



## Rowena Janell Lankford

September 25, 1939 - September 19, 2021

Rowena J. Lankford passed away on September 19 after a long illness with frontotemporal dementia. She was born in Dugger, Indiana on September 25, 1939 to Lt. Col. John Cummings Sr. (USAF) and Ruth (Young) Cummings. She is survived by her adoring daughters, Kendall Lankford of Solsberry and Kiersten Schiffer (Andrew) of New Hartford, CT; her brother, John Cummings, Jr. of Bloomfield; her four grandchildren that were the light of her life – Lauren Schiffer (Scott Leger) of Miami, FL; Andy Schiffer (Alli Olivieri) of New Hartford; Ben Schiffer of Albany, NY; and Sam Schiffer of New Hartford, CT; and her great-grandson, Finley Rowen Schiffer. She is also survived by two nephews, John Cummings III of Bloomfield and Matthew Cummings (Danielle) of Greencastle along with their children Emma, Ethan, Jazmine, and Sage. She was blessed by many wonderful people in her life including her dearest friends – Chuck Pate and Jeff Wisner, Eric Rensberger, and Suzy Fulkerson and her “group” – Bev Ohneck-Holly, Nancy Vitello, Steve Arnold, Rich Balaban, and Keith Kelly. She is pre-deceased by her parents and husband, Maj. Kenneth E. Lankford (USAF).

To say that Ro lived a life well-lived is an understatement. If you look up *joie de vivre* in the dictionary we wouldn't be surprised if you would see her picture. She was an accomplished artist, cook, and gardener and imagined and created the beautiful oasis in Solsberry where she lived the last forty-one years of her life. As a child of a career Air Force navigator, she moved often (which instilled in her a love of road trips) and never attended the same school

for more than a year. It is probably these sojourns in her early life that cultivated both her love of learning and her love of people.

After graduating high school in Smyrna, Tennessee, she attended Middle Tennessee State University, where her mother was sure she was majoring in playing bridge. In 1960, she married Ken Lankford and began her nearly twenty years as a military wife, continuing to move with her husband (Texas, Florida, and Virginia) until his retirement in the early 1970's.

Ro always had a deep love of animals. After Ken's retirement, Ro packed up her family (including her husband, children, parents, dogs, cats, chickens, fish, and her beloved milk cow, Buttercup) and moved from Virginia to Indiana to become a gentle-woman cattle farmer on more than 100 acres just outside Bloomfield. The family had the farm from 1974 to 1980. When she downsized to her property in Solsberry, she still always had at least one (if not more) of her loving Boxers at her side.

While living in Matthews County Virginia, Ro was one of the first directors of a Head Start program. She continued her art education at Hampton University in the late 1960s. She completed her education degree at Indiana University and taught art at Bloomfield High School for one year before finding her true calling as an individual and family therapist. She obtained her master's in counseling education from Indiana University and worked as a graduate assistant with Dr. Alan Bell at the Kinsey Institute in the early 1980's. After working at community organizations in Bloomington for several years, she opened her own private practice and continued to see clients for over 25 years. Ro loved her clients deeply; her work as a therapist and the bonds she made with the people she counseled brought her great joy and satisfaction. The family would like to thank Allen Funeral Home for overseeing her cremation, Premier Hospice for their support upon her initial diagnosis, and Southern Care Hospice for their care during her final week of life. In addition, her daughters express great gratitude to Carol Duzan for her help especially during these past three years.

A Celebration of Life will be held at a later date, but her daughters now ask

that you share your fondest memories of Ro on her Facebook page: [facebook.com/rowena.lankford](https://facebook.com/rowena.lankford) Ro had always wanted to write a book about her life's philosophy and what guided her as a therapist. Her daughters would love to be able to share with Ro's grandchildren and great grandchildren any memories that would help to continue their mother's legacy. You may also share those by email at [rowenalankford@yahoo.com](mailto:rowenalankford@yahoo.com). If you feel so inclined, memorial contributions can be made to the animal welfare charity of your choosing (Boxer Rescue was dearest to her heart). Finally, Ro loved her birthday, so on this September 25th we ask that you take a moment, raise your glass, and honor her joyous life. Allen Funeral Home and Crematory, 4155 S. Old State Road 37, Bloomington, have been entrusted with arrangements. Online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ *Ro was one of the most important people in my life. I don't even know how to put into words how wonderful she was, and how much she helped people.*

*When I was a teacher, I heard people say that every child needs at least one person who is there for them and believes in them. For me, Ro was one of the people that believed and helped me find my way.*

*Ro was also like a teacher to me and I find myself using the lessons she taught me to help people every day. She had this way of throwing her head back and laughing that brought humor to things. When she met my little son, I remember her kindness and being struck by how easily she connected with him. I miss her so much.*

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**Tamara Eklöf-Parks** - March 13, 2023 at 04:47 PM

SL

“ *Rowena was a wonderful person. She helped me through a difficult time and was a friend.*

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**Steve Lankford** - March 11, 2022 at 07:43 PM

RS

“ I was a professor who helped train Ro for her important work. She was part of a group of students that I was especially fond of, and remain so today. I had no problem referring potential clients to Ro, I knew she would take good care of them. I'm sorry to hear of her passing. She was an inspiration to many.

*R.I.P. dear Ro*

*Rex Stockton*

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**Rex Stockton** - September 27, 2021 at 02:59 PM



“ Ro was my therapist (and my family's therapist) for years in the late 90s and well into the 2000s. She was like a second mom to me, or a big sister. I have so many memories of our sessions--they helped me in ways I can't begin to enumerate. But what I remember most was how much I looked forward to talking with her, and how much we laughed--sometimes even in the midst of my darkest seasons. She once said, "Edie, this is more like a pajama party than a therapy session." She had one of the most liberating laughs on the planet--a great burst of joy that came from her heart. I was so sad to hear of her passing--I never got to say goodbye. But I carry her words, her voice, her laughter and sparkling eyes with me always. A beautiful woman and a force of nature.

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**Edith Sarra** - September 25, 2021 at 05:58 AM

SJ

“*Ro, What a treasure. I was divorced, raising children alone and my life was in chaos.*

*She listened, championed my efforts and gave me the confidence to move forward. Her wisdom and advice changed my life. I wouldn't be where I am today if it were not for her guidance. Rest in peace dear Ro.*

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**Staci Jennings** - September 23, 2021 at 01:25 PM

CS

“*I am so sad to hear of Ro's passing. I was one of Ro's therapy clients. I loved the way she challenged me. I will be forever grateful to her (and her daughter who was her driver) for meeting with me and my ex-husband for a session that took me years to arrange. It was an evening with a predicted large snowfall (they predicted correctly), but I knew that if we didn't meet, I would never get it arranged again. Ro, driven by her daughter who I'm sure had to wait somewhere the entire session, made that appointment. I wanted you to know how important that has been for me. I was stuck. It allowed me to move forward- that one incredible session- it changed my life. Thank you. I never did get my ex to meet again and Ro retired soon afterwards. I never got to say goodbye. I will be forever grateful.*

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**Caren Stoll** - September 21, 2021 at 09:14 PM