



Rosalia Antonio

September 4, 1933 - March 16, 2022

My Grandmother, minha Vó, Rosalia do Nascimento Antonio of Topeka, Kansas, born on September 4, 1933, in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, passed away on March 16, 2022, surrounded by family.

Never one to be caught unprepared, Rosalia purchased her cremation plan way back in 2004. She was an avid reader of the Topeka Capital-Journal for a great many years, and she wanted a published obituary to be the only formal notification to others of her passing and the story of her life. Here is our best effort toward fulfilling those wishes.

Vó was born to Maria Oliveira do Nascimento and Manuel Alexandrino do Nascimento, in Bahia, Brazil, the seventh of nine children; only her youngest brother now survives. Vó emigrated from Brazil to Provo, UT in 1988, three days after the birth of her first granddaughter, and she became a proud naturalized citizen on October 27, 1995. (She was especially proud that Carla Stovall herself officiated at her naturalization ceremony.) Vó dedicated her life to her family, and she learned much of her English from watching TV—The Price is Right was a must-watch, though she simply called it “the Bob Barker show”(and, later, “the Drew show”). I and all my siblings were blessed to have her as our caregiver growing up, and we learned to say “come on down” as one of our first phrases. She also loved soap operas at first—until she found out that, unlike telenovelas in Brazil which last at most one calendar year,

soap operas in the US have in some cases been airing for decades. This meant that she had missed a lot of the story already, so she soon moved on to other programs. Much like my mother, Vó loved the Oprah show; in 2011, when Oprah announced the end of her program, I was put on-task to get tickets through the random lottery system. We were fortunate enough to be able to attend a January 2011 show featuring Rosie O'Donnell as a guest; at the end of filming, as we waited for the audience to filter out, Rosie and later Oprah herself came up to speak to my grandmother; Oprah held her hands while they spoke, and Rosie even left a lipstick mark when she kissed Vó on the cheek! She was, as she would often repeat when she remembered the story, “completely enchanted”—completamente encantada.

Vó was a fervent reader for most of her life, tearing through back issues of Reader's Digest (first in Portuguese, then later in English) and bearing a particular fondness for the Anne of Green Gables series of novels. Her formal education was only up to the 5th grade, having been pulled out of school to help the family earn a living; even so, her lifetime of dedication to reading anything she could get her hands on gave her an education far beyond her grade school level.

An extremely talented cook as well as a lifelong hard-working homemaker, Vó reared several generations of children over the course of her life. She had four children of her own; she is survived by her oldest son, Claudio Antonio, an RN at Midland Hospice House, Leila Roepke, a homemaker in Brazil, and my mother Denise Walsh, a corporate executive for Revlon. Her second child, son Marcio Antonio, passed away in 2018 after a long battle with cancer.

Family meant everything to Vó. After immigrating to the United States as a widow, she immediately took to being a grandmother and took a lead in raising her grandchildren. I was fortunate enough to be one of them. My Vó has had a lasting impact not only on my life, but on the lives of my siblings as

well. My mother gets a real laugh out of retelling a story from when I was an early teen, spitefully yelling at her, “I love Vó more than I love you!”, to which she responded, “Oh, what a relief! I love Vó more than I love you, too. I’m so glad I don’t have to feel guilty about it anymore.” Vó was the rock at the center of our family; a common touchstone and a source of endless stories and memories.

Vó was always a humble and kind beloved family matriarch. She sacrificed a great deal throughout her life in order to give her children the best life possible, a kindness some of them rewarded by laboring to keep her comfortable, happy, and wanting for nothing in her later years. A collective effort was made by my mother, my uncle, myself, and my siblings to ensure that she could remain in her own private home, surrounded by family and friends who could speak her native language and loved her dearly. She never had a single surgery or hospital stay without one of us gladly being with her 24/7; very large portions of several of my semesters at college were spent eating, sleeping, and basically living in the hospital with her after a bad fall and some major operations. I remember turning in math homework by photographing my notebook and emailing the photos to my professor, since I didn’t have access to a scanner for the entire term. Vó did so much for us over the years that anything was worth enduring if it meant we could be there for her when she needed it.

Throughout her life, Vó showed her love for family and friends by giving what she could of herself. She was very talented not only as a cook, but also as a seamstress. She could recreate an outfit from scratch with nothing more to reference than a single photograph. Back when I wore dresses as a child, most of them were handmade by my Vó. She could also knit, having produced sweaters, beanies, and even full-blown knit dresses for my mother over the years. These durable goods will remain with us forever, but something equally

irreplaceable was the food she always loved to cook. Even after she was no longer physically able to cook on her own, her handwritten recipes continue to be made by her children and grandchildren, and she still enjoyed sometimes taking a ringside seat in the kitchen to helpfully participate in the process. (“How much salt should I add?” “Oh, you know: just enough.”) Her grandchildren share fond memories of coming home from school to the chugga-chugga steam train sound of a pressure pot on the stove and the scent of spices in the air, knowing that rice and beans would be ready for dinner very soon. She could cook to serve two just as easily as to serve twenty, and even family duplications of her recipes never exactly mimic the touch that only she could provide. For Vó to compliment your cooking was high praise, indeed.

Vó harbored a love for flowers in general, but roses in particular were her favorite; her nickname, Rosa, is the word for a rose in Portuguese. A plot of red roses she planted and cultivated in the late nineties was successfully transported with her to two successive residences, and that same strain remains alive even today, still decorating the front of her home. She received several neighborhood “Pride Awards” over the years for the floral spread in front of our homes, a fact that always made her proud.

Rosalia was preceded in death by her late husband, Geraldo Antonio, who passed away prematurely in 1980. She is survived by one brother, three children, ten grandchildren, and one great-grandson. Following Rosalia’s wishes, there will be no memorial service, and her ashes will be divided amongst her loved ones.

Those wishing to make a memorial contribution in her memory are asked to make a monetary donation to the “Parks for All Foundation” to go toward a memorial bench in the Reinisch Rose Garden at Gage Park in Topeka, in honor of her lifelong love of roses. Donations can be made by accessing this

link: <https://square.link/u/HNiEwByf>.

Condolences may be sent online to www.kevinbrennanfamily.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *Rosalia Antonio*

January 28, 2023 at 12:08 PM



“ *Denise and Family,
Beautiful tribute to your mom.. I feel like I've known her..
Your mom will live on in your heart..*

My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.

Diana Nardello - March 28, 2022 at 11:59 AM



“ *I have never had the honor to actually meet your grandmother, but I am moved by your tribute to her and to her intense love for all of her family, friends, and even the United States. Many blessings on your family and RIP beloved Rosalia.*

Sally Klumpe - March 27, 2022 at 03:09 PM



“ *What a beautiful life she had and how loved she was! Beautiful tribute for a so special person. She will always be with each one of you, not only in your hearts and memories but as part of who you are. My condolences and love. E um abraço apertado. Sara*



Sara Santos - March 25, 2022 at 09:56 PM