Susanne Catherine Westover

January 11, 1943 ~ April 5, 2015

Our devoted wife, exceptional mother, incredible grandmother and family historian extraordinaire died in the early morning hours of Easter Sunday, April 5th, 2015. Born Susanne Catherine Begich on January 11, 1943 , her father's birthday , in Mt. Kisco, New York, she was simply Cathi, Mom or Nana to all who knew and loved her.

With her father deploying overseas during World War II from his station in California, Mom and her mother traveled by train when she was 6 months old with hopes of saying goodbye. But an unfortunate twist of fate had them arrive too late for their goodbye - never to see her father again. Alone with her young child in a state far away from any life she had known, our grandmother raised Mom with the help of her new husband, Pascal H. Caldwell , both nursing their heartache and war wounds with an addiction to alcohol. Mom's childhood was difficult and trying. She rarely spoke about it.

It was in California while in high school that she discovered her love of journalism, honed her skills as a graphic artist with dreams of one day working as an artist for Walt Disney. It was in high school where she met our Dad, Kyle Westover whose strong family ties attracted mom for although her childhood was problematic to say the least, she had developed a strong, deep, long-abiding love for family.

Dad never knew what exactly Mom saw in him. And we have to admit, we're not quite sure either because Mom was HOT and well,Ä¶he was NOT! She had her pick of all the jocks, was the class valedictorian and yet, she got together with the gangly, nerdy kid who shared her passion for journalism, sang in the barber shop quartet and was president of the Pat Boone Fan Club. She has said that at first that she could not stand the sight of him. Fortunately, he was able to quickly change her mind. He introduced her to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and she was soon baptized. They were married on August 9, 1960- eloping at the young and tender age of 17. Upon arriving in Carson City, Nevada (as Las Vegas was just too "tacky"), they had to call her stepfather to come in person from California to give his consent since they were both underage. Our brother Jay arrived shortly after and along with their puppy Tinka, they started to build their family. Mom and Dad were later sealed in the Los Angeles temple on August 23, 1961. Through out their 55 years of marriage and the trials they shared, she was always passionate about her husband and also (in no particular order)- ice cream, fishing (especially, if she had a fish on the line), keeping the living room clean at all times in case she had visitors, ensuring the vacuum lines were straight and even, family history and her family.

Mom and Dad established their home in a little white house on Crawford Street in Concord, California and soon they had added Debbie, Jeff and David to their growing family. As Dad was finishing his schooling at UC Berkeley, we lost our own Nana, Mom's Mother. The loss was devastating and it would be a burden our young mother would carry for the rest of her life.

After graduation, Dad and Mom moved their family to the Central Valley in what they called their "Camelot" in Lodi, California. There, the kids would be able to ride their bikes all over town without care, they could feed the ducks at the local park and they would routinely feast at their favorite eating establishments , Pizza Garden, Howard's Delicatessen and Cottage Bakery , all places that never had an equal and to this day are regarded fondly by every member of the family.

Despite a doctor's grim prediction that her child bearing days were over after an earlier life-endangering miscarriage, they welcomed their last child, Kristine at Christmas time 1971.

With their family complete, Mom and Dad began work together in the small upstairs office of the Lodi house on what would later become the training department for Longs Drug Stores. When it became apparent that the fruits of their labors were succeeding, they were on the move again , this time back to Concord, California to be closer to family and the general offices of Dad's new job as the director of Training for Longs Drug. This time they decided to build their home from the ground up. Mom designed every part of the house - to the open layout downstairs, to the redwood chevron styled walls and the strategically placed "Mt. Diablo Window" by the stairs. With the help of Uncle Darrell Westover's skilled hands in construction, Mom's dream home was realized, built with the sweat of their brow, surrounded by her beloved rose bushes and where each of their children would round out their own childhoods.

With many of the kids grown and starting to leave home, Mom and Dad, along with their "caboose child" as Mom liked to call her started their very early daily grind in the Longs Drug general offices in Walnut Creek, California , Dad working the ins and outs of training with Mom at his side illustrating each training program with the powerful strokes of her very capable fingers and creative mind.

In the mid-1980s Mom would leave Longs and seek some independence with a short career as a front office manager for a local veterinary but it was with the birth of her grandson Matthew that she found her true calling as Nana. Already a grandmother to Darcy, Amy, Katy, Aubree, Nikki, Jessie and Ashley, Mom relished her role as Nana even if it was from afar. But with his mother returning to school and with the demands of being a single-mom weighing heavily on her mind, Debbie sought out Mom for help in caring for her son. Mom quit her job at the veterinary to care for Matt full-time. Mom had learned much during her tenure as mother that it paid off big dividends for her grandchildren who benefited from her years of experience. Being Nana was the reward for having survived her own little devils. Matt was the first benefactor of her love and guidance. And given her own little wicked sense of humor, she was his first influence in the art of sarcasm and wit.

Mom would build on to her repertoire as Nana with the additions of Abby, Enoch, Allie, Maggie, Madelyn and Emma. And in 1999, she would move to Utah to be closer to her grandchildren. Layton, Draper, Lehi and finally Pleasant Grove were places that Mom called home these past 16 years.

When Michaela, her granddaughter, came along in 2002, she was once again putting on her Super Nana Cape. With both of Michaela's parents working and knowing that there was no daycare in existence that could provide their daughter the kind of influence that Nana could give her, Mom was once again working the bottle, changing the diapers and singing all the nursery rhymes with her own unique lyrics that only Nana could sing. Nana became an expert in all things Dora the Explorer and Franklin the Turtle. She was once again flexing her artistic fingers drawing Mickey Mouse, cutting out bats and ghosts for Halloween and snowflakes at Christmas , even though arthritis had set in and it was painful. It didn't matter because Nana was doing what she did best. She was being A MOTHER.

When her son-in-law unexpectedly passed away in 2008, as they quietly drove away from her daughter's home, Michaela's small voice came from the backseat asking if her father was dead. True to "Nana Form" and never one to accept untruth and patronizing, Mom told Michaela that indeed her father was gone. A young orphan herself, Mom felt particularly protective of this young granddaughter knowing that the memories of her father would turn to foggy dreams at best. Keeping her father alive and fresh in her mind was something she took to heart and she approached this tender time with an experienced finesse that only she could be capable of.

Mom was forthright. When asked to describe their Nana in a word, Mom's grandchildren say that she was caring, tough, vivacious, enduring, artsy, amazing, spunky, faithful and a sassy-pants. So true! Mom was all of those things

and more.

She would tell her opinion of them- straight, honest and true. She could always be counted on to give them the unconditional love that only a Nana can give. At church, she had the uncanny ability to take any lesson or sermon and tie it back to family history... seriously any topic.

Despite the burden of new health concerns and surviving a stroke in 2010, Mom stoically faced what would become her most arduous trial yet , an active and vigorous spirit coupled with a body that was failing her. It was frustrating, exhausting and difficult to face. But she did so because her drive to stay with her family was strong. Enduring diabetes, liver and kidney failure, countless doctor visits, hospital stays and stints in rehab, Mom defied the odds and strongly and enthusiastically gave the proverbial middle finger to her health woes. This indelible spirit would serve her well these next 5 years until when at the close of 2014 she had decided she had enough of the doctors and hospitals.

Mom retreated to her home in Pleasant Grove with the company of her dog, Chewie and her loving and devoted husband , our father who dedicated every minute of his daily routine to her care. With meticulous notes and a tenacious effort, Dad tended to Mom's every need much to her chagrin as time grew short. His only goal was to give her comfort, boost her spirits and keep her strength up for the daily visits with her son David, his wife Wendy and their children whom she had only in recent years gotten to know. Tasia, Porter, Amelia and Carson were new reminders of her very important role as Nana. Although unable to draw for them the pictures she had shared with her other grandchildren or sing for them her very uniquely Nana songs, she taught them the true meaning of enduring to the end , perhaps the most important lesson of all , that despite the trials and heartache one experiences in life, you approach them with bravery, you stick your chin out in defiance and you love deeply. Mom/Nana was teaching all of us to the very bitter end.

Mom died very much like how she lived , marching to the beat of her own drum, demanding that she'd go when she was darn well ready and that she wouldn't go without every one of her loved ones knowing how much she loved them , for these were her last words , her final testament as our Mother. "I love you," she repeated in a whispered voice, too weak to open her eyes. Yes, Mom. We know. We thank you for this final gift. What a wonderful Mother you are. What a teacher you have been. Mom, whether it was a cold glass of water to the face when we sassed you, cornflakes in our bed when we demanded our breakfast, tying us together until we got along, making us walk around the house naked because we refused to clean up our dirty clothes or the colorful metaphors that came from your mouth when you encountered annoying drivers , your influence will be felt for generations to come. You were a force to be reckoned with here and we hope Heaven was ready for you. Oh how we would have loved to be celestial flies on the wall when you got there!

Mom is survived by her husband, our father, Kyle Jay Westover Sr., children Kyle Jay Westover Jr. (Mary), Deborah Westover, Jeffery Westover (Sandy), David Westover (Wendy), Kristine (Westover) Fluck, 19 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren (with 1 more on the way), in addition to two "adopted" daughters Andrea Castiglione Waters (Mitch), Audra Castiglione Walburn (Ron) and cousins located in Pennsylvania, Minnesota, New York and Colorado. She is preceded in death by her parents, Carl P. Begich (Father), Winifred Caldwell (Mother), Pascal H. Caldwell (Step-Father), Elizabeth Sorensen (Great-Granddaughter), Michael Fluck (Son-in-Law) and her "babies" - dogs Tinka, Snuffles, Jenny, Molly and Mandy.

The family wishes to extend their sincere gratitude to the staff at First Choice Home Health and Hospice. Britney, Colette, MaKayla B., Mckayla F., Emily and Spencer, thank you for the love and devotion you gave to our mother. Our lives have been enriched by your selfless care and we look upon you as family.

We invite family and friends to join us in celebrating Mom's life. Visitation will be at Larkin Sunset Gardens, Friday, April 10th from 6pm-8pm and Saturday, April 11th from 9:30am to 10:30am with a Memorial Service at 11am at the South Mountain 3rd Ward Chapel, 272 Traverse Ridge Rd in Draper, Utah. Interment will immediately follow at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E 10600 S in Sandy, Utah.