

Nixon Irene Roberts Lawrence

July 12, 1935 ~ April 16, 2022

Nixon Irene Roberts Lawrence entered the world on July 12, 1935 in a maternity home in Coalinga, California. She was the first child of Thelma Mae Lisman Roberts and her husband George William Roberts. Thelma was the descendant of early Americans and many of the crown heads of Europe and Scandinavia but she didn't know it. George was the son of a British-born mother and father descended from Welsh and British families. Hot and dusty Coalinga was a Standard Oil town in the rough and tumble oil fields of Central California: it was the middle of the Great Depression, and demand for petroleum products waned as the world economy suffered. The strained economic circumstances of her childhood impelled Nixon to always strive for better things. As she grew up, she overcame her early poverty and modest circumstances by working hard and rewarding herself with fashionable clothes and beautiful surroundings.

She was joined within a few years by brothers Kenneth Leroy Roberts and David Miles Roberts. They attended school in a 2-room schoolhouse. As World War 2 increased the demand for oil production, her school had the resources to hire music and band teachers. Each child had their own instrument; uniform and music lessons were available to all. Well-qualified teachers were brought into the settlement and the tiny school in the middle of the wilderness became the seat of an excellent education that served her well throughout life.

When a Standard Oil transfer relocated her family to Redondo Beach in Los Angeles County, she learned to appreciate coastal life and a whole new Southern California culture. Neighbors Ardith and Lila Landers became her lifelong friends and introduced her to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She attended seminary with her new friends and was baptized as a teenager. In high school she was involved in theater, enjoyed playing tennis and working as a camp counselor. There were trips to Lake Arrowhead for fun in the snow; it was the era of cashmere sweater sets, skirts and cruising the boulevard. After graduating from Mira Costa High School, she worked as an operator for a year to save money for college.

She attended BYU in Provo, Utah for a year then returned home and worked in the aerospace industry in Los Angeles, where she met Larry Karl Layton, a recently returned veteran, who, as a former Army rocket scientist, was now working in R & D in the aerospace industry.

They married in Los Angeles and soon welcomed daughter Pamela Sue into the family while Larry was studying at USC. After deciding to go into Education, he earned a Bachelor's degree and started work on his Master's degree. Cynthia Ann and Brian Christopher were born at rival campus UCLA Hospital (ironically) before he graduated.

The Laytons moved to Carlsbad in 1963 after Larry finished his studies. His first job out of college was with the

Oceanside School District at North Oceanside Elementary. They bought their first house on Guevara Road (near the “stinky lagoon.”) Brian Layton was 1, Cindy was 3 and Pam was starting 1st grade at Buena Vista Elementary. The family attended the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in a rented building in Oceanside then in a newly built chapel on California Street.

There were so many wonderful things about living in the small beach town of Carlsbad; Nixon loved bike riding, tennis and fireworks at the beach where she also taught her children to play chess. She baked the best cookies at Christmas and hosted picnics and fun at Holiday Park. They enjoyed holiday concerts and carnivals at Buena Vista, the Del Mar Fair, the Carlsbad library, the drive-in at Oceanside, pizza at Shakey’s, visiting Santa at the Elm Street fire station and the new El Camino Real mall. She sewed clothes for her children and made lots of friends: Lois Chaplin, Lillian Smith, Kay Tisdale, Ginny Smith, Fran Yarbrough, neighbors and others.

One year she decided Thanksgiving should be like the pilgrims’ feast, so she packed it all up and the family ate turkey on the windy bluffs overlooking Torrey Pines in La Jolla. There were trips to the Palomar Observatory, Big Bear to play in the snow, the zoo, Sea World and the happiest place on earth.

Her love of theater introduced the family to many classics, they attended a live performance Dicken’s A Christmas Carol production at Carlsbad Community Theater and Nutcracker Ballet in San Diego. . Watched the Wizard of Oz on the black and white television every year, the original Batman series, Bewitched and Gilligan’s Island. They watched the Parent Trap and other Disney movies at the San Luis Rey Drive-In with trips to Shakey’s Pizza before. On the family stereo vinyls played; Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass, Sergio Mendez and Brazil ’66, the Supremes, comedy and the Beach Boys. A highlight of the Christmas season was attending performances of Handel’s Messiah and the Nutcracker Ballet.

Family was important, Nixon and her children enjoyed visits with her parents in Santa Maria, her brothers in Hermosa Beach and Santa Barbara and extended family in other parts of California. As her children grew and started their own families and careers, she was an important part of her grandchildrens’ lives. She loved visiting Brian when he was stationed in Hawaii in the Air Force, going on cruises, especially the Panama Canal with her second husband Jim Lawrence, flowers, beauty, music, cool cars, and researching her family history back to 160 A.D.

Her July birthday and patriotic spirit made the 4th of July an important holiday in her world. Picnics on the beach, children bobbing in innertubes, lemon drops, a red, white and blue dessert and fireworks after dark became beloved traditions.

In her retirement she became involved in family history research. She found records of her Tracy ancestors back to 160 A.D. She joined the Daughters of the American Revolution and made scrapbooks for her local chapter. She collected hundreds of family members’ names and histories and created beautiful scrapbooks of photos and family histories.

Strokes and age-related dementia slowed her down in her later years, but she still enjoyed a good shopping trip. Her final words were her checking on each family member and wanting to go to the temple; she was going home.

Surviving family members include brother Ken Roberts and family and the family of the late David Roberts. Her daughter Pamela Layton McMurtry and husband Newell, grandchildren William Chaddock, Laurel Phillips, Heather Touchet, Andrew Chaddock and Timothy McMurtry with their spouses and children. Daughter Cynthia Ann Layton Reischman and husband David and grandchildren, Eric Kapitanski, Emily Rivadeneyra, Alyssa and Amanda Kapitanski with their spouses and children. Nixon was preceded in death by her son Brian Christopher Layton and husband James Lawrence, her parents and brother David Roberts.

Nixon was a good and loving mother and grandmother. A celebration of her life and family gathering are planned for this summer; details will be posted later. She will be inurned at Eternal Hills Cemetery in Oceanside, CA with her husband Jim and son Brian.

The family would like to thank everyone who cared for her, especially Symbii Hospice, the Yalecrest First Ward and Larkin Mortuary for her final arrangements.

Families are forever; she would tell us all, “bye for now.”