

Nancy Brown Parker

July 3, 1945 ~ October 10, 2025

Nancy passed away on October 10 from the ravages of Alzheimer's disease. It is a cruel disease that attacks capable, dynamic people and inexorably drains them of their competence and vitality, fading the vivid colors of their unique personalities. It impacts those who are close its victims, filling us with unabated sorrow. But Nancy's passing, while sad, marks the end of this grim chapter in our lives. She is no longer suffering. And those of us who knew and loved her can begin to lessen our own sorrow. Perhaps the best way to do this is by remembering her in full color—as she was before.

Remember that she was intelligent, witty, clever, fun, feisty, and a bit acerbic. Always quick with a quip or a comeback, she made people laugh. Tall, slender and redheaded, she was elegant, stylish and always, always well shod. She was an attractive woman, who became even more beautiful as she aged. She loved to cook and was very good at it. She loved giving dinner parties, and her friends loved attending them, relishing both her food and her company. She was a serious foodie and sought out the best restaurants in the great food cities—New York, San Francisco, New Orleans, Chicago, Paris. She loved music and for forty-odd years had season tickets to the Utah Symphony. She loved having dogs, particularly chows, whose intelligence and independence mirrored her own. For much of her adult life she drove sports cars, mostly Porsches. She was adventurous—two wildlife safaris in Africa, a tiger safari in India, a polar bear safari in northern Manitoba, flying in ultra-light aircraft around Annapurna in Nepal, eating barnacles (tasty) and sea slugs (definitely not tasty) in Spain. She knew how to enjoy life.

Remember also that she did a lot of good. For forty-two years, she was a skilled, innovative and utterly dedicated elementary school teacher in Salt Lake District. For much of her career she worked in the Extended Learning Program, teaching gifted students. Gifted herself, she was a good fit. A thousand students were made smarter, wiser, more curious and more creative as a result of her teaching acumen.

Remember that she was not only a great teacher; she also worked tirelessly to better the education profession. She spent many years working for the Salt Lake Teacher's Association as a passionate, unflagging and courageous advocate for teacher's rights. This earned her the respect and gratitude of many teachers whose rights had been abused. It also earned her a certain amount of enmity from those doing the abusing. She was completely undaunted by this, courageously persevering in the face of resistance. She was also active with the National Education Association as a member of task groups developing educational standards and of evaluation teams accrediting colleges of education.

She had a lot of friends; she had a lot of fun; she acquainted a multitude of students with the joy of learning; she brightened the lives of everyone she encountered; she was, in her own modest, self-effacing way, a rock star.

She is survived by her husband Howard, her brother David Brown, her nephew Jeffery Brown (Brenda), and godchildren Bree Murphy (Dom) and Aaron Lebenta (Lisa).

Nancy always said she wanted a wake (she’s half Irish), and a wake she shall have—in mid-April, when the land is greening and hope is rising.