

Kate Lauvon Kirkham Christmas

December 13, 1944 ~ December 4, 2024

St. George, UT - Kate Kirkham Christmas passed away December 4, 2024, after a long, complicated battle with Parkinson's disease. While she will be terribly missed, we are happy that she is no longer struggling against her temporary physical limitations.

Kate was born on December 13, 1944, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to LaPreal Rich Pugmire Kirkham and ElMoine Woodhouse Kirkham. She spent many summers at Bear Lake with her sister Diane (Miller) and a much-loved bunch of Pugmire cousins picking raspberries and playing card games.

She graduated from Salt Lake City's East High and then attended the University of Utah. There, she was an ASUU (student association) leader, chair of the Union Program Council, vice president of Alpha Delta Pi sorority, and inducted into the prestigious Beehive Honor Society. She graduated, at the age of 20, with her bachelor's degree in sociology.

At 20, she moved to Washington D.C. to work for the National Education Association (NEA) in Training and Development. She went on to finish a master's degree in human resource development from George Washington University and a PhD in organizational behavior from the Union Graduate School.

In D.C., she connected with amazing colleagues to innovate approaches to diversity and the systematic underpinnings of discrimination decades before it was recognized and studied by the business community as a whole.

She started her own consulting firm Resources for Change, Inc., and became a senior associate with Elsie Y. Cross Associates of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her work and research on racism and social inequality benefited corporations she consulted, like Bell Helicopter, Corning Incorporated, and Girl Scouts of America.

She joined Brigham Young University (BYU) in 1978 as an associate professor of organizational leadership and strategy in the Marriott School of Management and settled in Springville, Utah.

She served as the associate director of BYU's MBA program and BYU's Women's Research Institute and was the director of BYU's Master of Organizational Behavior program.

In 2003, BYU established the Dyer Institute for Leading Organizational Change with Kate as the executive director. She was awarded the Marriott School Citizenship Award, Outstanding Mentor award, and the Mentor of the Year award, among other honors.

She interviewed women for the Aileen H. Clyde 20th Century Women's Legacy Archive oral history project and was a speaker for BYU Women's Conference and BYU devotionals.

Her research and scholarly pursuits were published in many peer-reviewed scientific journals, such as Management and Organizational Behavior Teaching Society, Organizational Dynamics, Research Management, and Journal of Management Education. She was also named one of Utah Business's 30 Women to Watch in March 2001.

To support the next generation of sociology students and continue her lifelong pursuit and support of change, she generously established The Kate L. Kirkham Graduate Student Finish Line Endowed Fund at the University of Utah. Her support and influence will be felt for many years to come.

Kate retired in 2008 and moved to Toquerville, Utah, where she delighted in the beauty of the desert and in the people she connected with there.

Kate was an active member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and served in many callings, including stake Relief Society president and as a member of the General Evaluation Correlation Committee. In 1990, she was called to the Relief Society General Board and served many people through her time there.

Kate was diagnosed with Parkinson's in the early 2000s but continued to serve others even as she struggled with her own challenges. When she could no longer drive, she relied on rideshares to get her to doctor appointments in Toquerville and met a particular cowboy poet driver named Robert (Bob) Christmas. Their friendship developed through the drives and eventually led to their wedding on July 14, 2020, in Spanish Fork, Utah, and their sealing in the Manti Temple on July 14, 2021. Bob lovingly took on the caretaker role with diligence and dedication. Her family is forever grateful for his compassion, selflessness, and the joy he brought to her life.

Kate loved hosting friends and family. Every year she would hold the annual "No Bears are Out Tonight Picnic and Barbeque," a tradition much-loved by those who knew her. Kate loved musicals and traveling and would attend the theater and take trips with her sister and their friends.

After her retirement, she found more time to write and was an incredible poet. She won awards for her poetry and was included in "Sand and Sky: Poems from Utah," a published poetry anthology. She was a brilliant, engaging person who 'told it like it is.' Her humor, her thoughtfulness, and all-around amazingness will be greatly missed.

She held nightly "check-in" phone calls with her sister Diane. When the phone rang at 10:58pm, everyone knew it was Kate calling. We are sure that Kate and Diane are back to their nightly check-ins and card games with family and cousins on the other side.

Kate is preceded in death by her parents, her brother Gary (Nona Parker) Kirkham, and her sister Diane (Dennis) Miller. She is survived by her husband Robert Christmas and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces, and grandnephews that think the world of her.

As per her wishes, there will not be a funeral service. A viewing will be held Friday, December 20th from 1:00-3:00pm at Larkin Sunset Gardens (1950 E 10600 S, Sandy, Utah) with the internment to occur there at 3:00pm.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the charity of your choice. And please sign the online memorial guest book and share pictures or memories of Kate.

https://www.mykeeper.com/KateKirkham

Those wishing to view the service via Zoom can click "Watch Service" or follow the link:
https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/KDOM1PMx9Gc7QPCPkXayxoWmnkBPdFSfNdgUu9uZQFo4OrgjCLlb5Od-w2wVRM