



## Gerda R. Whitman

March 21, 1929 - April 18, 2025

ANNANDALE, VA – Gerda Joan Rice Whitman, 96, died peacefully at home surrounded by family on April 18, 2025.

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on March 21, 1929, to Harry and Elizabeth (Braemer) Rice, Gerda grew up in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood and graduated from the Winchester School, class of 1947. She received a bachelor's degree from Vassar College, class of 1951.

Gerda worked for the University of Pittsburgh Press after graduation, putting her attention to detail and skills in English grammar and writing to good use. This lifelong love of language was instilled in her three children even as they grew to adulthood.

In 1963, Gerda married Nelson Whitman, also of Pittsburgh, and a 62-year marriage began with a move to northern Virginia. There they raised three children, first living in Alexandria and then moving to Annandale.

Gerda was active for many years in girl scouting, leading neighborhood troops and serving on the board of the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital Council, where she received numerous awards for service. She was an avid collector of stuffed and collectable bears. Her collection numbers in the thousands.

Visitors to the family home were often taken to meet the bears before meeting the rest of the human family. She was a supporter of the arts and a season ticketholder to ballet and opera at the Kennedy Center, and a longtime member of Beth El Hebrew Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia.

Above all, she was a devoted wife and mother, often volunteering at her children's school activities and often serving as carpooler-in-chief. Family meant everything to her and she was always accepting and supportive of her children and family. Gerda is survived by her husband, Nelson, and three children, Frances (Bill) Ostendorf; Harriet (John) Dunkerley and Bernard (Constantin Mitides) Whitman. She is also survived by four grandchildren: James (Ashley) Ostendorf, Sally (Patrick) Ferrell, Zachary Whitman, Rosella Dunkerley; and five great-grandchildren: Ella, Sophia, Olivia and Noah Ostendorf and Lillian Ferrell. She is also survived by her younger brother, Walter (Bonnie) Rice and along with many nieces, nephews and cousins.

Contributions in her honor may be made to the World Wildlife Fund ([https://protect.worldwildlife.org/page/78674/donate/1?&supporter.questions.821163=Nature&en\\_og\\_source=SearchAd\\_Donation&ea.tracking.id=PaidAd\\_Google\\_Membership&supporter.appealCode=AWE2409OQ20565A07791RX&utm\\_source=googlepaid&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=earth-day&gad\\_source=1&gbraid=0AAAAAD6\\_a0A0y07ziZSdSHYQdbj6BHCLg&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIsovgN-DmjAMV-o\\_uAR1NtjD3EAAYASAAEgISGvD\\_BwE](https://protect.worldwildlife.org/page/78674/donate/1?&supporter.questions.821163=Nature&en_og_source=SearchAd_Donation&ea.tracking.id=PaidAd_Google_Membership&supporter.appealCode=AWE2409OQ20565A07791RX&utm_source=googlepaid&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=earth-day&gad_source=1&gbraid=0AAAAAD6_a0A0y07ziZSdSHYQdbj6BHCLg&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIsovgN-DmjAMV-o_uAR1NtjD3EAAYASAAEgISGvD_BwE)), the National Humane Society (<https://www.nationalhumanesociety.org/donate>) or the Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital ([https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E206259&id=16&utm\\_source=website&utm\\_medium=homepage&utm\\_campaign=evergreen](https://interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/WebLink.aspx?name=E206259&id=16&utm_source=website&utm_medium=homepage&utm_campaign=evergreen)).

A funeral service will be held Monday, April 21, at 11 a.m. at Beth El Hebrew Congregation, 3830 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA. Burial in Pittsburgh at

West View Cemetery. Meet at Ralph Schugar Chapel at 10 a.m. before burial.

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

APR **21**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

Beth El Hebrew Congregation  
3830 Seminary Road  
Alexandria , VA 22304

# Tribute Wall



“ *Jefferson Funeral Chapel created a Tribute Video in memory of Gerda R. Whitman*



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**Jefferson Funeral Chapel** - April 21, 2025 at 09:06 AM

SC

“ *To the wonderful family of a very special lady, Gerda Whitman, I will truly miss.*

*Gerda spoke often over the years of all of you. She was so proud of her family and I feel like I know you all. I am so sorry for your loss.*

*Heaven has a new angel.*

*Sincere condolences ,Sharon Chapman*

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**Sharon Chapman** - April 21, 2025 at 03:54 PM



“*"A butterfly flaps it's wings." I realized today that because of this connection, I would not know my wife or have my daughter.*

*I met Sally in high school in Rhode Island, my native state. Sally's brother was an RA at Pitt, a university I only vaguely knew. I have to imagine James' Seekonk, MA to Pittsburgh, PA connection was not by happenstance. Sally and I visited Pitt in 2007 and I fell in love with the city. In 2012, I met my wife at Pitt. Nine years later, we settled in Canonsburg, PA. In 2023, my daughter was born and I found my purpose in fatherhood.*

*And it all started via the Whitman family connection to Pittsburgh. This path simply would not have been taken without it.*

*It's selfish for me to reflect this way. My heart breaks for your family. But know that prexisely because of Gerda and family, many lives have been impacted to a great extent.*

*From my family to yours, we wish you all nothing but peace. Our thoughts are with you during this tough time.*

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**Sean McFarland** - April 21, 2025 at 07:25 AM

AP

“*Bernard, Harriet, Fran, and the entire family, you have Jen and my deepest sympathies. We are so sad she is gone, but hearten that she lived such a long, full live. Your mom was always so kind to me, and she had a special place in my heart as a fellow Pittsburgh native. You are lucky you had her as a mom. I know she will be missed. All our love, Andy and Jen Panson*

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**Andrew Panson** - April 20, 2025 at 11:45 PM

MB

*Judy and I were heartbroken to hear about Gerda's passing. We had been friends for over 40 years sharing meals trips to California and Las Vegas, and celebrating family events . She will always remain in our hearts. Our sympathies go to Nelson, Harriet, Fran and Bernie*

mort berkowitz - April 21, 2025 at 12:52 AM

SF

*Gerda was a true treasure and a cherished part of our lives for 4 decades The wisdom and smiles shared will remain in our hearts forever. We were honored to be treated as family. Much love, Ann, Glenn, Judith, Rebecca, and Congressbear.*

Siegal family - April 21, 2025 at 07:06 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Gerda R. Whitman.



April 20, 2025 at 01:34 PM