

Marilyn Robinson Holt, PhD

February 16, 1928 ~ February 24, 2024

Marilyn Robinson Holt, PhD
02-16-1928 to 02-24-2024

Matriarch of Utah Theatre, Marilyn Holt passed away on February 24, 2024, due to dementia and age.

Dr. Holt was a faculty member of the University of Utah Theatre Department for more than 30 years and chair for 9 years. She was an assistant professor, an associate professor, a professor, and a professor emerita. While with the Theatre Department, Marilyn, with fellow associate and friend, Kenneth Washington, initiated six new courses. She also chaired the graduate program. She played leads in at least 120 full productions and directed 30 at the University in Salt Lake City and throughout Utah and the Intermountain West.

Some of her favorite roles were in “Long Day’s Journey Into Night,” “Knowing Cairo,” “Vivat, Vivat Regina,” and “Road to Mecca.”

Among her favorite plays she directed were two productions of “Raisin In The Sun,” one at Pioneer Theatre and again a few years later at the Babcock Theatre.

She brought winning student productions across the country to various competitions and was constantly looking out for her students.

Dr. Holt was a member of numerous professional organizations, including president of the Utah Women’s Forum and president of the board of directors for the Utah Theatre Association.

In 2008, Marilyn and her family were invited to the Utah Governor’s Mansion to accept the Governor’s Arts in Acting from Jon M. Huntsman, Jr.

She was an actress on stage, in film, and on television. On February 27, 2012, at the age 84, Marilyn starred in her last role (“How To Make A Rope Swing”), which is a testament to her dedication and her resilience.

Marilyn found time to volunteer for multiple organizations, including the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation, Humane Society of Utah, Arthritis Foundation of Utah, and March of Dimes. She also spearheaded multiple Shakespeare workshops at local public schools.

Marilyn was born to Eugene Charles William Robinson and Leone Bennion on February 16, 1928.

Growing up and attending public schools in Ogden, Marilyn first attended Weber State University. While in college, she was crowned Miss Utah in 1948 and traveled to Atlantic City to compete in the Miss America Pageant. She won the talent portion for her dramatic reading and was a finalist. She also was rewarded with a scholarship.

Upon returning to Weber State, she obtained an AS. She then transferred to the University of Utah where she earned a BS (speech and English, teacher certification), an MFA (theatre, acting), and a PhD (theatre, dramatic acting). She won many scholarship awards, including Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi. She also affiliated with Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority.

While at the University, Marilyn agreed to go on a blind date with her future husband, John William Holt. They were married the same year and were moving towards a 75-year anniversary.

The couple was blessed with three remarkable and loving children: Ann “Annie” Holt (Don Gomes), David John Holt (Judith Newman), and Karen Holt Bennion (Douglas Neal Bennion). While the children were young, the family lived briefly in Bountiful, Utah, and Burlingame, California, before settling in Salt Lake City.

Marilyn’s joys in life were numerous…
Teaching, always teaching and working with her students
Getting together with her family
Reading plays, novels, The New Yorker and The Salt Lake Tribune
Taking walks around her yard with her walking partner, her leashed cat Buddha
Recharging with her husband (the love of her life) at their cabin in Star Valley, Wyoming
Traveling the world with her family
Baking birthday “money cakes” and her famous brownies for her family
Being called Grandma “Rose” by her grandchildren and her three great-granddaughters

Marilyn is preceded in death by her parents and brothers, Kenneth Bennion Robinson and Lynn Bennion Robinson. She is survived by her husband, John, and her sister, Carol Jean Robinson Borgmeier, as well as many extended family and friends.

There will be an intimate service for family members at Larkin Sunset Lawn, 2350 East 1300 South, Salt Lake. A graveside service will be announced at a later time.

Her family would like to extend a special thank you to the angels at Legacy Cottage Memory Care and Aspire Hospice, as well as to express deep gratitude to Marilyn’s many care providers.

To honor Marilyn’s life, please consider making a donation to one of her favorite organizations: University of Utah Department of Theatre, Utah Humane Society, Plan B Theatre Company, Planned Parenthood Association of Utah, and Alzheimer’s Association-Utah Chapter.

You may also go to Larkin Sunset Lawn’s website (larkinmortuary.com) to offer condolences and to download pictures and stories of this incredibly talented, creative, witty, loving woman, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and friend.

Good bye Rose. Your joyful, genuine, and warmhearted spirit will be in our hearts forever.