as well.

She found sisterhood and artistic joy in playing for The Music Madams in River Falls. *Hey Look Me Over* was their theme song. It and many other catchy tunes filled the Permann household throughout the years. She made many close friends through this group – none closer than Sonja, Ruth, Sue, and Cecily. This group made her vast talent and quick wit shine. Nobody played like she did -- vivacious exuberance mixed with tender musicality and intuitive listening made her an unmatched talent.

Judith also shared her talent by playing for the St. Croix Valley Boy Choir for well over a decade (led by her close friend Roger). She saw many of “her boys” grow into adulthood and followed their lives and careers for years to come.

Bloomington Civic Theatre soon came a'calling to play for the production of *Annie*. She cherished her time working with John (Director), Lori and Jeff (Musical Directors) and the talented casts and pit orchestras in 26 consecutive productions.

After returning from their interim ministerial positions, Judith accompanied the Gospellers, a group of singers from different churches in Wisconsin that travelled twice to Germany in a cultural exchange with choirs around the Berlin area. Jennifer and Elena were blessed to be able to hear the final show of their first tour. They then took Judith (who was recovering from Pneumonia!) on a tour of Germany and Salzburg Austria. Judith and Kate continued touring to sing and play to raise funds for local charitable groups.

Judith was a constant support and cheerleader for her family's creative endeavors. She was always in attendance at school and university concerts and plays, and reveled in the time she could spend with Elena (her granddaughter). All the Permann ladies performed in a production of *Godspell* in Tacoma with Rachel playing John the Baptist/Judas, Elena playing a disciple, Jennifer as Musical Director and Judith on piano.

She was a proud member of a coffee group at the Dish and Spoon Café (even though she never drank coffee). They met two or three times a week to chat, laugh, and give each other copious amounts of guff. When the younger members of the Permann clan visited, she would bring them along. There was so much love in the corner of that coffee shop.

She often played songs from yesteryear at the Comforts of Home Retirement Community in River Falls. She loved to chat with the residents and play songs they particularly enjoyed. Judith also enjoyed travel, listening to music -- James Taylor, big band music, and musicals (her favorite being Sweeney Todd) -- and going for drives to look at autumn

leaves or Christmas lights. One of her favorite trips was to Enge, Switzerland – an ancestral home. During the Covid shut-down, she and Rachel would take weekly adventures around the state of Washington to keep the cabin fever at bay. Those were cherished times.

Judith was a mother and surrogate mother to many. She is survived by her husband (Delbert) two daughters (Jennifer and Rachel), her granddaughter (Elena) and foster daughters (Rachael, Lynn, and Jean) and their families. She also welcomed Kassi, Garth, and Jerry as additional members of the family. Her nurturing nature, warm smile, and sense of humor drew people to her. She was a rock and support for countless people in her lifetime – all of whom are better for having known her. Judith was the ultimate pastor's wife – kind and giving with a wicked sense of humor.

To us, her family, she was an angel and will be missed until we are reunited once again. A memorial service will be held at the First Congregational United Church of Christ of River Falls, WI in late spring or early summer 2022 to celebrate her life. Details will be announced on Facebook and through the First Congregational UCC Church of River Falls.