

Maria José Muniz Pia

October 29, 1925 ~ January 24, 2025

Our beloved Maria José Muniz Pia, age 99, passed away peacefully in her home that she lived in for 64 years on Yalecrest Avenuewas a mainstay of that area of Salt Lake. Maria was a wife, Mother, Grandma, Great Grandma, and our dear friend. We miss her greatly. Our hearts are filled with a sweet, peaceful spirit, with the hope that we will be with her again.

Maria was born in Brazil and was beautiful, intelligent, and curious about the world around her. She went to school in Belo Horzonte, Minas Gerais, and was the daughter of successful parents Francisco Muniz da Silva and her mother Nair Lopez Jocob. She was also athletic and enjoyed playing tennis, volleyball and riding horses. Given her many talents, she was bound to catch the eye of many suiters. In particular, LeRoy Quinten Pia from Salt Lake City, Utah had completed an LDS mission and was working in Brazil and saw her one day. It was love at first sight. They were married on December 16, 1944 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Maria and LeRoy had two children in Brazil: Frank Pia (deceased) and Ron Pia. The family then moved to Salt Lake City for LeRoy to obtain a Masters Degree. In Salt Lake, Maria had two more children, her son LeRoy José Muniz Pia (deceased) and her only daughter Shanoa Pia. Maria’s children all became successful in their fields: Frank became a civil engineer, Ron started his own furniture business, LeRoy Jr. partnered in an appraisal firm; and Shanoa became an electronic design engineer.

Meanwhile, Vovo taught Portuguese at the University of Utah and the University of Arizona. In 1963 she launched into a life of travel, including: archeological digs in Aman, Jordan. She served in the Peace Corp several times in Brazil. One of her passions was making gorgeous flower arrangements, and her house always smelled of fresh flowers. She worked about 15 years at Miller & Ellison flower shop and competed in flower arrangement competitions becoming quite well-known in town.

Maria and LeRoy traveled the world together. They remarkably visited all seven continents including such remote places as the South Pole, including a submarine trip to the bottom of the ocean and a plane trip to the top of Mount Everest. They traveled up and down the Amazon River, went on safari in Kenya and Tanzania, visited the Taj Mahal in India, walked the Great Wall of China, boated the Suez Canal, and entered the Pyramids of Egypt.

Maria loved competition and was an avid Mahjong competitor. Many times she participated in competing cruise ship competitions. She was also an adept gambler. She was the President of the Utah Associated Garden Club and the President of the SLC New Comers club.

Maria’s many grandchildren and great grandchildren (4 children, 13 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren, and 1 and ½ great great grandchildren)

and they all called her “Vovo’” which means grandmother in Portuguese. Vovo generously shared her love of travel with the ever-growing family, arranging a trip for everyone to her beloved Brazil and many other places throughout

the world, as far away as outer Mongolia where she rode the smaller horses that are the decedents of the horses the armies of Genghis Khan and many other such places that most of us would have to look at a map to find. She always hosted holiday parties at her house, where there were talent shows, and of course she gave speeches saying that her family was the most talented in the world. She was known as a “gift-giver” and gave everyone a gift who came to her famous Christmas parties, whether they were relatives or not. Even Santa and his elf received a gift from Vovo.

Preceded in death by her husband LeRoy Quentin Pia, her son Frank Pia, and her youngest son LeRoy J. Pia, the family carries on Maria’s legacy of travel, curiosity for the world around us, a can do anything motto, and a pursuit of their dreams. For Vovo, no dream was too big to dream, no mountain too high, no ocean too deep, and no desert too dry. The world was an amazing place to her and she gave us a wonderful appreciation for it. We love Vovo’.

On Friday, Jan 31st, friends and family may attend the viewing from 6-8pm at Larkin Sunset Lawn, 2350 East 1300 South, Salt Lake City.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, Feb 1st at 12:00 noon, at the Bonneville Ward, 1535 East Bonneview Drive (1050 South), with a viewing beginning at 11:00 am. Interment at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park.