

Nila Ard Thompson

March 30, 1943 ~ September 16, 2025

Obituaries are more than announcements—they're tributes to a life lived, a legacy left behind, and the people who carry that memory forward and it is with great honor that we let everyone know that Nila Ard Thompson, age 82, of Salt Lake City, passed away peacefully on Tuesday, September 16 surrounded by her daughters, granddaughters and great granddaughters.

Born on March 30, 1943 in Idaho Falls, Idaho - though to everyone she met she was quick to let them know she was from her beloved Teton Basin, with her winters being spent in Rexburg at their winter homes or with her beloved paternal grandparents. Nila lived a life marked by her love of family, teaching, shopping for the finest Nordstrom had to offer and trips down memory lane. She was known for her famous auburn hair, declaring the color yellow as her own, love of shoes and being barefoot in the classroom. She touched many lives with her influence including family, friends and students.

After graduating Madison High School in1961, Nila attended beauty school in Rexburg. She excelled specifically in the "Beehive." Higher education beaconed and she traveled to pursue her education at Utah State University in Logan where she received a B.A. in Elementary Education. She proudly boasted that she was President of her Tri Delta sorority and even traveled to Washington D.C. to represent her chapter. In addition to a degree, she found her first love and husband Donald T. Thompson. One of her favorite stories is when she excitedly returned home to tell her parents that Don wanted to get married and her dad responded with, "who the hell does he want to marry?" The best friends tied the knot on July 22 of 1966.

Vietnam set the newlyweds off on their first of many adventures. Nila spent her deployment time living with her sister Lanny in Salt Lake City. She became famous on base as the wife that would send everything from banana bread to a fully decorated artificial Christmas tree so that her husband wouldn't miss anything from back home. This dedication to deployments would continue over their military career with cassette tapes and many letters. If only email had existed!

Once they were reunited stateside, the two kids from different parts of Idaho quickly moved across the country to Ft. Rucker, Alabama. Here she would gain many stories of her first teaching jobs in segregated schools. In addition to teaching, she became the perfect Army wife to her war decorated Warrant Officer. The skills and grace she gained as a hostess would follow her through life, always "the hostess with the mostest!" Their military adventures took them all over, from military bases in Georgia, Utah, Kansas, Washington and even Seoul Korea. With each relocation she would quickly set up our home to ease in all the transitions.

While in Alabama, they welcomed their first daughter, Kellene, in 1969. After a tenacious labor of love, while stationed in Manhattan, Kansas they were so lucky as to welcome their second daughter, Nicole in 1977. Being a

mom was her greatest joy, which was only doubled and tripled when she welcomed her five granddaughters and three great granddaughters. Nurturing was her specialty.

Nila finally settled in Salt Lake City for her love of the seasons. When faced with divorce and two children to raise, she threw herself back into education – first as a substitute, then to full time teacher and finally finishing a master's in education. She prided herself on specializing in Reading where she would go on to be a leader of the Utah Writing Project, teaching students as well as educators across the state. Health issues later led to her retirement, but it didn't stop her passion. Several granddaughters as well as children of friends learned their first words from her joy of teaching reading.

Nila will be remembered as the constant cheerleader of the family. She's been watching games, matches, concerts, and countless dance performances for decades. An unwavering presence on the bleachers and in the auditoriums.

Beyond her family and teaching she will be remembered for her love of Diet Coke, Disney, Yellowstone, gift giving, birthday celebrations and Christmas. She spent countless hours shopping and wrapping the most beautiful packages through the wee hours of Christmas Eve. In 2021 she fulfilled a lifelong dream of taking her entire family on an all-inclusive vacation to Walt Disneyworld. Her children and grandchildren remember countless trips to Yellowstone, Disneyland and many other destinations. She didn't care about the location; she simply loved having us together.

Through tears, laughter and some of her favorite Christmas Carols, we bid her farewell. There was comfort in knowing she was reuniting with her beloved Mom and Dad, back on the farm where she could be free from pain once more.

Nila is survived by daughters Kellene Thompson and Nicole (Joseph) Alamilla. Granddaughters Kylie (Michael) Walker, Isabelle, Abigaile, Danielle and Gabrielle Alamilla. Great Granddaughters Beckett, Lennox and Scottie Walker. Sister Karren "Lanny" Dustin. Best friend, Brenda Jeppeson and several nieces, nephews and cousins. Nila was proceeded in death by her parents Wayne and Ruby Ard, her ex-husband Major Donald T. Thompson, as well as many aunts, uncles and cousins.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, October 3rd at 2:00 PM at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 East 10600 South in Sandy, Utah. Visitation will be from 12:30 PM – 1:45 PM prior to the service. Interment with be held at Cache Clawson Cemetery in Tetonia, Idaho on Saturday October 4th at noon.

May the beautiful view of the Tetons comfort her in this eternal rest.