

Tina H. Straley

September 14, 1943 ~ April 22, 2025

Dr. Tina H. Straley died peacefully in her Salt Lake City home on Tuesday, April 22, 2025.

The daughter of Fran and Al Handelman, Tina grew up in a beautifully boisterous family residing in Brooklyn and Miami Beach. She earned her Bachelor of Science and Master of Science degrees from Georgia State University and her PhD in Mathematics from Auburn University, specializing in Combinatorics. During her studies, Tina taught at Miami Beach High School, Spelman College, and Auburn University. She then became Assistant Professor of Mathematics at Kennesaw Junior College, outside Atlanta, where she joined a small cadre of faculty who built the department and developed its major. As Kennesaw Junior College matured into Kennesaw State University, Tina's achievements also grew; she was promoted to Professor and served as Department Chair, Associate Vice President for Scholarship, and Dean of Graduate Studies. Tina's influence on mathematics scholarship and education stretched far beyond her university home. Moving to Washington DC, she worked as Program Director in the Division of Undergraduate Education at the National Science Foundation and served as Executive Director of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA) for twelve years, capping an extraordinary career dedicated to the advancement of mathematics on a national scale.

Tina's professional accomplishments were hardly the limits of her remarkable vitality. She travelled extensively with Wilt Straley (her husband of nine years), her daughter Jessica, her grandsons Elliott and Julian, family and friends, and MAA colleagues. These wonderful adventures often became inspirations for Tina's painting, a pastime that she enjoyed throughout her life. Never letting an unproductive moment pass, Tina was always active: playing tennis, Mah jong, and Word-o-Rama, working out and doing water aerobics, and taking art, dance, and literature classes. She made devoted friends wherever she went. Her sharp intelligence, undaunted ambition, and sense of humor were forces of nature, and her curiosity about the world remained unquenchable. Her daughter's family is forever grateful for her decision to spend her retirement with us in Salt Lake City.

Tina was preceded in death by Fran and Al Handelman and Wilt Straley. She is survived by her daughter, Jessica Straley; her son-in-law, Richard Preiss; her beloved grandsons, Elliott and Julian; her sister, Carol Burden; treasured cousins, nieces, and relatives, dear friends and colleagues, and countless former students. Committed to helping future generations, Tina chose an ecologically responsible soil transformation. Her family will hold a private memorial. For those who wish to do so, we ask that you honor Tina's memory with donations to the National Science Foundation or to the Mathematical Association of America.