

Linda King Newell

January 16, 1941 ~ February 12, 2023

Linda King Newell (82) died February 12, 2023. She was a beloved wife, mother, and grandmother, a prized aunt and treasured friend. Linda and her husband L. Jackson Newell enjoyed a truly remarkable 60-year personal and professional partnership. Linda forged a self-made career as a writer and historian while raising four children in a time and place where there were few role models. A champion of justice and truth, she created beauty in abundance—drawing from nature and her own gracious heart.

Born January 16, 1941, to Pearl Davies and Foisy Earl King, Linda was the second of five children. After graduating from Millard High School, she attended the College of Southern Utah (now Southern Utah University) on scholarship. There she participated in student government, Pi Rho Omega Sorority, and the Drama Club. Linda completed her BA degree in Art and Education at Utah State University.

A Spring break Drama Club trip in 1962 opened a world of possibilities to this small-town girl who had rarely ventured further than 150 miles from home. The club traveled by bus to New York City, where they saw five Broadway plays and an opera, and then to Washington DC where Utah Senator Frank Moss arranged for them to tour the White House. There she had the honor of meeting President John F. Kennedy, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson, and Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The trip ignited a desire in Linda to make an impact on the world—and she did.

Linda spent her college summers working for the Utah Parks Company at Bryce Canyon National Park and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Between her junior and senior year, her future husband Jack's attention was captured by her spunk when they both worked at the North Rim of the Grand Canyon.

Linda was a noted historian, writer, editor, and independent scholar. She wrote or co-authored four books including Mormon Enigma: Emma Hale Smith, co-authored with Valeen Tippetts Avery, and published by Doubleday in 1984. This meticulously-researched biography of the first wife of Joseph Smith, the founder of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, provided groundbreaking insight into the beginnings of the church and the practice of polygamy from a woman's perspective. She was heartbroken that upon publication of the book she and Val were ostracized and banned from speaking in the institution she cared deeply for and that had nurtured her during her childhood. Mormon Enigma won the Evans Award for the Best Biography in Western History, the Mormon History Association's Best Book Award, and the John Whitmer Historical Association Best Biography Award. A revised edition was published in 1994 by the University of Illinois Press and remains in print. In 2016, the Wall Street Journal listed it as second among the five best books on Mormon history and culture.

For Utah’s Statehood Centennial, Linda authored or co-authored the histories of Millard, Garfield, and Piute Counties. She contributed a number of essays in other books and published over two dozen articles. With her husband Jack, she co-edited Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought from 1982-1987. She was a series editor for the University of Utah Press, Development Director for the Utah Humanities Council, and Director of Special Projects at Deep Springs College.

Linda was past president of the Mormon History Association and John Whitmer Historical Association. She served on a number of boards including the Utah Humanities Council, the Evans Biography Award, the Lowell Bennion Community Service Center at the University of Utah and was a founding member of the Gun Violence Prevention Center of Utah. She was a proud member and President of the Utah PEO Chapter A.

For forty years, Linda worked passionately to realize her vision of establishing an artist’s and writer’s retreat near Zion National Park. As board chair of the Zion Canyon Mesa she oversaw the design and construction of the first buildings. In honor of her decades of work to make the retreat center come to life, one of the residency cabins is named the “Linda King Newell House of Grand Dreams.”

Linda was also a prize-winning artist who worked in watercolors and oils. Her work has been shown in galleries in Utah, California, Ontario, Canada and is in many private collections across the country. She lovingly painted portraits of the people and places she cherished the most—her grandchildren and the landscapes of Georgian Bay, Deep Springs Valley, Zion, and the Grand Canyon. She could turn any space or canvas into a beautiful work of art.

Nowhere did her kindness, generosity of spirit, gifts for creating beauty and for teaching others express themselves more fully than the decade she and Jack spent at Deep Springs College where she literally made the desert bloom. She sowed flowers in her garden and in her childrens’ gardens. She always had a spray of flowers on the table and a single bloom on her desk and one for Jack, too. Linda was tenacious and overcame adversity with dignity and grace. She always rooted for the underdog.

Linda is survived by her husband, Jack, their four children, Chris (Bob Hoffa), Jennifer (Steve Anjewierden), Eric (Emma Mecham), and Heather, and twelve grandchildren: Ben, Drake, Elise, Ezra, Lila, Lydia, Micah, Nate, Nicholas, Sage, Sydney, and Will. She is also survived by her sister Charlene King Kotoku (Ken) and her beloved sisters-in-law Joyce Chesnut, Lenette Wilde, and Faith King. Her son-in-law Keith McKeown, brothers Gerald King, Terral F. King (Faith) and George Stephen King, and her parents proceeded her in death.

Donations in honor of Linda Newell may be made to the Zion Canyon Mesa; PO Box 145, Springdale, Utah 84767 http://zioncanyonmesa.org/donate

A Celebration of Life will be held will be held Thursday, February 16 from 6-8pm at the Garden Park Ward (1150 E. Yale Ave. Salt Lake City, UT.) Funeral services will be Friday, February 17 at 10am at the Garden Park Ward.

For those unable to attend in person, Zoom will be available. A free Zoom account is required. You can attend the service by clicking the "Watch Services" button above.