



Arita Petty

January 6, 1931 - January 10, 2025

Arita Mary Visconti was born on January 6, 1931, in Detroit, Michigan, to Anthony Joseph Visconti and Phyllis Lupo. The third of five children she had two older brothers, Peter and Joseph, a younger sister, Nancy, and a baby brother, Phillip, born much later when Arita was 19, and after the birth of her first child. While her parents were both born in Michigan, all four of her grandparents immigrated from Italy. Her grandpa Peter (Pietro) had a vegetable cart pulled by a horse in Detroit and she told stories about riding around with him and hearing him call out things like, “No bananas today!” with his strong Italian accent. Grandpa Peter was insistent that the family speak English. When her Grandma Maria Arita would speak Italian, he would wave his hand at her and say, “No, you speak English—we live in the United States of America. AND you learn the constitution!” Arita had fond memories of her Grandma Mary’s cooking, telling stories about her rolling pasta on wires and drying it in baskets. After living in the basement of her grandparents’ house, Arita’s “daddy and mama” eventually built a tar paper house, using a blanket to divide the room, later building onto it to make a bigger home. Arita and her siblings would walk the railroad tracks to find dropped coal for heating the house. After an accident while ice fishing, her father suffered from arthritis and the family moved to Tucson, Arizona, in 1944, to both avoid the cold Michigan weather and get out of the city.

Like her mother, Arita was a lively beauty. When she was in her teens, she

was seen by a Hollywood scout who told her daddy they wanted her to do a screen test—he told them to take a hike. Concerned that her staunch Catholic daddy might lock her up or send her to a convent as he threatened to his free-spirited eldest daughter, in 1947 (at the age of 16), Arita eloped with Kenneth Joe Acton to North Bend, Washington. Kenneth had a nomad's heart, moving her and the family they had together nearly 30 times across Washington, Arizona, California, Alaska, and Montana. Together they had three sons—Randolph Joe in 1949, Mark Ken in 1955, and Dan Philip in 1958—and many adventures. Arita's grandchildren loved to hear the story of a time when she and Ken were hunting, and Arita turned at a noise to see a black bear heading right towards her. She hesitated to shoot and scare off any deer but, as the resulting 1960 newspaper article stated, "...the bear kept coming, and she downed the beast with one shot."

Arita went to school, working hard to get her beautician's license at the age of 32. She absolutely loved her job, as she said, "coloring old ladies' hair" and chatting with clients. She took pride in looking her best and always had her hair done, her natural ringlet often held back with a clip or bow. In her later years, she was tickled when anyone would tell her she looked much younger than her age.

Arita's grandchildren will remember her as a spry grandma who was always up for anything, whether it was cooking and baking or four-wheeler rides and paddle boating. Her culinary treats were beloved: cannoli, pizzelles, tamales, baklava, chocolate rice pudding, and lasagna.

Her artistic talent was immense and she loved to paint, especially landscapes and animals, and was extremely creative. In one painting of the Grand Canyon, an old train steams its way out of a tunnel. She would point to it and proclaim, "You know, there's no train in the Grand Canyon—I put that there!" Her paintings will be treasured by her family for generations. Throughout her life, she quilted crocheted doilies, and decorated cakes. In her final years, she

took up coloring, using up her colored pencils until she could no longer grip them, at which point she stored her “fallen soldiers” in a tin. She loved music, learning to play the piano, organ, and accordion, and found peace in listening to her favorite artists, like Jim Reeves.

Arita had a lifelong love for animals, with a particular fondness for her horses and many dogs, whose companionship brought her immense joy. Arita took a keen interest in life, and you always knew she loved and appreciated you. When a family member visited, she would often take their hands, look into their eyes, and say, “Oh, honey, I love you so much.”

After more than twenty years, Arita and Ken ended their marriage. Arita then married Everett “Slick” Petty in 1973 and together they had a home in Arizona for nearly 30 years. Slick adored Arita and encouraged anything he thought might make her happy. Like Arita, he valued family and ensured everyone stayed connected through phone calls and visits. Eleven years her senior and with deteriorating health, 2002 he left the southwest where he’d spent his entire life and bought a home with Arita in Wenatchee, Washington, so she would be settled near her children when he was gone. After his passing, she lived independently for 18 years in the home they had shared, her dog Katie, and then Rosebud, her constant companions.

In 2023, she made her final move to Mountain Meadows Senior Living in Leavenworth, WA. Our family would like to express deep gratitude to the incredible staff and caretakers there. The kindness shown in her day-to-day and end-of-life care brought comfort and security to not just her, but to her loved ones.

Throughout her life, Arita’s faith was a cornerstone of her character. She often spoke of her love of Jesus and to her last moments wore the cross gifted to her at her first communion. Whether as a Catholic, a Baptist, or a member of

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, she remained steadfast in her devotion to God.

Arita witnessed an era of profound transformation. Born the year “The Star-Spangled Banner” was adopted as the national anthem, she grew up during the Great Depression and World War II, experiencing the resilience and sacrifices of those times firsthand. Over the years, she saw the world reshaped by the establishment of the United Nations, the Civil Rights Movement, and the Cold War. Technological advancements transformed daily life as electricity and household appliances became widespread, space exploration put humans on the moon, and the digital revolution introduced computers, mobile phones, and the Internet. From the rise of television to the evolution of air travel, her lifetime spanned a century of innovation, cultural shifts, and historic milestones that forever changed the world. She was fascinated by new inventions, especially kitchen gadgets and electronics.

Arita passed away on January 10, 2025, in Leavenworth, WA, four days after her 94th birthday. She is now reunited with those who went before her, including her beloved husband, Everett “Slick” Petty, whose memory she held dear for nearly twenty years. She joins her grandparents, parents, and brothers—whose love and influence shaped the woman she became—her stepdaughter, Darlene, and her great-granddaughter, Natalya, both gone too soon. We take comfort in knowing they are together again.

Arita’s legacy lives on. She is survived by her dear sister, Nancy, and the sons she adored: Randy and his wife, Linda; Mark and his wife, Nicole; and Dan and his wife, Lorna. She is also survived by 13 grandchildren, 43 great-grandchildren, and 13 great-great-grandchildren with three more great- and great-great-grandchildren already joyously awaited.

Arita took immense pride in her family and her presence will continue to be felt through the generations she nurtured and inspired.

Arrangements made by Chapel of the Valley, East Wenatchee.

Tribute Wall

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Lorna Acton - January 24, 2025 at 08:17 PM

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Lorna Acton - January 24, 2025 at 08:12 PM

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