

Martha Jane Stringham Wankier

January 17, 1936 ~ November 27, 2023

Martha Jane Stringham Wankier passed away Monday, November 27, surrounded by her adoring family. She was born January 17, 1936, to Ralph and Vera Stringham in Salt Lake City. Martha had three older brothers who doted on her, and whom she loved dearly. She spent her early years in Keetley, Utah where her father worked for the Park Utah Mining Company. When she was young all three of her brothers served in WWII. She remembered three stars pasted in her home's front window.

When Martha was 10 years old she moved to Salt Lake City with her parents. They eventually built a home on Gilmer Drive, and this is where she lived for the majority of her adult life. Martha graduated from East High School and the University of Utah. During the time between high school and college Martha spent a glorious summer working at Grand Canyon, where she created lasting friendships and memories. This was an experience she cherished throughout her lifetime.

She was an elementary school teacher and began and ended her teaching career at Emerson Elementary, where she met her sweetheart, Carl Wankier. He taught fifth grade and she taught second grade and their romance blossomed during a single academic year. Once they married, she retired from teaching. Carl and Martha raised four children together. They were a wonderful team who instilled discipline, hard work and loving kindness in their children. They were a study in contradictions, Carl was a quiet, down-to-earth farm boy and Martha a cultured, socially extroverted city girl. In their more than 50 years together their differences were eclipsed by their commitment to one another and their family.

Martha was fully engaged and energetic in everything she did. She was active in civic and educational issues. She was not shy in voicing her concerns regarding education and school policy. She was consistently PTA president at the schools her children attended and enjoyed being involved. In her later years she was a volunteer at Preservation Utah and loved being a docent at the Governor's mansion, Memory Grove and other SLC historical sites. She chaired the volunteer council and the Historic Homes Tour.

Martha was a committed member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She served in auxiliary leadership roles for dozens of years and relished the time she spent serving others. Her life was spent looking for ways she could help someone in need. The vast majority of her service was performed quietly, without recognition or obligation. She simply loved. She and Carl served two LDS missions together, in Los Angeles and Salt Lake City. She had a steadfast belief in the goodness of Jesus Christ.

Martha’s greatest gift was loving. She loved wholeheartedly. She was a devoted mother who was involved in each of her children’s lives. She welcomed friends and family into her home with a warm smile and lots of homemade goodies. She loved having people in her life and was always inviting friends and strangers alike into her home. Martha was connected to everyone in her neighborhood. She loved meeting people and hearing their stories. She was an exceptional listener who held no judgement. She was earnest in her desire to know people and understand them.

As Martha’s children began to marry, she loved and welcomed each of their spouses into her boundless heart. As her family grew so did her extraordinary capacity to love. Martha was an amazing mother, and yet she was an even more extraordinary grandmother. She was never too busy to be with a grandchild and created warm and unforgettable experiences with each of her 16 grandchildren. She loved being with her family and was always looking for an excuse to host an event or outing. Her love extended to great-grandchildren and numerous nieces and nephews whom she considered to be her own. She cared tirelessly for Carl as his health declined, while continuing to host and welcome family into her home.

It is not possible to overstate the impact of Martha on countless people’s lives. She will be sorely missed, and we are grateful that she is no longer suffering the ravages of old age. Martha was the last surviving member of her generation in her family and Carl’s. She is now survived by the generation of her four children Robert (LeAnn), Carrie (Rick), Ralph (Sara) and Mark (Nikki), 16 grandchildren, 14 great-grandchildren with one expected in the spring.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, December 9, at 11:30 am at Garden Park Chapel (1150 Yale Ave), with a visitation prior to the service from 9 to 11 am. The funeral will be livestreamed via Zoom and can be accessed by clicking the "Watch Services" button above or at the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89873121599.

We are indebted to the countless caregivers at Spring Gardens Assisted Living and Inspiration Home Health & Hospice who gently and patiently cared for Martha during the past year, and especially the last week of her life.