

Munselle Rhodes Funeral Home

Joan Lavell Rice

(May 29, 1937 - March 9, 2015)

Joan LaVelle Rice, 77, of Athena, OR passed away on March 9th, 2015 in Milton-Freewater, OR. she was born in Walla Walla, WA on May 29th, 1937 to Elmer and Virginia (Wilson) VanOcker. Joan started school in Adams, OR before moving with her family to Athena where she attended Athena schools, graduating from McEwen High School in 1955. Between her Junior and Senior year, she was a delegate to Girls State in Salem, OR. where she excelled and was elected Secretary of State. Following graduation, she worked for Pacific Northwest Bell in Portland, OR for a few months before joining her parents in Haines, OR. While living in Haines, she was a life guard and swimming instructor at Radium Hot Springs. On Sept. 9th, 1956 Joan and James Richmond Rice were married at the Episcopal Church of the Redeemer in Pendleton, OR. They lived in Pullman, WA for 2 years before returning to Athena where Jim took over farming the McIntyre farm, belonging to his grand-father. On January 11, 1962, a son, James Kevin Rice, joined the family. Joan enjoyed being a home maker and a stay at home mom. In April 1972, Jim unexpectedly passed away leaving Joan a single mother. In the 1980's Joan was diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa. She eventually lost her eyesight and yet continued to live a fiercely independent life. She was active in several fund raising events for different organizations in the community. Joan had an out-going personality and was willing to help others in need. She was also a member of the WM Booster Club. Swimming and children were two of her passions, which she actively pursued until ill health forced her to stop. Joan loved teaching swimming lessons and entertaining different high school groups and others at her swimming pool. The last few years Joan was especially blessed to have special friends, Trish Crawford and Ann and Mike Countryman helping with her care. Joan is survived by a son, James K. Rice, and 2 grandsons, Clayton and Jacob Rice, all of Alpharetta, Georgia. She is also survived by 2 brothers, Garry (Joan) of Athena, and Steve (Barbara) of Boise, ID and several neices and nephews. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Weston-McEwen High School, 540 E. Main, Athena, OR 97813. A memorial service will be Friday, March 20th at 10:30 AM at Athena Christian Church

[Back](#)

