Elvira I Piepho

June 21, 1922 ~ April 18, 2015

Elvira Irene Piepho left us on April 18, 2015. She was born on her family's farm in La Salle County, Illinois, on June 21, 1922, the fifth of eight children of Fenton and Emma Berninger Brennan. She loved to tell stories of her childhood on the farm. When cousins came to visit they would all sleep sideways in the bed, 6-8 of them, each hoping to be in the middle where it was warmest. After skipping a grade in elementary school, she graduated from Long Point High School in 1939.

In 1940, she married Francis H. Defenbaugh, and they had three children. She assisted in his auto sales and service business in Streator, IL for many years. They divorced in 1958. In her working life, she was a nurse's aide and did clerical work. She was curious about everything, including how mechanical gadgets worked. We wonder what career she would have chosen if she had lived in a time when women had the choices in education and careers they have today. Later, she wasa clerk at Ft. Sheridan near Chicago, where she met Earnest (Pete) Piepho, whom she married in 1972. They enjoyed 10 happy years together before his death.

Farm girl, mother, tireless volunteer, story spinner; Elvira had a zest for life that few could match. She was always ready for the next adventure, and never met a car trip she didn't like. She lived much of her life in northern Illinois, but loved her years in Los Angeles, Yuma, and Salt Lake City. "Ellie" made friends wherever she went.

She loved visiting national parks and other attractions, and after Pete's death, she took the train from place to place to visit her children. Her priorities were always her family, including nieces and nephews, and her friends.She loved crochet and crafts, but her grand kids remember her best for teaching them card games, especially several forms of solitaire. At 75, she danced with wild abandon at her granddaughter Jennifer's wedding reception, and was nicknamed thereafter "Dancing Grandma".

She was a devout member of St. Anthony Catholic Church in Streator, IL and a valued member of Third Order of Franciscans. She taught her family by words and deeds to to be of service to others and take care of those ill or in need. She traveled to Rome with her diocese in the late 1980s and especially treasured their audience with the Pope. She met her daughter in England and toured Ireland in1997. She was often joking and joining in evening fun in the Irish pubs on that trip. Jan, Dan and Kathy accompanied her on a cruise to Alaska in 2006. As a farm girl in the Great Depression, she likely never dreamed she would travel so far and see such sights.

Elvira is survived by her children, Jan Miller of Salt Lake City and Daniel (Kathy) Defenbaugh of Poulsbo, WA and two step-sons, Paul Piepho, of Daphne AL, and Robert Piepho of Corpus Christi, TX. She has five grandchildren: Jennifer (Aslam) Mukhtiar, Minnetonka, MN; Jessica (Jennifer Blackburn) Miller, Seattle; Brett (Lisa) Defenbaugh, Arlington, WA; Tricia (BJ) Benson, Poulsbo, WA; Sarah (Hakeem Lee) Defenbaugh, Morgan Hill, CA; and two step-grandchildren, Kristen (Billy) Calderwood of Burbank, CA and Mark Fagiano of Atlanta, GA. She has two

great-grandchildren, Zane C. Mukhtiar of Minnetonka and Kourtney Benson of Poulsbo. She was predeceased by her husband Pete, her son John H. Defenbaugh, and all her siblings and first cousins. We like to think she has gone to meet them in her rest.

The family wishes to thank Dr. Sonia Van Hala for excellent care for 13 years, and the staff of the Assisted Living unit of St Joseph Villa for their love and care for the last five years, as well as the caring staff of Brighton Hospice, who made her last few months so much more comfortable.

A memorial mass will be held in the chapel of St Joseph Villa, 451 Bishop Federal Lane, Salt Lake City, onTuesday April 21at 11:30 am.Her ashes will be interred with Pete in Yuma. In lieu of flowers, Elvira would have appreciated contributions to the Disabled Veterans of America.