



## Mrs. Norma T. Riley

December 3, 1926 - March 1, 2023

Norma T. Riley, long time resident of Cortland, passed away peacefully on March 1st at the age of 96 after a brief stay at Matthew House Hospice. Norma was well known to many in Cortland as a physical education teacher and coach, as well as from her membership in numerous clubs, organizations, professional associations and local politics.

Originally from Binghamton, NY, Norma came to Cortland to attend Cortland College, graduating in 1948. It was while a student there that she met Cortland native, Joseph K Riley. They married in 1952 and were blessed with 52 happy years together. She began her teaching career in Endicott, but after one year came back to Cortland. She taught in the Cortland City Schools from 1949 until her retirement in 1991. A ground breaker in her career, she began teaching girl's physical education in an era when there was virtually no girl's or women's sports. After receiving her master's degree, Norma went on to earn several additional degrees and certificates. She was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the development of a robust women's athletics program at Cortland Junior and Senior High Schools. In 1979 she was appointed Athletics Department head. Though she was a natural educator and loved teaching, her passion was coaching, at which she excelled. She was an advocate well into her senior years for encouraging all of us to participate in "life time sports" in order to enhance physical fitness regardless of age.

Her commitment to service was evident in her membership in many civic and community organizations. Norma served as Cortland City Clerk from 1976 through 1980. She was an active member and one time president of the Woman's Democratic Club as well as a member of the Cortland Zoning Board, the Department of Public Works and Sewer Board. Among the many professional educational organizations in which she was affiliated, Norma held the office of president of Phi Delta Kappa from 1983 to 1986 and was Society Secretary of Delta Kappa Gama. She was President of the SUNY Cortland Alumni Association in 1969 and 1972. She was a member of the Catholic Daughters for more than 65 years.

Norma, an avid golfer, was a member of the Cortland Country Club for many years and active in their ladies golf league into her 90's. She enjoyed tennis, and loved to play bridge. Throughout her life she enjoyed needle crafts especially knitting, fine crocheting, and sewing. Her love of reading was evident in that she was usually involved in 2-3 books at a time.

Norma made the choice to give up the home she had lived in since 1958 and moved to the Elizabeth Brewster House in Homer, NY for the last 4 years of her life. Though deeply involved in civic and professional activities, she was most proud of her role as wife, mother and grandmother. Her greatest accomplishment was her family.

Norma was predeceased by her husband Joseph K Riley in 2004 and by her son Tod Riley in 2021. She is survived by her sister Ellen Callaghan of Endicott as well as her two daughters, Gene Hall (Walter) and Christine Drance (Gregory); 5 grandchildren, Caitlin Strassburger (Richard), Peter Drance (Elizabeth), Colin Drance, Amy Hall and Angela Hall; and 2 great grandchildren, Pearl Strassburger and Riley Drance; and many nieces, nephews, and close friends.

Calling hours will be at Riccardi Funeral Home, 69 N Main Street Cortland on Wednesday, March 8 from 5-7 PM. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church on Thursday at 11 AM. The Christian Rite of Committal will follow in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to: Matthew House, Inc. 43 Metcalf Dr. Auburn NY 13021, who provided peaceful and tender care to Norma in her last days, The Elizabeth Brewster House 41 N Main St. Homer, NY which was her chosen home for the last 4 years, or to St. Mary's Church 59 N. Main St. Cortland, NY which nurtured her faith throughout her adult life.

[www.riccardifuneralhome.com](http://www.riccardifuneralhome.com)

# Cemetery Details

## St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery

4101 West Rd  
Cortland, NY 13045

## Events

**Details are pending.**

# Tribute Wall

JE

“ Jessica lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Norma T. Riley



Jessica - March 09, 2023 at 12:06 PM

SC

“ I really loved her. I had no idea she was the head of the Department. I graduated in 1988, I wasn't an athlete, I hung out in the Art department, her office was right next door. I would hang out in the hall way skipping class or just going to draw or paint in Mrs. Lanes classroom. Mrs. Riley would let me sit in her office, sometimes we would just talk, she showed me how to repair my stocking when they had a hole in them. We would talk almost everyday, I once asked her what she did in the school and I remembered her telling me that she was Mr. Mason's secretary, I now, after 35 years, get her joke. She was a wonderful and beautiful woman. Stephanie (Stevens)

stephanie cain - March 07, 2023 at 09:37 PM

DE

“ I had Mrs. Riley as my Physical Education Teacher. She was a caring and wonderful person. Years later I had the opportunity to see her on the golf course. My family sends our condolences!



Diane Ellsworth - March 07, 2023 at 04:34 PM

LM

“ We were Blessed to have the opportunity and example of Joe and Norma in our family and Faith at St Mary's Cortland. Thank you for your inspiration and example in our Family Life !!

Lucy&Jim Murphy - March 06, 2023 at 08:33 PM

K(

“ Karen Williams (Jones) lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Norma T. Riley



Karen Williams (Jones) - March 06, 2023 at 02:20 PM

SG

“ Scott Goodrich lit a candle in memory of Mrs. Norma T. Riley



Scott Goodrich - March 06, 2023 at 10:18 AM

MD

“ I will always remember Norma as an elegant and soft spoken lady who shared her life with all those she had contact with. She certainly enjoyed a very full & productive life, sharing her knowledge and talents with many. RIP !!!

Mike Dexter - March 06, 2023 at 09:53 AM

LU

Absolutely !

Lucy - March 06, 2023 at 08:33 PM

DH

I will always remember the Thanksgivings Day dinners and how gracious and kind Norma was.

Dave Healey - March 07, 2023 at 10:47 AM

JS

Mrs. Riley was the best PE teacher and coach! Remember her patience and guidance as we learned basketball... we went on to have an undefeated season...great memories of her and the team. She established the first ever girls gymnastics club at CHS breaking the glass ceiling for girls athletics! So sorry for her loss and wishing peace for her family.

Jo Anne Mandarano Securra - March 09, 2023 at 04:23 PM