Larkin

# Nellie Allen Leighton

*February 18, 1919 ~ March 10, 2019*

Nellie Allen Leighton passed away peacefully on March 10th 2019, just two weeks after she surprised nearly 400 family and friends who flocked to Salt Lake City for her 100th birthday party, arriving at the media covered event at the last minute despite recovering from a serious infection. The impressive attendance spoke volumes for how many lives Nellie touched, and her incredible determination to be there was but one of numerous exceptional attributes that exemplified this remarkable lady who will remain unforgettable in the minds and hearts of all who knew her.

Everyone at the party knew she appreciated their presence, for she was as genuine and humble as they come, which is pretty amazing, considering all she accomplished, persevered through, and gave for all those years. Her generosity was truly extraordinary, and it's doubtful that anyone who knew her would disagree that she was one of the most kind, selfless, and compassionate people they ever met.

Recently while hospitalized, Nellie didn't complain about her pain or having to spend her 100thbirthday in a hospital bed. In fact, she had only one concern: to go ahead and have the partywithouther, in case she couldn't go! That was classic Nellie. She was truly concerned about everyone else; the work they put into her party, the plans they made to see her. Subsequently, they should enjoy themselves even if it meant somehow singing Happy Birthday without her. As always, she placed everyone else ahead of herself. It was an incredible display of selflessness on her part. Of course, soon after, she out-did even that, astonishing everyone by overcoming tremendous odds to make the party via ambulance at the last minute. Once again, classic Nellie.

Through a century of experience, Nelliequitepossiblypicked up a thing or two that cultivated her wise perspective on life. She sawa lotof things happen in that time. When Nellie was born on February 18,1919 in Provo, Utah, to James Stephen Allen and Mary Jane Matson, there was no such thing as TV, cell phones, or the internet; movies didn't even have sound. There was no Gone with The Wind, Wizard of Oz, or King Kong, and no Empire State Building to hang on. The Bay Area was essentially bridgeless, Mount Rushmore faceless, and the Grand Canyon wasn't even a national park. Perhaps those modest yet challenging times helped influence Nellie. After all, she lived with 10 siblings in a home without plumbing or modern electricity, while sharing one bed with 3 sisters. Nellie's parents undoubtedly rubbed off on her as well: Her father's great work ethic may have inspired her limitless energy, and her legendary strength and compassion probably grew while seeing her always-positive mother giving to needful folks while working and raising all those kids during the Great Depression.

With all do respects to environmental and familial influences, one still has to choose which road to go down. Nellie always seemed to choose the path of doing what's right for her family, friends, community, and anyone else she came in contact with.

As a mother of five and loving wife to Paul Leighton, Nellie proved to be the quintessential provider of unconditional love, always there for her family no matter what:

Her service for family and community on a seemingly endless array of organizations , from Sunday school teacher to Scout leader to PTA president - reflected her incredible level of selflessness.

Taking her kids to so many exciting places, her knack for dressing in costumes for special occasions, and her penchant for practical jokes ,whether it was green foot ,Äòdisease' on a new-born or green paper ,Äòlettuce' on a sandwich - only begin to describe how much fun she was to her kids and generations of grandkids. As recently as six months ago, she taught her great grandkids several card games, and they had so much fun, even though she kicked their behinds with reckless abandon.

Leading-by-example, Nellie taught her kids honesty, responsibility, and to love one another. Memories abound with her gentle and positive ways with all her family, and her many hours devoted to making every gathering fun and memorable. It's evident she passed her greatness down to her children and on down the line, based on all the hard-working, generous, and sincerely caring people amongst her family.

As a standout worker, volunteer, and leader, one word is difficult to describe all that Nellie did. But, if one had to pick one, Tireless comes to mind.What else can you say, when, after decades of record-breaking, Manger of The Year success with Tupperware, Nellie spent her ,Äòretirement' managing a uniform store for 11 yearsandpersonally delivering heavy packages from as far as Oakland to Eureka until she was nearly 80? Or, after that, as a devoted member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, serving three full-time missions before continuing as a service missionary all the way up to her passing. Her boundless energy bubbled over to her private life, out-pacing teenage great-grand kids on walks in her nineties, and friends on her jazzy even as she neared the century mark.

Incredibly, her great enthusiasm never wavered despite several immense challenges life threw her way; Nellie met each and every one with tremendous resilience and courage, from climbing the Great Wall of China at age 77 only a year after open-heart surgery, to her miraculous recovery from the Family History Library shooting nearly 20 years ago, an incident that left three people dead and made world news . Not only did she recover without scars from a serious wound, she returned back to work in the library without fear, while even forgiving the shooter. It's no wonder Nellie is an icon here in Salt Lake. Her inner strength was extraordinary; her positivity infectious; her service indefatigable; her generosity limitless; her love for people all-encompassing. Through a century of life experience, Nellie will undoubtedly remain one of the most positive, kind, and genuine persons anyone - from loved ones to acquaintances - will ever meet. Her life was a wonderfully impressive ride.

Nellie is predeceased by Paul Leighton, her husband of 39 years, and sons Steve Leighton and Johnny Leighton, five sisters, and three brothers. She is survived by sister Mary Allen Brown, daughter Judy Lewis, daughter Kathleen Bailey, son David Leighton,13 grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren, and 8 great-great grandchildren.

A viewing will be held on Friday, March 15 from 6-8 pm and at Larkin Sunset Lawn Mortuary, 260 E.S. Temple, Salt Lake City, followed by a viewing at 2 pm and the funeral at 3 pm on Saturday, March 16 at 3 pm, Salt Lake City Stake Center, 149 W. 2nd N. Internment will take place in California.

Funeral services will be held at 3:00 pm on Saturday, March 16, 2019 at the Salt Lake City Stake Center, 149 West 200 North. Viewings will be held Friday evening from 6-8 pm at Larkin Mortuary, 260 East South Temple and Saturday beginning at 2:00 pm prior to the services at the church. Interment will take place in California.