

Leslie Barton

November 14, 1957 ~ March 2, 2022

Leslie Barton passed away quietly at home on March 2, 2022, after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. She was 64. Leslie's death leaves a hole in our hearts. She was the beautiful, devoted, and patient wife of Carl, the constant and loving mother of Dane (Chelsea) and Sean (Adell), and the doting grandmother of Bo and Millie. Leslie leaves a legacy of virtue, kindness, grace, modesty, good humor, intellectual curiosity, service, faith, and love of family, God, friends, and music. Life was about relationships for her. People mattered more than things. Leslie loved to laugh with people, not at them, and others' names and mistakes were safe with her. She was physically attractive, beautiful in spirit, and strong spiritually, physically, and emotionally. Many leaned and relied on her and felt safe in her presence.

Leslie filled her life with family, friends, children's literature, art, cheese, peanut M&Ms, tennis, laughter, and movies and television shows like The Sound of Music, Mrs. Doubtfire, and Father of the Bride, the Carol Burnett Show, the Andy Griffith Show. She loved and had a gift in nurturing and teaching children. She lived a happy, blessed, and wonderful life. She deliberately chose to be happy, even during her protracted fight with Alzheimer's. We believe and hope she is now spending time with family and friends who preceded her in death, playing the violin in a heavenly orchestra, playing doubles tennis, sharing her faith, and laughing with and loving people like Grandpa and Grandma Weight, Don and Erma Barton, Julie Andrews, Robin Williams, Carol Burnett, and Barney Fife (Don Knotts).

Leslie was born on November 14, 1957, to Jack and Cherie Van Ry as the second of five children. She grew up in Sandy where she attended Bella Vista elementary school and Butler junior high. Leslie graduated from Skyline High School in 1976, where she and Carl first met. She earned a bachelor's degree in early childhood and elementary education from the University of Utah in 1980 and took a job teaching second grade and kindergarten at Magna Elementary and later at William Penn Elementary. Leslie was a spiritual woman and a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and loved serving and teaching there, particularly when it involved children or music. She was the organist in her church ward and trained many young organists until her disease prevented her from doing so.

Family was Leslie's highest priority. Her personal journal captures her feelings about family: In 2016, she said, "Family is the BEST!" She and Carl had a model marriage of more than 41 years during which she patiently supported and tolerated his drive, energy, and ambition: "He's the love of my life and always will be … What a blessing he is in my life---Don't know what I'd do without him." Leslie was a born nurturer and an exemplary mother who loved and trained her two boys: "Dane … is a wonderful son whom I love and admire. I had a good day because of Dane." "Yesterday was great having Sean with us. … We're so proud of him … we love … him." Leslie

was an exceptional mother and passed her love of music and reading onto her sons. She and Carl never missed a game, concert, or performance as their boys grew up. It was only after Sean finished playing college football that Leslie privately told Carl that she had never liked football. She was so happy when Dane married Chelsea and they had children: “We love our dear sons. We love Bo, Millie, Chelsea. Life is good!”

Leslie loved and was close to her parents and siblings and enjoyed time with her three sisters: “My sisters are always so good to me. I wish my sisters and I could be together more.” She and her three sisters took a sisters-trip to Southern Utah shortly before COVID, which was a highlight for Leslie. She also loved making a weekly visit with her sister, Wendy, to see their parents. During COVID, those visits gave them all a chance to laugh, reminisce, and listen to her dad sing. Leslie’s love for and commitment to family extended to her in-laws. Leslie took French classes from Carl’s father at the University of Utah before she started dating Carl. After they married, she and Carl traveled with his parents for eight weeks each summer in Europe. Leslie and Carl’s parents loved and admired each other, and her love extended to Carl’s siblings and their children.

She also had another close family relationship with her Father in Heaven and His Son: “I love the Lord and hope I’m doing more to show it to Him” (Leslie’s personal Journal, 2016). Heaven always felt close when Leslie was praying, and her family received many blessings by just being hers.

As Leslie’s disease progressed, her “family” expanded to include a group of trusted and devoted friends. She loved and relied on them without reservation. For several years, they cared for Leslie and filled her life with laughter, lunches, tennis, walks, aerobics, yoga, gab sessions, hikes, piano lessons, private violin, harp, and piano concerts, and reading children’s books. Those friends became family to Leslie and Carl in every sense.

Only about 10 days before COVID, Leslie’s “family” expanded again, as her ability to speak and care for herself had ebbed away. A team of private caregivers led by Andy Meacham became her constant companions, and they rendered attentive, tailored, and amazing care to Leslie. Her current team of Shelby Mower, Ashlyn Anderson, Angela Workman, Izzy McGrath, and Alex Davidson have rendered unparalleled, attentive, selfless, creative, and exceptional care and service to Leslie and Carl. They laughed together, cried together, and became Leslie’s closest and constant companions during her vulnerable years. Carl and his family wish to express their gratitude to those caring, remarkable, and devoted ladies.

Leslie was born with music in her soul. It enriched her life, allowed her to form lifelong relationships, guided her important choices, and allowed her to serve in ways that filled her soul. It was in the Skyline High concert choir that Leslie first met her husband, Carl. It was in the Skyline choir and orchestra that she made lifelong friendships with friends, like Liz Ungricht Van Leeuwen, Tammara Bishoff Oswald, and Nancy Kuhn, all of whom continued to bless her life with music. Leslie’s first date with Carl was an evening at the Utah symphony. While they were dating, he joined the Mormon youth symphony and chorus a tenor just to be near her on Saturdays, where she played the violin in the orchestra. Once married, she immersed her home and family in music and required her two sons to take piano lessons until they finished high school, as a condition to playing sports. She taught violin and piano lessons for many years and was active with VIP Strings. The Barton family routinely attended the symphony and Utah Chamber Artists concerts. Leslie loved to sing and to play the violin, piano, and organ, and she taught many children and teenagers to do the same.

Music made Leslie’s journey with Alzheimer’s so safe, happy, calm, and manageable. Her decline has been filled with music therapy, playing the piano, Broadway soundtracks, religious music, and rock music. She continued until 2019 to play the organ in church and to teach young people to play. Karen Hughes, Andrea Hughes, Jonathan Hughes, and Stacey Segura performed unforgettable private Christmas concerts for Leslie and Carl in 2020 and 2021. Other friends performed and sang with her often, including Mari Nichols, Stacey Segura, Tammara Oswald and Nancy Kuhn, Bridget Dopp, Alison Smart and her girls. Starting in 2017, she took piano lessons for three and one-half years from Tom Eyring just for fun and to keep her brain sharp. Tom was so patient and encouraging with Leslie until her final lesson shortly before COVID. Music was Leslie’s refuge during those years. During her final weeks, Karen Hughes played the violin at her bedside several times a week.

Leslie’s battle with Alzheimer’s lasted for about 10 years. The first visible sign of her disease occurred in 2013, when she wandered off and got lost in the Benjamin Franklin Museum in Philadelphia. The unexpected and terrible

discovery of her condition changed everything for Leslie and Carl. They were never closer or more united or in love with each other. Leslie's ordeal revealed her unwavering courage: "Life can be so hard. Really need to gut it up and get going." "Worked on Moonlight Sonata . . . . I'm frustrated about signatures now. Play by ear?" (Leslie's personal journal, 2016). Another example of Leslie's grit occurred when she went five and one-half years without eating any processed sugar, carbohydrates, dairy, or meats and followed a strict regimen of cardio exercise, meditation, and medications outlined by her doctors.

Leslie's disease robbed her of the people and things she loved and enjoyed most. Her grim, relentless path selfishly claimed her chance to nurture grandchildren, to read, play the piano, organ, and violin, use the telephone to talk with loved ones and friends, attend the temple, play tennis, shared her feelings, and look ahead to and live the future to which she and Carl had looked forward upon his retirement. With each passing month and year, parts of Leslie went missing until she could no longer care for herself and became totally dependent on others. In recent years, she could
no longer brush her teeth, dress herself, shower on her own or manage her personal hygiene, drive, follow simple a recipe, feed herself, turn on the TV, buy groceries, or text loved ones. Her memory, perceptions, and judgment all eventually failed her. She could no longer walk and suffered several falls in recent months. She hallucinated. It was a long, intense, relentless path for Leslie, Carl, and their family.

Leslie and Carl learned two life-changing lessons from the length and intensity of her Alzheimer's journey. First, there was no road map or timetable for grief to tell us how near to or how far we were from the desired, yet terrible, destination of eventual relief. We have desperately desired the peace of passing for her and for ourselves, because we could not go on much longer with this heavy stone weighing down our every thought and feeling. There was no escape from and seemingly no end to her journey. Second, we know more clearly now than ever before that God knows and loves Leslie and her family and that He has, at every turn, directed Carl in her care and has sent friends, doctors, caregivers, and family to the rescue, often in unexpected and surprising ways. Leslie is survived by her husband, Carl, her sons Dane (Chelsea), Sean (Adell), her grandchildren, Bo and Millie, her parents, Jack and Cherie Van Ry, her siblings, Charlayne (Dirk), Wendy (Tom), John, and Stephanie, sisters-in-
law (Suzanne Hansen, Valerie Youngstrom, Linda Barton), brothers-in-law (Eric Barton, Dave Hansen), and a host of other relatives and friends.

Funeral services will be held on March 5, 2022, at 2:00 p.m. at the North Salt Lake Stake Center church building, located at 900 Eaglepointe Drive, North Salt Lake, Utah 84054. A viewing will be held at the same location on both March 4, 2022, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. and on March 5, 2022, from 12:30 to 1:45 p.m. In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Utah Chamber Artists at https://www.utahchamberartists.org/support-us/donate/

For those unable to attend the service in person the family invites you to join via Zoom at: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83001787342 A free Zoom account is required and you will need to sign into your account to join the service..