

# Meleseini Heivaha Katoa

*May 22, 1936 ~ July 18, 2025*

Mele Seini He’I Vaha Muti Katoa, affectionately known as Vaha, whose name beautifully translates to "Lost in the Horizon," found her way home to her Heavenly Father after a life filled with faith, service, and boundless love for others, surrounded by her family and loved ones.

On May 22, 1936, in 'Uiha, Ha'apai, Tonga, Vaha was born to Mosese and Salavia Muti. Of her ten siblings—Vaha was the second oldest. At the age of 39, her father, a patriarch in Tonga for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, gave her a remarkable blessing.

Heavenly words spoke of her “great,” “outstanding,” and “brave” spirit. They spoke of her intelligence and love. They bore witness to her missionary soul and explained how God called her to distant lands to share His Light and Love with the world. They explained how the Lord gave her the ability to speak many languages, so she could bless His children wherever she went.

These prophetic words, among others, shone brightly in He ‘I Vaha’s life. By the time she received this blessing, Vaha had left her native Tonga in pursuit of love and marriage, living in far-removed places such as Dutch New Guinea (modern-day Papua New Guinea) and the Netherlands. Through prayerful study of the Dutch translation of the Book of Mormon, she became so proficient in the language that it seemed as if it were her native tongue. By studying local newspapers and articles in New Guinea, she also became equally fluent in the Malaysian and Indonesian languages. In time, and at the heartfelt invitation of her younger brother, Morton, Vaha prayerfully immigrated to the United States. There, in Salt Lake City, Utah, Vaha eventually mastered the English language.

Her journey from the islands of Tonga, Dutch New Guinea, the Netherlands, and eventually to America reflected the same spirit of exploration and determination that would characterize her entire life. Like her namesake suggests, she was never truly lost—she was always moving toward greater purpose and deeper connections with those she loved.

He ‘I Vaha experienced the privilege of marriage and remarriage. She considered each marriage a gift that served a special purpose in her life, expressing gratitude for each. From these marriages came Rina, Yvonne, Mary Francis, Frank, Daniel, Lynn, and Joe.

Vaha was a devoted member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving faithfully in many capacities throughout her life. She found her greatest joy in her calling as a ward missionary, sharing the gospel with the same generous heart that defined everything she did. She also devoted herself to service in the Primary and Relief Society, touching the lives of countless individuals through her loving example.

Vaha's love language was giving. Without hesitation, she shared her money, food, clothes, and time with anyone in need. Her faith was so unwavering that she never worried about having enough—she knew the Lord would provide,

so she gave freely and joyfully. She demonstrated her love by dedicating her life to being a caretaker for her parents, siblings Lusi Tauteoli and Joseph Morton, during their last years, and offering the same selfless service to her late husband, Loseli, and his parents before they passed away.

To her family and friends, Vaha exuded a colorfully charismatic personality. Vaha was stylish, sassy, bold, adventurous, and outgoing. She wore bright lipstick, maintained a beautiful blonde hairstyle, wore her sunglasses at night, and always had the best nails. She was a gifted storyteller, captivating listeners with her unique charm. Her secret to happiness is forgiveness and love.

Her gift for seeing beauty everywhere extended far beyond her impeccable sense of style and fashion. Whether shopping at Nordstrom or finding treasures at Deseret Industries, she had an extraordinary talent for discovering beauty and value where others might not see it. Her closet was always open to family members—sisters, daughters, nieces, and friends—who knew they could count on her for the perfect dress or outfit for any occasion.

Outside of her family, Vaha's passions included cooking, gardening, and church service. She could single-handedly prepare a luau for 300 people or tenderly care for family members in her own home. Whether you found her in the front yard tending her garden, in the kitchen creating something delicious, or at the church serving others, she was always in her element when helping others.

Her unwavering testimony and strength of character inspired all who knew her. Even when standing alone in her convictions, she stood tall in her faith, demonstrating that true discipleship sometimes requires the courage to walk a solitary path.

Vaha was preceded in death by her husbands: John O Mackenzie, Daniel Prins, Alan Katoa, her son, Francis Bertus Mackenzie, her mother and father, Mosese and Salavia Muti, her sisters: Lusi Tauteoli, Kalolaine Muti, and brothers: Joseph Morton Muti, Penisimani Muti, and Kama Muti. She is survived by her children: Rina Johanna (Juan) Gutierrez, Yvonne Christina Mackenzie, Mary Evelyn Ommundson, Frank (Sarah), Danny (Veeran), Lynn (Patrick Becker), Joe; all of SLC; 18 grandchildren; and 31 great-grandchildren.

Vaha's legacy lives on in the countless lives she touched through her service, generosity, and unwavering faith. She truly found her horizon in a life well-lived, guided always by her love for God and her family.

Services:

Viewing on Wednesday, July 30th, from 8:00 - 11:00 am at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1621 South 1100 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105).

Funeral Service on Wednesday, July 30th, from 12:00 - 1:00 pm at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (1621 South 1100 East, Salt Lake City, UT 84105) with graveside service immediately following at the Memorial Estates Cemetery (6500 South Redwood Rd, West Jordan, UT 84084).