

Timothy Ray Hughes

September 1, 1942

July 24, 2021 (78)

Rockford, IL

Timothy Ray Hughes died peacefully, but unexpectedly, in his sleep on July 24, 2021, at the Alden Park Strathmoor care facility in Rockford, IL. Tim was born in Rockford September 1, 1942, to Walter and Betty (Manroe) Hughes. He attended Rockford Public Schools and graduated with the West High School Class of 1961. He earned a master's degree from Rockford College. At Rockford West, he was a member of the debate team. He taught English and coached debate at Auburn High School for 20 years.



A longtime member of the Rockford Writers' Guild, Tim Hughes was a local poet and author who had been writing since 1964. He was the first student finalist from a college or university not offering playwriting instruction in the history of the National Collegiate Playwriting Contest; that play received an off-Broadway bid but was never produced. He later wrote a full-length play about the Holocaust.

In a 2009 interview with Jan Saglier of the *Rockford Register Star*, Tim said:

“For me, writing is more of a compulsion than having anything to do with inspiration, although I have felt inspired at times. I have written several short stories, a novel about 19th century Rockford, numerous editorial pieces and have just completed a full-length play about the Holocaust.”

With the help of generous benefactors, he self-published a children's book Spanky, the Cat Who Loved Christmas translated from “meow” by Tim and illustrated by Frank Fiorello (Rockford West '65). It was a publisher's choice selection of the American Library Association's national convention and was recognized by first lady Laura Bush. The Spanky character was often featured in Rockford parades.

Tim was a member and fundraiser for the Rockford Area Arts Council. In addition to his writing, for fun and thanks to a talented and dedicated organizing committee and generous grants from the Rockford Area Arts Council and Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, he created and coordinated the Festival of Fantasy, a children's Halloween parade and costume contest. He also was a Santa Claus

stand-in at a local area mall. He loved going to the Coronado Theater, now the Coronado Performing Arts Center, on nights when the Rockford Symphony Orchestra was performing.

Tim was adamant that Rock River Valley public schools should stop debasing academic standards to create an artificial sense of learning equity, a policy shift he said would do more to improve the quality of education than any charter school. As an English teacher, one of his challenges in teaching writing skills to high school adolescents is learning to write sometimes requires drudgery and trial and error. Some educators believe such obstacles are incompatible with an educational environment that values student self-esteem and instant gratification above learning principles.

He recalled that while attending a Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts summer session in England, he was detained by Scotland Yard and the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation on suspicion of assassinating Martin Luther King Jr.; the assassin, James Earl Ray, was eventually apprehended in the United Kingdom.

Tim was a proud member of the Rock River Valley Blood Center, where he made more than 300 whole blood and apheresis donations during the past 20 years.

Timothy Ray Hughes is survived by several cousins around the country.

No memorial service is currently planned.

Reference:

Jan Saglier, *Rockford Register Star*, April 20, 2009

[Tim Hughes - News - Rockford Register Star - Rockford, IL \(rrstar.com\)](http://www.rrstar.com)