

Bebe Daniels Jensen

August 10, 1925 ~ August 13, 2024

Bebe Daniels Jensen, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend, passed away peacefully at the Meadow Peak Rehabilitation Center on August 13, 2024, just three days after celebrating her 99th birthday by making videos with her grandchildren. Her long life was characterized by curiosity, joy, independence, adventure, charm and gracefulness. She was lady beloved, one who loved others and saw the best in everyone.

Bebe was born on August 10th, 1925, a hot and muggy day in Annabella, Utah, in a home with a wrap-around porch nestled beneath large trees along the Annabella Canal. She was the first child of William Bliss and Mary Lavern Hawley Daniels. Despite a long and challenging birth, Bebe and her mother both made it through, an event recalled throughout her childhood as a reminder to stay obedient. Perhaps because of this, Bebe retained a sense of gratitude for life, often remarking how lucky she was to have experienced what she considered "the best of childhoods," filled with long, carefree days of play and many friends.

After graduating from South Sevier High School, Bebe pursued higher education at the Branch Agricultural College (now University of Southern Utah) in Cedar City. Her mentor there, Ione Spencer Bennion, identified Bebe as a talented writer and encouraged her interest in English literature. Professor Bennion assumed the position of Dean of Women at the University of Utah and invited Bebe to come with her to continue her studies. During that time, she began steadily seeing Jay Monroe Jensen, a friend from high school whom she had met while performing in a play. When she was a few credits short of graduation from college, Jay Monroe proposed marriage and asked her to accompany him as he entered the University of Chicago School of Medicine. Professor Bennion thought Bebe should finish her degree before committing herself to her marriage. But love, reason, or Jay Monroe prevailed, and the couple married in the Manti Temple on June 14, 1947, and moved to Chicago.

The early years of their marriage in Chicago were “all she could have hoped for in terms of opening up new challenges and making lifetime friends.” They started their family there, before continuing to the University of Pennsylvania for Jay Monroe’s surgical residency. They ultimately settled in Salt Lake City, where Bebe became an active and dedicated member of her community. She was active in the Relief Society, taught Primary and Sunday School classes as called, she served as president of the Holladay School PTA, participated in the Utah State Democratic Party, and could often be found dancing with “Jay M” at the Cottonwood Club and the Inaugural Ball of President Lyndon Johnson.

Bebe lived an interesting and varied life, which included many unique and fulfilling jobs. She worked as a Messenger Clerk for the Rio Grande Railroad, held a position at the County Treasurer's office, and later worked at the American School in Chicago. During Jay Monroe’s surgical residency at the University of Pennsylvania, she became a member of the Ravdin's Rosebuds Bridge Club, where she found joy and companionship. She served as

president of the Art Jensen Cattle Company for 25 years and also of the Joseph Grazing Land Investment and Cattle Company.

Throughout her life, Bebe was quick to make and keep close friends, forming connections that lasted through her lifetime. From her early days at Monroe Jr. High, to drama at South Sevier High School, to her time at BAC in Cedar City, and the years at the University of Chicago and University of Pennsylvania, Bebe gathered a circle of friends who remained dear to her heart. Bebe and Jay Monroe were members of a Great Books book group that met monthly for more than 30 years. After the death of her husband, she took up painting watercolors and began to travel with one of the couple's oldest and dearest friends, James C. Thompson of Galveston, Texas, with whom her husband had done surgical research at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1950s. As part of Dr. Thompson's duties as President of the American College of Surgeons, they visited many medical centers, on several continents, for many years. Her ability to connect with others was one of her most cherished qualities, leaving behind a legacy of deep and lasting friendships.

Bebe's intellectual curiosity never waned. Late in her 97th year she described it as "the most productive year of her life," during which she read works of Balzac, Foucault, and the Stoics, claiming that "the reading alone was worth living for." This passion for literature began early in her life. As a young woman, she was interested in a book written by Mortimer J. Adler of the University of Chicago which espoused incorporating classical and ancient literature into modern education. She had lent this book to her then friend and future-husband Jay Monroe. Serendipitously, during their early marriage at the University of Chicago, she attended evening classes taught by the very same Mortimer J. Adler. While there, a friend of hers was on a university sponsored project related to the publication of a book on The Great Ideas. This friend introduced her to the Russian authors, which became a lifetime project that Bebe found endlessly interesting.

Even in her advanced years, Bebe maintained an optimistic outlook on life. In a letter to her granddaughter, she wrote, "Maybe it isn't too optimistic to look forward to [time at the Ranch] after all, regardless of my advanced age. My dad always was warning me about working too hard. 'Remember, daughter, you are no spring chicken.' Silly him. Turns out I was."

Bebe was a devoted and loving mother to her seven children. She adored them deeply and made it a priority to stay closely connected to their lives, no matter the distance. She was especially proud that each of her children completed college and graduate school, married, and started families of their own. Bebe was a devoted grandmother to her 22 grandchildren, each of whom she cherished deeply. At the family's Blue House in Elsinore, she was famous for her Ranch breakfasts, particularly her waffles made with the secret ingredient of bacon grease. She gave gifts of poetry, artworks, literature, cinnamon buns, popcorn balls, and her time and attention.

The family would like to thank Mr. Tex Olsen who throughout her life remained one of Bebe's dearest friends and closest counselors. In her later years, she formed close bonds with her caregivers— Carmen, Nadia, Ana, Melissa, Alisha, Daisy, and Helena—to whom the family is extraordinarily grateful and whose care and companionship brought her great comfort and joy.

Bebe is survived by her beloved sisters Mary (Don) Lay of St. George, Utah, and Holly Lynn (Davey) Lay of Annabella, Utah, and their families, as well as by the children of her late brother, Phillip Bliss (Pat) Daniels of Provo, Utah. She loved each and every niece and nephew and delighted in their company. She became dear friends, too, with Jay Monroe's family. She cherished the friendship of and is survived by Louis Douglas Hill, Sheridan, and Kristin Hill and their families. She leaves behind a loving family: her daughter Judith Ann Jensen of Salt Lake City, her son Dr. Jay Arthur Jensen of Los Angeles, California, her son Dr. Niels Frederik (Martha) Jensen of Iowa City, Iowa, her son Dr. James Christian Jensen of Huntington, West Virginia, her daughter Mary Karen (Steven) Marsden of Salt Lake City, her son Dr. Peter Erik (Rhonda) Jensen of Sandy, Utah, and her daughter Dr. Nicoline (Dr. Richard) Lee of Houston, Texas. She is also survived by twenty-two grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren, who will carry forward her legacy.

A viewing will be held at the Holladay Ward (2065 East 4675 South) on Saturday, August 17th, from 9:30-10:45, followed by a funeral service at 11:00. Graveside services and interment will be at the Elsinore City cemetery at 4pm the same day.