

Marci Townsley Phillips

August 16, 1943 ~ June 16, 2022

Marci Townsley Phillips passed away on Thursday, June 16, 2022, at Sunrise Memory Care in Sandy, Utah.

She was born on August 16, 1943, to Matthew and Lettitia Townsley in Logansport, Indiana. She and Keith Leroy Phillips were married July 31, 1998, in Fillmore, Utah.

Marci graduated cum laude from Brigham Young University in 1965 and earned a master's degree in French from L'Institut at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1983. She also studied in Mexico and in Quebec, Canada. She was a gifted linguist, speaking fluent Spanish and French, and had a lengthy career teaching those languages as well as bilingual and cross-cultural education. After graduating from BYU, she taught Spanish at Snake River Junior High in Blackfoot, Idaho, then moved to Port Huron, Michigan where she taught Spanish to elementary grade gifted students until that program was discontinued, at which time she was moved to the high school. She did not like the brutal Michigan winters, and moved back to Utah intending to earn credentials to teach business education. Instead, she was called to serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the California San Diego Mission. The call was to an English-speaking mission, but when the mission president discovered her fluency in Spanish, he transferred her to the Spanish-speaking mission and sent her to the Imperial Valley area. This inspired move placed Marci on a path that would impact the rest of her life.

Upon completion of her mission in 1976, Marci returned to the Imperial Valley and began teaching Spanish and French at Central Union High School in El Centro. Hurricane Kathleen struck the region on her first day of school there. That afternoon she went kayaking through the flooded streets with friends, a most unusual pastime for a desert community. A devoted member of the El Centro Spanish Ward, Marci delighted in leading the congregation in song. She particularly enjoyed Primary Singing Time, as she loved being among the children and sharing her love of music with them. Never a 'shy' singer, she was known in the Ward and in her neighborhood for her beautiful singing voice. She continued her passion for sharing the Word of God for the rest of her life, through both her words and her actions. She made many friends with whom she remained close over the years.

In 1985 Marci made her first trip to France on a scholarship from the American Association of Teachers of French and the French Government. From 1994-2001, she took many groups of students to Europe, sharing with them her love of the languages and cultures of Spain and France. During this time, her nieces and nephews greatly anticipated the wonderful Christmas gifts she sent them, unique little items she picked up in the countries she visited. After Marci retired, she remained in the Valley, surrounded by a large group of very dear friends she had grown to love over more than forty years' residence among them. In 2019, Marci moved to Utah to be nearer to family.

Marci was an incredibly kind and generous soul who reached out to help many as she made her way through life. She was a mother to any child who needed love, and a friend to everyone she met. She particularly cherished her Church friends in the El Centro Spanish Ward. We all shall miss her.

She is survived by two brothers, John (Renee) Townsley of Spokane, WA, and Robert (Debra) Townsley of Sandy, UT; sister Patricia (Robert) Willingham of Cape Girardeau, MO; two stepchildren, William (Alycia) Phillips and Vickie Ortega, five step grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, June 24, 2022, at 2 p.m. MDT at Larkin Mortuary Chapel in Sandy, Utah.

Interment will be at Evergreen Cemetery in El Centro, California on Thursday, June 30, 2022, following an 8:30 a.m. PDT graveside service.