



Amal Altoma

December 13, 1936 - August 31, 2025

Amal Altoma, a beloved wife and mother, passed away on August 31, 2025, in Bloomington, Indiana, at the age of 88. Amal Altoma's life was marked by her selfless dedication to her family, friends, and community.

Amal was born on December 13, 1936, in Kirkuk, Iraq. She met her soulmate and husband of more than sixty-six years, Salih J. Altoma, while attending college in Baghdad. They married in 1959. In 1960, with a new baby girl in her arms, Amal moved with her beloved husband to Washington, DC, where Salih Altoma served as a Cultural Attaché at the Iraqi Embassy. Later the Altomas moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where Salih taught at Harvard. In 1964, they moved to Bloomington, Indiana – with a second baby girl in Amal's arms. Bloomington was home and cherished for decades.

Amal was a writer and poet in the Arabic language, and she received her B.A. in Arabic and literature at the University of Baghdad in 1958. In 1972 Amal received a Master of Library Science at Indiana University, and shortly thereafter, she started her dream job working at Monroe County Public Library. At the MCPL, Amal contributed over decades in many leadership positions, both in supervising and heading up some of the operations of the library, as well as in serving in numerous associations and community organizations. From the time she moved to Bloomington, Amal discovered the opportunity to tirelessly work to make life better for those around her and to fulfill her librarian mission to promote the joy of reading and exploring information. Amal

would encourage everyone to volunteer to help others, in big ways and small. She always felt it was one of the greatest privileges of life, to be able to serve – as a librarian, teacher, volunteer, friend and member of the community.

Amal lived by a simple motto – do good for others and make the community a better place for all. Her list of volunteering is long, including Area 10 Agency on Aging, Older American Center, Hoosier Hills Food Bank, Red Cross's Book Sales, Salvation Army, United Way, Volunteer in Tutoring Adult Learners, Altrusa International, Meals on Wheels, Jill's House, and Bloomington Animal Care & Control. Much of Amal's volunteer work involved reading and books, sewing, and education and support for children as well as elderly or homebound.

Upon retiring from the public library, Amal did not slow down – she got busier than ever and was happy to have more time for volunteer work. Upon winning a volunteering hero award, Amal said, "They call me a hero, but I am not. Just do what makes me feel good...a selfish addiction." She received numerous awards in recognition of her service to the community.

Amal made friends wherever she went, and she was blessed to have friendships that lasted decades as well as new ones popping up like flowers every year. She and her husband opened their home and hearts to many young families who were newcomers to town and who could use care, home cooked meals, extra babysitting, and guidance around Bloomington.

One friend recently wrote about Amal, "She is a wonderful human being. We have not seen anything from her except for love and kindness." Another friend said, "Amal is the most dedicated and giving person we had the privilege of knowing and were proud to be favorite friends of her."

Amal is lovingly remembered by her devoted husband, Salih J. Altoma; her

cherished daughters, Tiba Walter and Reef Altoma Larsson, and her beloved son-in-law, Tony Larsson.

The funeral has already taken place. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to one of the following in Amal's memory: Bloomington Meals on Wheels, Friends of the Monroe County Public Library, and the Islamic Center of Bloomington.

Cemetery Details

Valhalla Memory Gardens

310 North Johnson Ave.
Bloomington, IN 47401

Tribute Wall

MS

“ Amal and I met in 1970 while studying for a Masters in the School of Library Science, at IU.

It was on drizzly fall day, as I was leaving Campus View House, in a rush to get to my class. From a car in front of the building a hand was wave at me and a voice urged me to get in: "come...come, you come with us, we go

together"! I had never seen her before, in class,or, elsewhere. Salih was driving, and I got to meet him, too.

Her big smile and excitement in "finally meeting with me" was so genuine and warm,

as if she waited for us to meet for many years

We became friends and buddies instantly.

A few days later, early evening, there was a knock on my door.

Amal stood there. " Please don't make dinner. We will be happy for you to come eat with us. I made shrimp curry".

Many dinners and parties followed, which was also very convenient for both our families since we lived in the same building. But my most cherished times were when the two of us had time to ourselves. To share our thoughts, talk about books, our experiences, and expectations of becoming librarians after graduation.

I was employed, first by the IU Library i the Slavic Department; a year later by MCPL in

Circulation, and as a Young Adults Librarian.

Those were very happy and memorable years

for me. Amal also applied to MCPL and waited

her turn to become part of it. Bob Trinkle, who at that time was our Library Director, asked me one day if I knew Amal Altoma, and what I thought about her. Yes, I said. Her dream is to work with people, for people, she is hard working, nothing is too hard for her or a problem she can't deal with.

I think that Mr. Trinkle and MCPL made the best investment, with huge returns when he hired Amal.

Life took our family to Wisconsin; Altomas remained in Bloomington.

We visited each other regularly. I often came to Bloomington in the fall to enjoy fall colors and to be with Amal. We stayed up late,

*talking, laughing and having an occasional cigarette.
I miss her terribly. She was like sister to me, a sister I never had,
and found in her.
I have pictures of us, gifts that she made for me, cards...so much to
remind me of her and to keep her in my heart always.
Dear Salih, Tiba, and Reef my deep sorrow and condolences for the
loss of your beloved
Amal. I know that God's arms opened wide to
receive her.
Lovingly,
Mira Spalatin*

Mira Spalatin - September 18, 2025 at 11:54 PM

RL

Thank you so much for caring and sharing beautiful memories.

Reef Larsson - September 20, 2025 at 06:57 AM

CS

“ I had the privilege of getting to know the Altoma family through Mira, my mother, who became dear friends with Amal while they both lived at the Campus View Apartments in Bloomington. It was through that connection that I became fast friends with Reef, Amal’s youngest daughter.

Amal was one of the warmest, most gracious people I’ve ever met. She welcomed everyone with open arms and a kind heart. Her laughter was unforgettable—full of joy and a touch of impish mischief that made you feel instantly at ease. She was also an incredible cook, and I still remember the delicious Middle Eastern meals she lovingly prepared. Her baba ganoush, in particular, was my absolute favorite.

The bond I’ve shared with the Altoma family has been a gift—enduring through the years, through moves, marriages, and grandchildren. It’s a friendship I deeply cherish.

My heart goes out to Salin, Tiba, and Reef. Please accept my deepest sympathy and healing prayers during this time.

-Christina Spalatin



Christina Spalatin - September 17, 2025 at 10:54 AM

CS

Apologies for misspelling Salih's name.

Christina Spalatin - September 18, 2025 at 08:44 AM

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-Christina Spalatin



Christina Spalatin - September 17, 2025 at 10:25 AM

NS

“ *Amal was wonderful and we adored her. Amal was a favorite supervisor to my husband Jim. Amal will be truly missed. My sincere condolences to the family. Amal, rest in peace beautiful one. Nissy, Jim & Ariya Grace*

Nissy Stetson-Grace - September 05, 2025 at 08:13 PM

RL

Thank you from Amal's family.

Reef Larsson - September 20, 2025 at 06:59 AM

AW

“ *Amal was such a light, such a caring person. It was a privilege to know her!*

Amy Wardlow - September 05, 2025 at 11:45 AM

RL

Thank you so much.

Reef Larsson - September 20, 2025 at 06:58 AM

RP

“ *Salih, Tiba, Reef and family. I wanted to express my sympathy at Amal's passing. Back in 1991, she hired me to work at the Monroe County Public Library, and I was fortunate to have her as my supervisor and colleague for 10 years. She was simply delightful and when she smiled, her eyes would light up and twinkle as well. She would often bring a certain rice dish to any events that were potluck. I asked her how to make it on many occasions, and would get her vague "oh, just this and that." So I was never able to replicate it! I am glad to have had the chance to know her. Sincerely, Reann (Lydick) Poray*

Reann Poray - September 03, 2025 at 10:01 AM

RL

Thank you so much for sharing and caring.

Reef Larsson - September 03, 2025 at 04:24 PM

K.

Amal was a skilled baker and always brought her cakes to book club. Her dedication to the library and Friends of the Library is legendary. She will be missed!

K. - September 12, 2025 at 09:00 AM

CW

I remember Amal for her kindness and hospitality. She lived the best life - she was loved and respected by everybody who knew her, and had positive impacts on so many people. My condolences to Reef, Tiba, and Salih, and all of her extended family members.

Cynthia Werner - September 15, 2025 at 08:35 AM

RL

Thank you for sharing and caring.

Reef Larsson - September 20, 2025 at 06:59 AM