



## Dr. Rita Atwood

April 23, 1949 - April 1, 2019

Dr. Rita Atwood passed away on Monday, April 1, 2019. She was 69 years old when she succumbed to COPD. Dr. Atwood was a retired Fresno State Professor of Media, Communications and Journalism, whose teaching abilities and course development impacted countless students and media professionals.

A 1967 graduate of Turlock High School, Ms. Atwood studied as an undergraduate at Fresno State and earned her bachelor's degree in speech communications in 1972. She accompanied her husband in the Peace Corps to Venezuela for two years before returning to Fresno State to earn her master's degree with distinction in Mass Communication and Journalism in 1977. She went on to receive her doctorate from the Department of Communication at the University of Washington in 1980.

Dr. Atwood's professional teaching career began in the 1980s at the University of Texas at Austin. She joined Fresno State as an associate professor of Mass Communication and Journalism in 1987 and was promoted to a full-time professor in 1988. She was instrumental in merging the Telecommunications and the Journalism Departments to create what is now known as the Department of Media, Communications and Journalism. Her contributions to Fresno State include the creation of Mass Communication and Journalism courses that helped ensure the future of the department. In

particular, she encouraged women to participate in journalism and the media. Fluent in Spanish, her special area of interest was Central and South America, where she lectured and worked for human rights. She often spoke of her lunch dates spent with her friend M.C. Drake and friendly differences of opinion with conservative writer Victor Davis Hanson.

Atwood's fondest memories were being in the classroom with students and encouraging them to be enthusiastic about questioning their media environment. Her main goals were to help students become more critical consumers of media, encouraging them to question the truth and honesty portrayed by various forms of mass media.

Rita traveled to France, as well as Central and South America to lecture and once she hiked to Machu Picchu. Her biggest project was designing and building her home in 1988 on a beautiful piece of land in Prather, CA.

Rita taught until 2007, when she was forced to retire due to health reasons. Rita shared her home with her elderly mother and they both took care of each other until her mother's death in 2010. Like her mother, Rita was very giving and kind with a heart of gold and had many friends in life. A role model for her students, an author and lecturer, and staunch supporter of right and wrong, she cannot be replaced, but hopefully others will carry on her goals and accomplishments.

Rita Atwood was born in Kingsburg, California to Guy Atwood and Mary Evelyn (Addington) Atwood on April 23, 1949. She was preceded in death by her father, mother, and younger brother, Bill, and half- brothers, Gary and Jerry Bingel. She is survived by her former husband, Randy Johnson of Turlock, two older brothers Dr. John Atwood of Roanoke, Texas, and Guy Davis Atwood (Diane) of Pleasant Hill, California, and their children; along with many cousins, nieces and nephews.

Rita loved all animals, but in particular cats. Last year, she kept five kittens in her bathroom for seven weeks, had them spayed and/or neutered and found homes for them. Rita's wish was that any donations in her memory may be made to Cats by the Tracks at <https://www.adoptapet.com/catsbythetracks/>.

A celebration of Rita's life will be held graveside at 11:00 AM on June 1 followed by a reception for all her friends and family at Turlock Funeral Home, 425 N. Soderquist Rd., Turlock. Please RSVP at 559-288-4307.

# Cemetery Details

## Turlock Memorial Park

575 N. Soderquist Rd.  
Turlock, CA 95380  
(209) 632-9111  
<http://turlockmemorialpark.com>

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

JUN 1. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Memorial Park  
575 N Soderquist Rd  
Turlock, CA 95380-3749  
(209) 632-9111

## Reception to Follow

JUN 1. 12:00 PM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Turlock Funeral Home  
425 North Soderquist Road  
Turlock, CA 95381  
(209) 632-9111  
<https://turlockfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Rita Atwood*

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *Fairest of All was purchased for the family of Dr. Rita Atwood.*



May 30, 2019 at 07:08 PM



“ *I remember sharing speech classes and speech tournaments with Rita during high school. She was fun, kind and competitive with a happy smile.*

*I am happy she had such a fulfilling life and career.*

*My sympathy to the family.*

*Joyce Doo Teekell*

**Joyce Teekell** - May 18, 2019 at 04:00 PM



“ *I'm so sadden to hear this . Ran around with Rita growing up. What a wonderful person and friend . My son had her as a teacher at Freson State ( 89\_94) it was nice to reconnect then with her. My thoughts and prayers go out to family.*

**Marcia Fowler** - May 16, 2019 at 06:00 PM

TO

*Rita was one of my best friends and I'm really going to miss our evening conversations. She was absolutely the most stubborn person I have ever met! Just a few months before she passed she was determined to spay and care for more cats, ordering all of us to participate like a general! Rita you will be missed by all of us and I am proud to have been your friend.*

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**Toni Olson** - May 23, 2019 at 05:54 PM