



# Dagmar Renate "Reni" Henney

MAY 6, 1931 - SEP 16, 2023



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# Dagmar Renate "Reni" Henney

MAY 6, 1931 - SEP 16, 2023

**D**agmar Renate "Reni" Henney, 92, died on September 16, 2023, at Beebe Hospital in Lewes, DE after a difficult struggle with cancer. Born on May 6, 1931, in the Spandau section of Berlin, Germany, she was the daughter of the late Georg Albert and Margot Henriette "Hanna" (Philipp) Kirchner.

Dagmar's father was Catholic and her mother was Jewish, which made her a target of the Nazi regime. Her mother was murdered in Auschwitz in 1944.

Dagmar and her father, a scientist, went on the run; first from the Nazis and later from the invading Russian army. As a scientist, he was sought after for his involvement in the German rocket program.

As a child of Jewish descent, Dagmar was not allowed to enroll in a formal school during the war years. Her father taught her chess and mathematics at home, and at age 10, Dagmar gained admission to the Abitur High School in Hamburg, Germany, from which she would later graduate.

She frequently shared fond memories of her summers with her grandparents in Hamburg near the sea which is what ultimately drew her to Rehoboth Beach, where she purchased her own summer beach cottage in 1978. She had been a regular summer resident in Rehoboth Beach ever since while teaching in Washington, D.C., where she remained a Washingtonian for more than 65 years.

Dagmar arrived in the United States in 1951 in pursuit of a better life and a college degree at age 21. She enrolled at the University of Miami where she continued to study mathematics, taking classes in nuclear physics and advanced calculus.

At the age of 24, Dagmar graduated from the University of Miami with a bachelor of science degree majoring in physics and minoring in mathematics and chemistry. She later earned a



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master of science degree in pure mathematics. It was during her freshman year in college that she met her future -- and only -- husband, Alan G. Henney, in a nuclear physics class.

After graduating from the University of Miami, Dagmar and her husband moved to Takoma Park, MD where they raised their only child, Alan, Jr.

She began working on her doctorate at the University of Maryland in College Park. In 1965, she became the first woman to earn her doctorate in pure mathematics in the history of the University of Maryland.

She became a tenured college mathematics professor at College Park and later accepted a position at the George Washington University where she taught classes in calculus, finite mathematics, and measure and integration. She also served as an adviser to the university's chapters of Pi Mu Epsilon, Sigma Xi, and Phi Beta Kappa.

Dagmar's accomplishments have made her the recipient of several distinguished honors, ranging from her membership in Phi Beta Kappa to her distinction as a member of both Who's Who of American Women and The World's Who's Who. Dagmar was the first female student to receive a scholarship to the University of Miami from B'nai B'rith and was also admitted into the National Association of Science Writers.

Dagmar lived the American dream and serves as a role model to other children -- especially girls -- who have had their childhoods stolen from them. She exemplifies that through perseverance, dedication, and hard work anybody with the right motivation can become an accomplished, successful, and productive member of society.

In addition to her parents, Dagmar was preceded in death by her husband, Alan G. Henney, Sr. She is survived by her son, Alan Gilbert Henney, Jr., who has been the pride and joy of her life.

Services will be held privately.

Please sign the virtual guestbook located on the tribute page.



## Tribute Wall

**Dagmar Renate "Reni" Henney**

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DV

**Dresia Vaughn** posted:

Alan often spoke of his mom. Even though I never met her in person just from his stories she was such a beautiful soul and inspiration in his life and I hope Alan will write a book because this is worth writing a book her story of how she was able to better her life after fleeing from an evil life that she was not deserving of what a powerful story this woman has and just to read what I read we have to consider ourselves blessed because not everyone have it easy in this world especially running for your life and she conquered that and made something of herself. I pray that in the difficult mins hours days weeks months years, a peace will surround Alan and see him through this rough period. God bless you Alan for your genuine sincere humble loving loyalty to your dear mother.

November 9 at 5:26 PM

DC

**Dave Carter** posted:

Alan, To know your mom 30 plus years was one of the greatest joys in my life!!!! She will be truly missed I consider you two my family and she will be forever in my memories and heart. Dave Carter

October 3 at 5:30 AM

MK

**Mark Keefer** posted:

I'm very sorry for your loss Alan. I know this is a very difficult time. What an incredible & impressive life your Mom lived.

October 2 at 7:23 PM

JW

**John Wicker** October 25 at 11:50 AM

Alan, I first met your Mother and you in January 1971 in her complex variable class at GWU. You were a toddler then and I fondly remember her holding you in her arms. You and I stared at each other intently for about a minute. Best of luck to you

GC

**Gordon Creed** posted:

Dr. Henney was my calculus professor at George Washington University and was one of the best instructors to share her knowledge with students who knew little like me. She will be missed by many for her charm, wit and grace. Gordon Sutherland Creed, Esq.

October 2 at 1:33 PM



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CP

**Christina Pompa** posted:

Hi Alan, Your mother sounded like an extraordinary human being. As an only child that just lost my second parent a couple of months ago, I send you deep sympathy on the passing of your mother. It is a difficult emotional journey from here on out, but you were very lucky to have her into her 90s. Please take care of yourself.

October 2 at 12:56 PM

RP

**Rick Perry** posted:

My sincere condolences, Alan, on the passing of your mother. I always marveled at her tenacity and dedication to be knowledgeable about our local community and, especially, local elections. Now, more fully knowing her background, it all makes sense. You were blessed to have each other.

October 2 at 9:24 AM

BB

**Ben & Bill** posted:

Condolences to you, Alan. What a storied life of tragedy, triumph and accomplishment. We now reside in what was our winter home in Fort Lauderdale, FL. Our first home in Rehoboth Beach was 42 Delaware Avenue. We first met Dagmar, her husband Alan and son, Alan in 1981 as our neighbors. Dagmar was very good to us, even providing us vehicle parking when we needed it. We later sold 42 and purchased 54 Delaware Avenue in 1998, then sold in 2018. Consequently, we knew Dagmar for many years. She was so sweet and kind to us over the many years we lived in Rehoboth Beach. We have fond memories of Dagmar. Earthly time ends, eternal time begins. Memories will sustain us. Ben and Bill'm FreeDon't grieve for me, for now, I'm free!m following the path God laid for meI took His hand when I heard him callI turned my back and left it all.I could not stay another dayTo laugh, to love, to work or play.Tasks left undone must stay that way.I found that place at the close of day.If my parting has left a voidThen fill it with remembered joy.A friendship shared, a laugh, a kiss.Ah yes, these things, I too, will miss.Be not burdened with times of sorrow.I wish you the sunshine of tomorrow.My life's been full, I savored much.Good friends, good times, a loved one's touch.Perhaps my time seemed all too brief,Don't lengthen it now with undue grief.Lift up your heart and share with meGod wanted me now, He set me free.

October 2 at 8:59 AM

HH

**Hilde Horvath** posted:

I'm so sorry, Alan. I loved and admired your mother very much.

October 2 at 6:18 AM



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DR

**Drexel** posted:

Alan, I am SO sorry to learn of the passing of your beloved Mom. The relationship you both shared is a most special one, she was blessed to have you, you were blessed to have each other. She will continue to walk with you. Drexel

October 2 at 5:44 AM

LF

**Liz Ferry** December 21 at 1:41 AM

Just now seeing this notice about your Mom, Alan. I so enjoyed her and your visits to the Library and request for mysteries without "too much violence or sex". Also, it was so nice of your two to offer the beach house to me and my partner for a much-needed wknd getaway. She was a remarkable woman and I miss her. I hope you are doing well, Alan. Take care. Liz Ferry

PD

**Peggy Douglas** October 2 at 6:22 AM

Alan, My sincerest condolences to you. Your Mother was a very, very impressive person. I was intrigued by her obituary write-up and wish I had known her. You were blessed to have her as your loving Mother, and I know this is a huge loss for you. Fondly, Peggy Douglas

GS

**Guillermo Silveira** posted:

Lady of ScienceTo Dagmar Henney(May 6, 1931 - September 16, 2023)Lady of science, excellent chess player and art lover, memorable vernissage's talks on music, history or art, always left us admiring her fervent passion, knowledge, cleverness and kindnessfeeling really grateful to be her friend.We also shared the love for good food, the sea, or many wonderful friends, happily chatting several hours about philosophy, performances, etymology, classical literature, clothing or news;our encounters were always joyful, even when odd circumstances framed our lives in perplexing sadly situations.Sharing her tenacious temperament advising tenderly with a soft voice to keep a promise, not only because it's an eternal secret, but for the sake of its infinite exponential blessings,Dagmar offered the best of herself.Thanks so much dear Doctor Henney for your gifts an honorable friendship.Guillermo Silveira

September 23 at 2:10 PM



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PN

**Pam Nestor** posted:

Dear Alan, We are SO sorry! Reni is certainly the most remarkable woman I have ever known! She was such an inspiration and example of humility in spite of her brilliance ( and she was gorgeous too!). She was devoted to you, to her friends and ever appreciating cultural events of every variety. She expressed her love so generously! Bob Merritt loved and admired her deeply too - especially their long conversations - until his own declining health prevented those to continue. Alan, you inherited all of these wonderful talents and sensitivities from both Reni and your very beloved Dad! You have established a strong, valiant reputation in D.C. and we are all so very proud of you! Please know you are in our prayers. We hope to see you soon. Much love, Pam & Bob Nestor...and our family

September 22 at 7:24 AM

MB

**Michele Bond** posted:

Dear Alan, My family and I send our love and deep sympathy as you mourn the loss of your wonderful mother. I remember the family celebration (at my grandmother's house on Cathedral Avenue) when your mother earned her Ph.D. There was a throng of aunts, uncles and cousins. I was 11 years old and have never lost my admiration for her extraordinary achievements. I remember my mother and grandmother describing the dangers and challenges she overcame as a girl, and the history-making sensation of her being the first woman to earn a doctorate in mathematics at the University of Maryland. "She will ALWAYS be the first one," my mother emphasized. I also remember her gentle, kind presence, talking to me with serious interest about my friends and schoolwork. She and Alan were warm and loving, always, when I saw them at family gatherings through the years. I also remember their joy when you were born, Alan, and their pride in your every step along the way. Nothing in their lives gave them more happiness than being your parents. I hope your memories of your mother, and the knowledge that you did everything possible to care for her during her final years, will bring real comfort now, as you grieve for her. I know my loving memories of her are typical of the impression she made on her students, colleagues, friends and family throughout her long, generous and brave life. With deep sympathy, Michele

September 22 at 3:14 AM



# Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Dagmar by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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