

Camille Minichino

June 3, 1937 – May 6, 2024



Castro Valley

On May 6, 2024, Camille Minichino passed away after a brief illness. Born in Revere, Massachusetts, in June 1937, to Joseph and Helen Avallone Minichino, Camille was the first of two daughters; sister Arlene Minichino Polinene predeceased her. Camille often related how her father, a laborer, introduced her first to the joys of mathematics by showing her how to measure, multiply, and divide.

Camille graduated with a B.A. in Mathematics in 1958 before joining the Sisters of Notre Dame, where she remained for 18 years. Camille attended Fordham University, New York City, where she carried out experimental physics research in spectroscopy and obtained a Ph.D. in Physics in 1968, one of three women in a department of nearly 80 students.

After leaving the order, she moved to California. During her 30-year career at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory she worked in high-temperature, high-pressure physics, provided technical support to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and consulted at commercial reactors throughout the country. As an educator and professor, Camille developed and taught physics, mathematics, philosophy, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary courses at all levels. She served on numerous academic faculties from California to Massachusetts.

She also developed and taught writing classes and workshops at community colleges and through various writers' organizations.

Camille is also the author of nearly 30 published mystery novels, plus numerous short stories and articles in both technical and popular magazines and websites. Her first mystery series was The Periodic Table Mysteries.

Four other series followed.

She loved See's Candies, cappuccino, Amici's margherita pizza (hold the sauce!), designing and creating "miniature" scenes and dollhouses, watching movies, reading books, and hosting parties (games and prizes a must!).

Camille always stepped up when the call went out for volunteers for the many organizations she belonged to, and was readily available when a friend, family member, or student needed a hand or a listening ear. Although she lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for 50 years, she still considered herself a "New Yorker." Regular trips to the Big Apple, with its museums and bookstores, helped feed her city-soul.

No overview of Camille's life is complete without acknowledging the deep devotion she shared with her husband of 47 years, Richard (Dick) Rufer. Camille and Dick met at LLNL and married in 1977. Dick was, without question, the great love of her life. Dick predeceased Camille by two months. Although her death certificate states a medical cause of death, all who knew Camille and supported her after Dick's death know that she really died of a broken heart. Camille is survived by a number of cousins and second cousins, and by legions of friends, colleagues, and students.