



# Celia A. DeLawter

FEB 13, 1942 - MAY 11, 2025



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## **Celia A. DeLawter**

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**C**elia DeLawter, 83, of Bridgeville, Delaware, passed away on May 11, 2025, from complications of lung disease.

Born in Kensington, Maryland, Celia grew up with a strong sense of values, a sharp wit, and a tell-it-like-it-is personality that never left anyone guessing what she thought. She loved deeply, cared fiercely, and built a life that was both grounded in hard work and filled with family, friendship, and an appreciation for the simple things in life.

In 1960, a milestone year, Celia graduated from Wheaton High School, married the love of her life, Frank DeLawter, and began what would become a remarkable 41-year career with the Division of Biologics Standards, then part of the National Institutes of Health. Over the years, as the organization evolved into today's FDA Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, Celia rose from secretary to project manager. She found her work meaningful, formed deep bonds with colleagues, and treasured her role supporting leaders like Drs. Paul Parkman and Harry Meyer in the development of the first Rubella vaccine—an achievement that has saved countless children's lives and helped eradicate a devastating disease.

After renting for many years, Celia and Frank bought their first home in Rockville, Maryland, where they became beloved neighbors, known for hosting lively holiday parties that drew the entire block together. After retirement, they embraced the open spaces of Bridgeville, Delaware, and carried on their traditions of gathering friends and neighbors around their table, their backyard, and, on Halloween, their garage—where the kids got candy and the grown-ups got wine and cheese.

Never one to sit idle, Celia poured her energy into gardening, sharing bundles of tomatoes, cucumbers, and herbs with anyone who stopped by. She also delighted in collecting pottery, building a stunning collection of “usable art” and a cherished friendship with a local artisan.



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But above all, Celia's heart belonged to her cats. A proud "cat-lady," she welcomed every stray that "found her," giving them food, love, and, when needed, a cozy outdoor shelter that provided comfort and security. She never turned away a creature in need.

In her later years, Celia was deeply grateful for the love and support of her close friends and neighbors. In addition to her family, they accompanied her to medical appointments, ran errands, lent a hand around the house, and, most importantly, offered encouragement and companionship through difficult times. Their kindness and steadfast presence brought her comfort, dignity, and joy, and her family will forever hold these friends in their hearts with gratitude.

Celia was predeceased by her parents, Louis and Hazel Sterling and her husband of 57 years, Frank DeLawter. She is survived by her daughter, Amy Solliday; her brother, Wayne Sterling and his wife, Phyllis; several cousins, nieces, and nephews; and many dear friends who were, in truth, part of her chosen family.

To those who knew her, Celia was steadfast, loyal, and unfiltered. She told the truth, stood by her convictions, and showed her love not with frills but through action—whether it was a home-cooked meal, a listening ear, or a tomato from her garden. Her absence will leave an unmistakable void, but her values and spirit live on in those she touched.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations in Celia's memory to the Furball Farm Cat Sanctuary, The Humane Society (or a local animal shelter of your choice), or the Tunnel Cancer Center in Delaware.

Furball Farm Cat Sanctuary (Faribault, MN)

A sanctuary dedicated to providing safe, cage-free refuge and low-cost spay/neuter services for feral cats.

Website: <https://furballfarmcatsanctuary.com>

Humane Society (National, USA)

A well-known national organization dedicated to preventing animal cruelty and promoting animal welfare.

Donation page: <https://humaneworld.org/donate>



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Tunnell Cancer Center (Rehoboth Beach, DE)

A trusted local facility providing compassionate, comprehensive cancer care through Beebe Healthcare.

Donation page: <https://www.beebehealthcare.org/beebe-medical-foundation/donate>



# Memories only last if you share them

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



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