

Colleen Kelly Thompson

February 6, 1940 ~ August 6, 2020

How can one adequately sum up the life of a legend? Colleen Kelly Thompson was an ideal wife and mother; our fearless leader; the family's travel guide; an advocate for family, women, community and country; a loyal friend; a disciple of Christ and so much more.

On August 6, 2020, this unique daughter of God succumbed to the effects of a relentless brain tumor after an 18-month struggle. She was patient, courageous and long-suffering. Her strongest complaint was, "I wasn't expecting this." This diagnosis was a surprise to her family also since she had a lifelong habit of good nutrition and exercise.

Colleen was born in Salt Lake City on February 6, 1940. Her beloved parents were Lincoln Spry and Marcell Foulger Kelly. As a child, she called herself "Nini," which became a treasured nickname by which her grandchildren and many others called her later in life. She attended Ensign Elementary, Bryant Junior High and East High School, holding numerous student body offices. While at the University of Utah, she served as the Junior Class Vice President and as President of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. She graduated from the University of Utah in 1962 with a Bachelor of Science degree in speech correction and received her teaching certificate the following year. After college, she completed her Masters of Arts degree at Columbia Teachers College in New York City in deaf education in 1964.

While in New York City, Colleen dated her good friend, Roger Thompson, who was then attending Yale University. They had many dates either in New York or in New Haven, Connecticut. One spring day during a handsome cab ride in Central Park, Roger proposed marriage and Colleen accepted. They were married in the Salt Lake Temple on July 31, 1964. They recently celebrated their 56th wedding anniversary. Colleen worked at the Salt Lake Branch of the Utah School for the Deaf and Blind during the first years of their marriage while Roger attended law school. She also taught LDS Seminary for the deaf for many years.

Colleen cared deeply for people of all walks of life. It wasn't unusual for her to invite anyone needing extra care and love into her home. Colleen and Roger also welcomed two Native American students, Ellie Black and Janice Caboni, into the family. While in Ghana, West Africa, serving as a missionary for her church, Colleen volunteered weekly in an orphanage and would often cry on her way home because of conditions there. She and Roger helped fund a private school in Ghana and provided a path to education for many of those orphans. Her civic and charitable activities also included: President of Uintah Elementary School's PTA; President of East High School's PTSA; Board Member, Brighton Girls Camp; Board Member, West Ridge Academy (formerly Utah Boys' Ranch); Member, Advisory Board of the Belle Spafford Endowed Chair at the University of Utah's College of Social Work;

and, Member, University of Utah School of Music Advisory Board. She and Roger were awarded the Camerata Award from the School of Music which was celebrated in her backyard just days prior to her passing. She also received a James E. West Fellowship Award and the District Award of Merit from the Boy Scouts of America.

Family was paramount to Colleen. She made sure that her family saw the world, knew their ancestors, appreciated the arts and loved each other. She wanted a large family since she spent seven lonely years as an only child before the arrival of her beloved younger sister, Karren. She and Roger hosted monthly family gatherings in their home where Colleen provided nourishing food and equally nourishing ethics and gospel discussions.

She is survived by her husband, Roger, seven children: Eric (Michele); Kelly (Todd Eggertsen); Jennifer (John Corbett); Laurel (Erik Fetzer); Camille (Nathan Johnson); Joel (Kadi); Connor (Michal); and thirty wonderful grandchildren. She is also survived by her sister, Karren Hammer (Doug), her sister-in-law, Margery Pierson, as well as many cousins, nieces and nephews whom she adored.

Colleen believed that travel and vacations helped expand the mind and create precious memories. She expertly planned adventures to Palm Springs and Balboa, California; Baja, Mexico; Utah National Parks; Coeur d'Alene and Sun Valley, Idaho; and European family history sites, among others. She encouraged all of her children and grandchildren to pursue their education to the fullest. She was always learning something new.

Colleen was a natural athlete. Her favorite sport was tennis, but she also enjoyed golf, swimming and diving. She and Roger seemed to always win the family's annual Thompson Triathlon, but some family members claim the event was rigged to their parents' advantage. Some of her fondest memories were with her tennis and walking buddies. Roger and Colleen loved to dance and taught ballroom dancing to their family and to many in Africa and Spain. She also loved working out to the music of Donna Summer.

In Primary at a young age, Colleen gained an unwavering faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. She continued attending Church services on her own from age seven through age nineteen, when she finally received permission from her father to be baptized. She stood for truth and was never ashamed to bear witness of her faith in the restored Gospel. With Roger, she served three missions for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Ghana, West Africa; Barcelona, Spain (on the island of Mallorca), and in Mexico in the Tijuana Temple. She served as Relief Society President, Young Women's President and in the Stake Primary. At age 75, she was called to be an advisor to the Young Women in the ward and loved teaching them and participating in their activities. She served faithfully with Roger as an ordinance worker in the Salt Lake Temple on Friday evenings for many years and loved her fellow workers there.

Her love, her outgoing nature, her ability to acquire and keep friends and her lack of guile will be greatly missed especially by her family.

Funeral services will be held on Wednesday, August 12, 2020, at 10:00 o'clock a.m. on the grounds of the Garden Park Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1150 East Yale Avenue, Salt Lake City, Utah 84105.) Camp chairs and blankets are encouraged for the outdoor service.

A viewing will be held Tuesday, August 11, 2020, from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at Larkin Sunset Lawn Mortuary (2350 East 1300 South).

Due to concerns about Covid-19, the family respectfully requests that anyone who chooses to attend wear a mask and practice social distancing. The funeral will be recorded and a link provided to those who wish to watch at a later date. Requests to the link should be sent to whitney@thompsonmichie.com.

We would like to thank Colleen's caregivers during her prolonged illness. These include: Dr. Jensen, Dr. Colman and Sean Strope, PA-C at the Huntsman Cancer Institute; Symbii Home Health and Hospice, especially Aman Barham, RN and Deysi Vasquez, CNA; and her beloved friends, Analisa Aho, Maioha Kingi, Latai Nonu, Mele Taunauta and Antoinette Van Horn. Colleen's sister, Karren, has rendered extraordinary service to Colleen. The entire family is grateful for the privilege of participating in Colleen's care and for the blessing of serving her. The family would also like to thank her many friends, relatives, neighbors and fellow church members who visited her and sent her flowers, gifts and cards during her hospital stay and illness.

In lieu of flowers, you may contribute to The McCarthy Hill School in Ghana, c/o Roger H. Thompson, 428 E. Winchester #100, Salt Lake City, Utah 84107.