

Jan Richards Miller

November 30, 1948 ~ November 13, 2024

Our loving wife, mother, grandmother, auntie, sister, friend, and confidant passed away peaceful on the evening of November 13, 2024, to the sweet songs her sisters were singing to her.

Jan (previously Helen) Richards Miller, born November 30,1948 in Ogden, Utah to Hyrum Richards and Joan Gost Richards, was the eldest daughter and third of eight siblings. Jan's wit and loving nature won over the hearts of everyone she met and she will be so greatly missed.

Endless stories were shared about her early life growing up in Salt Lake. From taking the city bus downtown to watch an Elvis movie to riding bikes around the UofU campus and playing in the Fieldhouse and stadium with her brother, to being a student body officer at Clayton Middle School, and later attending Highland High (graduating in 1967), her younger years were filled with adventures and shenanigans.

The day after high school graduation, Jan took a bus to Jackson Hole and worked at various jobs there that summer. She then attended Utah State University, cultivating special and lifelong friendships along the way. She spent some time in San Diego, as well, and ended up working as a telephone operator extraordinaire (using her famous accents and making her coworkers laugh often) in Salt Lake. She met Glenn in the early 70's, and then reconnected with him several years later. They fell in love and were married on a beautiful September afternoon in 1976, and thus followed many great adventures together - hiking, camping, skiing, travel, and moves. She and Glenn welcomed their daughter, Laurel, in 1979 and Jan took to mothering so naturally, using her creativity and immense patience throughout her motherhood journey. Many sacred friendships were formed during those early parenting years, and Jan found community in La Leche League in SLC, Amesbury, MA when the family moved to be closer to Glenn's family, and again after moving to Broomfield, CO. Always with an imaginative mind and childlike wonder, she created The Colorado Sunshine Preschool in the basement of their home, with an attendee of one: Laurel. During at-home preschool time, she would teach about the proper way to answer the telephone, they would explore arts and crafts, and they even took breaks for "recess" time.

Returning to SLC was Jan's goal, and the family moved to Sugarhouse in 1986. Surrounded by family and friends, Jan thrived. She threw parties (so many parties!), volunteered at Laurel's school, made new friends and connected with old ones, and even volunteered as a docent at the University of Utah Museum of Fine Arts, eventually retiring and earning her 20-year pin! She always mentioned her love for the children she would take on tours of the museum, as she found them to be so curious and polite. In Jan's own words, she hoped "...the innate creativity of all children everywhere may be cherished and respected, and that their world will be safer, freer, and allow them time for play." She was a great example of these dreams taking hold.

Jan was an artist, and would often be found doodling and creating, whether it was paperdolls for the children in her life, Post-It Note sketches, or more serious artwork. She attended live model drawing classes for decades at The Kings Cottage and created a huge body of work, preferring a simple utilitarian style using pencils and paper. In 1999 she started a card company, Surrey Hills Collection, named after the Melbourne, Australia suburb where her mom was born and raised. The whimsical and dear characters she created were sold all over Salt Lake City in gift shops and museums and brought joy to so many.

Her only grandchild, Madeleine, was born in 2008, and Jan embraced her new role as “Mimi” immediately. They spent countless hours doing art, sewing, writing letters back-and-forth, talking on the phone, going on little outings, laughing, and reading together. There has never been a more perfect pairing of a granddaughter and her grandmother.

Jan took a vested interest in the lives of those she loved. The amount of information she stored in her brain about those she held close was immense. She was an avid reader and truly enjoyed the journey books could take her on. When life was stressful, her keen advice would be to “just get lost in a book.” She was a deep thinker and always wanted the real answer when she asked, “How are you today?” There was no surface level with Jan. Her love and curiosity ran deep.

Survived by her husband Glenn, daughter Laurel Miller-Jones, son-in-law Garrett Jones, granddaughter Madeleine Jones, and siblings John Richards, Joan Sperry, Anne Richards, and Steve Richards. Preceded in death by her parents, brothers Dave and Robbie Richards, sister, Karen Richards, nephew, Lenard, and niece, Nicole (Haydn).

A very heartfelt and special thank you to Bristol Hospice (in particular Olivia and Jessica) for providing such care, attention, and friendship over the last many months, and the deepest appreciation to the care team at Twin Oaks for so beautifully taking gentle care of Jan, for loving her, and for providing her dignity and comfort. She loved you all tremendously.

A private celebration of life will be held to honor a life well-lived.