



## Joseph Ransom Rice

October 18, 1922 - December 24, 2023

On December 24, 2023, Dr. Joseph Ransom Rice, age 101, formerly of Aurora, IL, and beloved patriarch of his extended family, died peacefully at Good Samaritan Society in Fairfield Glade, TN. Joe was preceded in death by his loving wife of nearly 60 years, Jean (Greene) Rice, daughter Sarah, son-in-law Ed Shenoo, and granddaughter Kara Weldon. He is survived by seven children: Carol Rosignolo (Bob), Ransom Rice, Craig Rice (Mary Woytek), Cathy Platt (Bob), Mary Shenoo, Karen Weldon (Bob), and Paul Rice (Suzy); 25 grandchildren; and 15 great-grandchildren.

Joe was born on October 18, 1922, to Emma (Johnson) and Dr. Imas Rice, in Aurora, the fourth of their seven children. When Joe was 13 years old, his father, the director of Kane County's Spring Brook Tuberculosis Sanitarium, died unexpectedly from a blood infection, leaving his first-generation Swedish mother to raise a large fatherless family in the midst of the Depression.

Joe attended high school at Marmion Military Academy (where he was fondly nicknamed "Handsome Ransom"). The Army sent him, as an enlistee during World War II, to finish college and Dental School at the University of Illinois. During the Korean War, he enlisted in the Air Force and was a dental surgeon at Chanute Field in Champaign, IL. Except for his Air Force service, Joe had his own dental practice in Aurora from 1947 to 1992, during which he cared for thousands of patients in the Fox Valley, including pro bono services for

many nuns and priests.

In June 1947, the day after finishing his Illinois Dental Board exams, Joe married his high school sweet heart, Jean Greene, and by the 1960's their family included five girls and three boys. Joe and Jean always prioritized faith and family, and sacrificed much to raise and educate their children in the Catholic faith, actively participating at Holy Angels, and at Marmion, Madonna and Rosary high schools, and watching seven of their children graduate from college.

Joe and Jean gave their children the lasting gift of wanderlust, and the curiosity, fun, and love for adventure it fostered. They spent many vacations at lakeside resorts and summer homes in northern Wisconsin, and cherished time on the water in fishing boats and sportier power crafts. Joe also somehow persuaded Jean to try family camping -- probably because motels were too expensive for such a large gang. In a progression of tents, trailers, and finally an RV, they explored from Acadia National Park to Florida, with many fun journeys in between. Their trips invariably began with Jean and Joe waking the kids up at midnight, laying them out like sleeping sardines in the back of a large vehicle, and Joe driving through the night, sleep-deprived, but savoring the welcome silence of the journey.

Joe finally retired at age 70. After a few false starts at relocating, he and his bride -- and his new Lund bass boat -- eventually moved to Leesburg, FL, where the winters were mild and the lakes, though also hosting alligators, were perfect for fishing and for boating with relatives visiting nearby Disney World. However, several years of hot humid summers prompted them to escape to Fairfield Glade, a retirement enclave of small lakes and golf courses in eastern Tennessee.

Like any large family, the Rice family had its share of mishaps, although the

family's luck largely held, in most instances. But Joe and the family also had their share of inescapable sorrow. Their youngest child was afflicted with schizophrenia by age 18, and Joe lost his lovely Jean to lung cancer in 2007. As a centenarian, Joe sadly lost all his siblings, most of his contemporaries, and many extended family members.

Joe was not one to dwell in sadness, however. He made friends easily and, during retirement, his social calendar was often much busier than his children's. At the heart of his social life was his love of music. He learned to play the saxophone in elementary school and was a member of Marmion's marching band. As a teenager, he joined the Musician's Union in order to play jazz with older professionals; and during the summers he earned money playing gigs at Wisconsin resorts. During his hectic days of raising eight children, he generally kept his sax in its case. But in later years, Joe joined musicians of all kinds, amateurs or professionals, retired or working, to make the music he loved. He organized more than one "Joe Rice Foursome" to play at dinner parties, cafes and local events. He was also a member of a 10-piece jazz band and the oldest member of the 70-piece Cumberland County (TN) Concert Band.

Joe lived life the way he played music. He lived a life of faith and love for God and family, just as he had faith in the beauty of music and lifelong love for it. He preferred to play by ear, to improvise, in life and in music. And he had a wonderful ear – surprisingly so, even as his everyday hearing became impaired from a career-long exposure to the whine of a dental drill. Somehow, he could always listen to a tune and immediately play or sing harmony. He didn't insist on playing solos, and was happy collaborating with others. But he could play solo if that's what was called for and, once he got the mic, joyously shared his talent and made the most of his time in the spotlight.

Visitation will be held Saturday, February 10, 2024, at 10:00 A.M., followed by Mass at 11:00 A.M., both at Holy Angels Church in Aurora. Abbot Joel Rippinger, O.S.B., will officiate, with burial in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Memorial services will also be held in Fairfield Glade, TN, at a time and place to be announced later.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Joe's name to Marmion Academy, 1000 Butterfield Road, Aurora, IL 60502; or Rosary High School, 901 N. Edgelawn Drive, Aurora, IL 60506; or St. Francis of Assisi Church, 7503 Peavine Road, Fairfield Glade, TN 38558; or the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 4301 Wilson Blvd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203.

# Cemetery Details

## Mt. Olivet Cemetery

278 Ashland Avenue  
Aurora, IL 60505

# Previous Events

## Memorial Visitation

FEB 10. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Angels Church  
120 South Lancaster Avenue  
Aurora, IL 60506

## Memorial Mass

FEB 10. 11:00 AM (CT)

Holy Angels Church  
120 South Lancaster Avenue  
Aurora, IL 60506

# Tribute Wall



“ Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph Ransom Rice.



February 03, 2024 at 02:34 PM



“ We sang with Joe in the St. Francis choir until he stopped at the age of 95, and we saw him every Sunday at mass until a few weeks before his death. He had a kind word for everybody, and always had a joke or story to tell. He will be missed by the entire St. Francis family.

Gary and Kathy Fitch

Gary Fitch - February 01, 2024 at 12:00 AM



“ Auther Family purchased the Magnificent Life Spray for the family of Joseph Ransom Rice.



Auther Family - January 31, 2024 at 11:07 AM



“ Auther Family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph Ransom Rice.

Auther Family - January 31, 2024 at 11:07 AM

WF

“ *With love from Helen Greene and Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Joseph Ransom Rice.*



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**With love from Helen Greene and Family** - January 30, 2024 at 04:03 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joseph Ransom Rice.*



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January 22, 2024 at 11:39 AM

EL

“ *Joe was an amazing man and beautiful musician. He lived a wonderful full life and he loved his family with all of his heart. His life touched so many beyond his loving family. May you rest in peace and play your lovely music in the heavens.*

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**Ellen** - January 14, 2024 at 09:01 AM

MF

“ *Sending the family my deepest condolences sprinkled with all the glorious Fox/Rice memories! May your memories bring you solace and the sure and certain knowledge of eternal reunion bring you peace.*

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**Mary Catherine Fox** - January 07, 2024 at 02:58 PM

PM

“ *Dr Rice was my dentist from childhood to his retirement and was just wonderful. Sincere condolences to the entire Rice family. .*

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**Patrick & Dianna Murphy** - January 06, 2024 at 04:22 PM

JH

“ *We had the pleasure of knowing Joe from St. Francis and from the CCCB, always a smile and will miss him. John and Ruth Hughes*

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**John Hughes** - January 03, 2024 at 04:11 PM

SC

“ *I was in the Community Band with Joe. Whenever I talked with Joe he gave me the nicest smile! When he had to quit the band, I missed him!*

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**Shirley Creager** - January 03, 2024 at 03:14 PM