

Barbara Chytraus Gilson

February 5, 1948 ~ March 17, 2022

Barbara, or Grandma ‘Ted’, short for Teddy Bear, passed away quietly and unexpectedly in her sleep on March 17, 2022, contrasting 74 years of rich adventures, professional accomplishments, friendships and deep love for her family.

Barbara was born in Salt Lake City, youngest child of three to Clarence and Janet Burris Chytraus. She went to Highland High School where she served as a class officer and valedictorian before going on to graduate from the University of Utah with a Masters Degree in Biology. She scored one of the highest MCAT and GRE in the history of the University and pursued post doctorate research and taught anatomy to medical school students. She spent many years as a neuroanatomy research scientist. In her spare time, she river rafted and ran most major rivers in the west with the Wasatch Mountain Club while Larry was serving in the Army and finishing his degree at Stanford.

Barbara dated her high school sweetheart and soulmate, Larry Gilson throughout college and married him on September 5, 1969. Larry has always been her immovable rock and cherished partner. Their 60 years of loving companionship and 53 year marriage is the gold standard for their children and grandchildren.

After becoming pregnant with her first son, Brad, Barbara decided to go into nursing to accommodate a life more suited to raising children, which later included Alysa and Angie, all of whom were the loves of her life. She could spend a weekend boating with the family, clean a house and still manage a 12 hour overnight shift in the Emergency Room on her usual Sunday night shift. With less than an hour of sleep, she would clean the house the next morning and be off to meetings with the Junior League of Salt Lake City throughout the day. Barbara served as a Registered Nurse with an MSN at Primary Children’s hospital for 25 years. She was an active community volunteer in many organizations and enjoyed spending time with friends in bridge clubs, book clubs, family boating trips and exotic travel. Later in life, she took up Scuba Diving which brought her to many exotic destinations throughout the world.

A mom that works in the Emergency Room is different from other moms. There were no big wheels, motorcycles, 3 wheelers, trampolines or popsicles while we ran around. Knowing the severity of an injury, roadrash was met with a lack of sympathy and a rough scrub brush, and faking illness was never successful.

In 1988 Barbara was a victim of a severe car accident and head injury that changed the course of her life. She joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and found some solace in her faith to help her overcome severe depression and the lingering effects from Traumatic Brain Trauma. Despite the bleak expectations from doctors about her ability to work as a trauma nurse after her head injury, she returned to nursing and spent many years teaching medical students, doctors and the medical community about head injury and depression.

Barbara was not the best cook. We had a few cold turkeys over the years and we always remember the year she accidentally substituted salt for sugar in the homemade cranberry sauce. Her go-to family dinner was chicken slathered in BBQ sauce - baked to a crisp. That said, we will always relish her decadent homemade French silk pie and her passion for stinky cheese and bread.

She absolutely loved her children and grandchildren. She devoted her life to their well-being. Being a grandmother was one of her greatest joys. She begged Brad to take vacations so she could babysit his kids and gave up a ladies golf club so she could be the full time care provider for Alysa's children, allowing Alysa to work without daycare worries. She loved going places with them, having rich experiences, and turned everyday outings into huge adventures as she navigated the zoo or a mountain hike with her 7 grandchildren in tow. She taught us to take a side road and enjoy the path less traveled. Her beloved grandchildren Kayla and Eric (Alysa), Alex, Jessica, MaKenna, Annika and Clarissa (Brad), miss her terribly and long for more "Ted" adventures.

Barbara loved adventure, but more importantly, adventure followed Barbara. She recounted her adventures where the 747 airplane overshot the runway and got stuck in the mud in Grenada or when she was stranded in Quito, Ecuador for three days due to a volcanic eruption. She was caught in a torrential typhoon in Palau that dropped 24 inches in an hour. She and Larry decided to escape to the Philippines where they were met with an earthquake while the airplane was on the tarmac. Their dive destination of Malapascua island was completely destroyed a week later from a typhoon. She remembers being chased by Abu Sayyaf terrorists on the way back to mainland Malaysia from their weeklong dive trip and inviting a guy to have dinner with them in Layang Layang that turned out to be a high-profile terrorist on the reef, in the south China sea. She survived the great earthquake in Tibet that destroyed part of Everest base camp, only a day before she was supposed to be at the Everest base camp herself. She survived the earthquake in Mexico City where she was attending the college of America's. She broke her foot walking in Pompei and came home in a wheelchair. She spent 14 hours stabilizing a friend after being injured by a whale during a trip to the Dominican Republic. She may have been the first woman to enter Russia wearing American Levi's in the 1960's during a special restricted short entry program. She drove a moped through a cafe on a Greek Island before laying it on its side just before hitting the table full of German tourists. She and Alysa were stuck in Norway due to an Air Traffic Controllers strike and found adventure being re-routed through Zurich for 2 days before getting home. To explore with Barbara was to know an adventure was imminent.

She valiantly overcame stage IV breast cancer with chemotherapy and radiation, and a fight with neutropenia. She battled Parkinson's disease, head injury due to a T-bone motor vehicle accident, emergency lifesaving surgeries, and multiple spinal reconstructive surgeries all with a smile on her face and a will to fight.

She was known by many names. We went skiing at Brighton, right after the new Snake Creek lift was installed. She had had her gallbladder removed only 2 days earlier, and hence, was described as Mrs. Buttersworth for taking her slow sweet time. That did not stop her from water skiing from Wahweap to Padre Bay a week later. She came to every swim meet her children competed in and was known as the "purple dot" for the easily spotted knit purple top and shorts she wore. "Muenster" was another endearing name given to her by her children, playing off her affinity for cheese (if she was on a desert island and could only eat one food for the rest of her life - it would be cheese…) Rather than have Larry and her risk receiving a funny name from the grandkids, she coined the phrase 'Teddy Bear and Pa Bear' which the grandkids shortened to Ted and Pa.

She loved her pets. Well almost all of them, there was the questionable love of a dog named Muffin (Gerf) who vindictively tortured Barbara after she gunned the boat and rolled the dog off the back end of the boat during a Thanksgiving trip to Lake Powell. She was later found swimming for her life, but the dog never forgot who was driving the boat. Later, Barbara fell in love with poodles of all sizes. She leaves behind her beloved Cooper but is finally snuggling with Tigger, Taveuni, and Quito again.

We cannot forget the day she used all 550 horses revving to 5000 rpm to overcome the fully engaged parking brake to drive the brand new Corvette home from Church. The youth talked about how cool it was for years. Larry, however, did not think it was cool.

Barbara loved to dance. She lived vicariously through her grandchildren who love to dance. She remembers the year the entire family starred in the Nutcracker and she participated as a party parent. As a child she danced in an

old mansion in the Salt Lake City Avenues and recalls seeing the city from the top story of the turret. Through the years she has tried many genres of dance including Irish dancing with her daughters, Ballroom with Larry and as of late, she had been enjoying line dancing at the senior center. She danced for 74 years of her life. We can only think she will continue to dance with her mom, Janet and sister Kaye. Her family will continue the legacy of dance.

Barbara loved to be highly involved in any organization she became a part of. You could find her as a leader of any group, leading any community, or delegating many tasks. She was the captain of every “ship” she was on. Some of her fondest memories are spending time teaching her dance groups or helping Alysa elaborately decorating for tea parties for her grandchildren’s dance studio. She educated fellow nurses in the latest protocols and led conferences in emergency medicine.

The time we had with Barbara, “Ted”, was much too short but it was filled with love, family, adventure and joy. We will miss her adventurous spirit and fathomless love. It is Goodbye for just now. And as she would say, “That is all I have to say about that.”

The Family will be holding a Celebration of Life Open House on Friday, March 25, 2022 from 6-8pm at 2478 E Barcelona Dr. Sandy UT 84093.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to St. Jude for their ongoing cancer research.