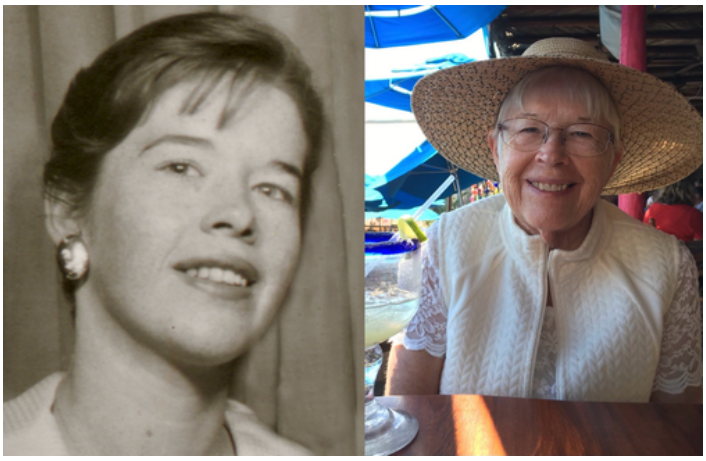

Jenial Rae (Birch) Shakib

July 6, 1940 ~ September 27, 2024

Jenial Rae (Birch) Shakib was born to Elmo Malberg and Nora Elvina (Hathaway) Birch, the third of thirteen children and the eldest daughter, on July 6, 1940. She passed away at the age of 84 on Friday, September 27, 2024.

Jenial was deeply loved and admired by all who knew her from every phase of her life. She was a quiet and boundless source of strength and an influence for good. She had an inherent and unrelenting capacity to see the best in everyone and every circumstance, no matter how challenging or inequitable. She met every challenge head-on, could and would fix anything, and would do anything for those she loved.

The circumstances Jenial faced as a young child were very difficult. Through all the early and extreme hardships, Jenial had a clear vision of her future and worked hard to achieve and exceed her dreams. At the age of thirteen, she took a job at the local cafe in Roberts, Idaho to make money to share with her family. After graduating from high school and before moving to Pocatello to begin college, Jenial saved enough money to buy a house in Roberts for her family. Jenial had a strong bond with her siblings, describing them as “adorable and intelligent children who were lost to their parents and each other, but in the end, grew up to become the kind of adults that would make any parents proud.”

The next phase of Jenial’s life was both unexpected and extraordinary. She moved from Pocatello to Ogden, Utah to share an apartment with her older brother Elmont and to make money to attend college at Weber State. Her brother introduced her to a handsome and charming young college student from Iran, Nasser Shakib, whom he met bowling. Nasser knew from the moment he met Jenial that he would ask this kindhearted and genuine young woman to marry him. They were married on July 1, 1960, just five days before Jenial’s 20th birthday.

Jenial pursued her education and career with focus and dedication. As a young couple, Jenial and Nasser worked many part-time jobs to save enough money for college. Jenial began her long career at Hill Air Force Base as a clerk typist and worked nights at a local noodle parlor until she and Nasser had saved enough money to cover her college tuition. She earned Bachelor of Science degrees in Accounting and Business Administration from Weber State University and applied and was selected for the highly competitive Copper Cap Program, a U.S. Air Force program designed to train college graduates as contract specialists. Jenial served the U.S. Air Force as a civilian for four decades, achieving a GS-14 grade level, and earning the admiration of her supervisors and all she supervised. After forty years of federal service, she retired for several months and then returned to work as a consultant for another decade.

Family meant everything to Jenial. Her wonderful grandchildren, Thomas and Sarah, were the light in her eyes. She was exceedingly proud of their many successes and cherished every moment she spent with them hunting worms

and bugs in the garden, cheering them on at their swim meets and school plays and recitals, and taking them crab fishing for the first time.

Jenial's life experiences opened her mind to the world. As a young wife and mother, she embraced the culture of Iran, mastering Persian cooking and all the traditions of this ancient and beautiful culture. She enjoyed trips to Germany and England to visit family and friends, and, in the last decade of her life, went on many memorable road trips with her daughter to the national parks and to her peaceful condo on the Oregon coast.

Jenial had a special passion for helping young people. She took great pleasure in her volunteer work holding newborns in the University of Utah Nursery and Neonatal Intensive Care units. In the last years of her life, Jenial warmly welcomed two bright young women, Razia and Yalda, into her home to help them achieve their full potential.

Jenial was preceded in death by her dear husband, Nasser, and is survived by her beloved children, Shaun (Sabine) and Julie, and adored grandchildren, Thomas and Sarah.

A memorial service will be held from 1-4 pm on Saturday, October 19, 2024, at Larkin Mortuary located at 260 East South Temple Street, Salt Lake City, Utah. Please bring your best stories and memories of Jenial, and we will give thanks for the love she brought to our lives.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the International Rescue Committee (@ircsaltlakecity).