

Kathryn Fletcher Fowles

November 20, 1946 ~ December 25, 2024

Kathryn Fletcher Fowles opened her big brown eyes on Nov. 20, 1946, in a Boston hospital, spied the world and its people - many of whom would become fast friends - and immediately set about making connections. She closed those eyes for the last time on Dec. 25, 2024, in a Denver hospital, felled by chronic lung disease, surrounded by her family and mourned by hundreds who knew and loved her.

Kathryn was the eldest of eight children born to Rosemary Bennett Fletcher and Robert Chipman Fletcher, and easily wore the mantle of role model, mentor, adviser, friend, organizer and creative problem solver to her younger siblings growing up in Summit, New Jersey. At 12, as her mother was on bed rest with Baby No. 6, while Baby No. 5 was barely 8 months old, Kathie (as she was called at the time) took on motherly responsibilities way beyond her years. At the same time, she was the cool older sister, a cheerleader with tons of friends, who was always invited to parties and understood fashion, hairstyles and dating. She played the piano like a pro (Kathryn and her mom once performed Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 for two pianos), sang in choirs, performed in high school musicals and was often the star of "roadshows," little skits performed at the Short Hills Ward of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After graduating from Summit High School in 1964, Kathryn left for the University of Utah, which turned out not to be a good fit for her so she moved home with the family, who then lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico. She later returned to college at Brigham Young University, where, ironically, she was lined up with a dashing U. student named Robert Fowles, who had recently returned from a Latter-day Saint mission to Beirut. He was funny and fun, energetic and thoughtful - and oh so smart. So she transferred back to the U. to earn her degree in journalism and marry that handsome future doctor in the Salt Lake Temple.

In 1969, it was back to Boston for Robert to attend medical school, and where they would have their first child. Four years later, they were off to his residency at Stanford, where they had three more children. Finally, in 1983, they settled in Utah, where she lived until she died.

As a mom, Kathryn infused creativity into everything from chores to homework to nightly book reading, adopting the voices and even accents of different characters. Her home became a center for the entire extended clan and others, whom she invited to stay with her for weeks, sometimes months. She also hosted Sunday and holiday dinners, where she dressed the table elegantly, displaying gifts and notes to every participant. If you complimented Kathryn on an item of clothing she was wearing, she might offer it to you. She invited her sisters to "shop in Kathryn's closet," and extended it to nieces at the annual "flip-flop fest."

Because she believed systems could always be better, Kathryn threw herself into tons of volunteer work. She organized swim meets at the former Fort Douglas club, directed musicals at Clayton Junior High, worked on

transforming the middle school experience, was an adviser for student government, offered scripture classes and workshops to interested church members, created a "temple prep" class to help Latter-day Saint couples get ready for those religious rituals, and taught seminary and Institute of Religion classes for 22 years, pioneering a parenting class that welcomed babies. She worked strenuously to make sure all voices were heard, especially those on the margins.

Driven by innate curiosity and voracious reading, she constantly asked why things were done a certain way and why not a better way?

Whether grabbing a snack with a friend, or chatting up the server at a restaurant, it wasn't just small talk or gossip she was after but a deep bond. To Kathryn, relationships were paramount. As she battled lung disease in the last few years, she developed a wide circle of texting, phone and email buddies, finding points of commonality with a diverse set of friends and family.

As she was wheeled into the operating room for her final surgery in Denver, she raised her arms in celebration and said, "Here I go on my next adventure."

Kathryn is survived by: Robert Fowles (husband) and children Keri Williams, Tim Fowles (Kristin), Lacy Anderson (Brandon), Madelyn Roberts (Cody) and grandchildren: Calvin, Ryan (James), David (Brianna), Dan (Lexi), Jacob, Luke, Will, Elly, Miles, Henry, Clara, Greta and Hattie - and a great-grandchild on the way.

Visitation will be on Jan. 8, 6 to 8 pm, Larkin Sunset Lawn Mortuary, 2350 E. 1300 South, Salt Lake City, and another one on Jan. 9, 10:30 am, in the Yale LDS Ward, 1431 E. Gilmer Drive, Salt Lake City, with the funeral at noon. Interment will be at Salt Lake City Cemetery.

For those unable to attend, services will be streamed via Zoom. Please click on the "Watch Services" link above.

In lieu of flowers, send donations to: National Jewish Health in Denver and Latter-day Saint Philanthropies.