Lois Smith Sumner Christensen

January 20, 1937 ~ May 30, 2018

Lois Smith Sumner Christensen passed away on May 30, 2018 after a brave battle with Pulmonary Fibrosis. She was born on January 20th 1937, in Julesburg, CO to Cecil Gee and Eva Smith Sumner. The family moved to Salt Lake City when Lois was 5 years old. She graduated from South High School in 1955. She attended the University of Utah, majoring in English Literature and minoring in Sociology; she also earned a teaching certificate. She pledged Kappa Kappa Gamma where she developed lifelong friendships. She valued her degree in English Literature, but it was in a sociology class where she met Reed Christensen. After dating for two years they were married in the Salt Lake LDS Temple on September 22nd 1960.

She taught high school English for two years before postponing her career to raise her five sons. She and Reed settled into a life focused on teaching, shaping, feeding, and occasionally scolding her five boys. Lois was passionate about creating a strong family culture. She never missed her son's ballgames and she earned five Eagle Scout awards. She developed a reputation for hot slices of homemade bread with butter and honey, lots of cold milk, and regular batches of warm chocolate chip cookies. These offerings extended beyond family and neighbors to her son's friends. Her parenting style was built on high levels of trust, high expectations related to homework, Saturday chores, and working in the family landscaping business, as well as an undying curiosity about each of her sons' personal affairs. Mom was never satisfied with one or two-word answers to questions like, what did you do tonight? She wanted to know how her boys felt about their friends and their choices and what they had learned that day. She certainly cared about what they were doing, but she cared more about who they were becoming. She applied this same genuine interest in her classroom, returning to teach at Highland High as her youngest son entered high school; she taught for 14 more years before retiring in 2001.

As professional teachers and the owners of a small business, Reed and Lois always felt the pinch of survival. Lois was a committed conservationist. She knew how to stretch, recycle, save, reinvent, and repurpose old things.

As her sons turned into adults they became her peers and close friends. Fortunately, these relationships came with long-awaited daughters who loved and cared for her, each in her own way, with obvious extra care and attention these last two years; this was something characteristic of Lois too, as a younger mother, caring faithfully for her own parents and Reed's father in their advanced years.

Reed and Lois moved to Heber in 2001 to enjoy the property they had purchased ten years earlier. She refined her patience on yet another never-quite-finished home-building project and a rather ambiguous and ambitious landscaping agenda, with the ultimate goal of attracting the grandchildren to their homestead. Reed and Lois returned to Salt Lake City (East Millcreek) in 2017 so they could be closer to family as Lois' health deteriorated.

Family has been her great joy and pleasure in life, but she was always surrounded bygreat friends too; they read books, went on trips, went to plays, and met for many lunches and luncheons. She treasured these friendships fiercely and viewed them as eternal, just like her family relationships.

At the center of everything in her world was her devotion to her faith and concern for her husband, Reed. She doted on him and also humored his direct and deliberate mannerisms. High points in their marriage included every family gathering, monthly dinners with "The Swedish Missionary Group," their mission to Nauvoo, Illinois, and serving together in the Provo Temple for many years. Lois was a sincere believer and a student of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Even as recently as two weeks before she passed away, she attended her Book of Mormon study group where she found spiritual nourishment with women she loved and admired. She loved being a Mormon and valued serving in the Church. Regardless of where she was contributing, she connected with people. As one of her nieces wrote: "Your mother was always interested in me and what I was doing and she never seemed distracted when she talked to me in a large group."

She is survived by her husband, Reed F. Christensen; her 5 sons and their spouses Steve and Christine, Jeff and Chris, Doug and Sara, Gregg and Marian, and Chad and Kristin; 27 grandchildren, Nathanael (Whitney), Peter, Eliza, Andrew (Sierra), Sarah (Paul), Jacob (Brianna), Amelia, James, Ben; Meisha (Sam), Megan (Garrett), Spencer, Cate, Owen; Hannah, Adelide (Chase), Henry, Lillie; Will (Rachel), Claire (Jacob), Emma, Charlie, Grace; Ford, Sophie, Grant, Truman; and 3 great-grandchildren, Bethany and Jessa Rae Christensen, and Wells Thomas; and her brother Robert Sumner. She is preceded in death by her Parents, Cecil and Eva Sumner; her siblings, Smith Sumner and Eve Sumner; and her grand-daughter, Bethany.

A visitation will be held to honor her on June 8th from 6:30 pm-8:30 pm at Sunset Lawn Mortuary on 2350 East 1300 South in Salt Lake City, UT. She will be interred at the Salt Lake City Cemetery at 9:30 am on June 9th and a Funeral service will be held following the interment on June 9th at 12:00 pm at the LDS Chapel on 3408 South Celeste Way in Salt Lake City, UT. Immediately following the funeral service, there will be an informal reception for family and friends in the cultural hall.