

Phyllis Helen Horne Gabler "Missy"

January 22, 1940 ~ March 30, 2024

Phyllis Helen Horne Gabler, or "Missy" as her dad called her, high-fived her older brother Richard on the way down to Earth, and was born the first daughter to her loving parents, Maurine Derrick and Marion Seth Horne on January 22, 1940 in Arlington, Virginia as the nation was emerging out of The Great Depression and gearing up for World War II.

Missy spoke fondly of her early years riding the street car with her older brother Roger; shopping in New York City with her mom; and learning all about the secret ingredients with which her mother used to cook - love and butter.... and more butter. Missy was anxiously engaged in theatre, dance, and the performing arts as a child and adolescent.

The Hornes moved from Arlington to Phoenix, Arizona when Missy was a teenager. She was kind, even-tempered, calm and didn't let anything get to her. When her brothers attempted to give her a hard time, she knew how to keep them in check. Missy was always 100% herself, never pretentious. Those who knew her loved her. Her dad gifted her a white fox fur stole for her to take to Stephens College. She thought it was so silly because being fancy wasn't of interest to her, so she pranced around her bedroom as she belted out a pretend strip show melody swinging that fur in every direction. She had an unquenchable passion for life and having fun, and at times took pride in doing the opposite of what her father asked.

In 1958, Missy graduated from North Phoenix High School. She was a stunning young lady. Out of high school, she attended the University of Utah. She participated in competitive swimming, and broke records in college for her backstroke that held for some time. She was invited to train for the US Olympic Team, but declined the offer. Missy and her friends frequented Ruth's Diner in Emigration Canyon. They developed a relationship with Ruth who would regularly chase suitors out of the diner attempting to hit on Missy and her friends. Missy transferred to the historic Stephens College, an all-female school in Columbia, Missouri.

After graduation from Stephens College, on the plane ride home to Phoenix, the 22-year-old Helen met her first husband, James Bernard Thomas, a charismatic Los Angeles disc jockey from Cadiz, Kentucky. At 37 years old, the handsome aspiring actor was beyond enamored by Helen's stunning beauty. Jim and Helen fell in love at first sight and eloped to Las Vegas shortly thereafter. They traveled around the country for the first several years of their marriage, sometimes living in a trailer. In letters to her mother, Helen spoke fondly of those early years of marriage before their children arrived.

Jim and Helen settled down in Palos Verdes, California in the 1960s. Helen loved her suburban life near Redondo Beach and even periodically donned that white fox fur. Helen's cousins, Elizabeth and Roger Derrick joined the household after their father died in 1968 then later moved on to live with other families. On November 27, 1969,

Helen welcomed her first son, Seth Carroll Thomas. On October 13, 1971, their second son, Sean Bernard Thomas joined the family.

Jim’s pernicious nature began to emerge creating difficult challenges for Helen. The family moved to Salt Lake City, and Helen and Jim separated shortly thereafter. As a single mom, Helen worked full time to make ends meet, but still managed to feed her two sons gourmet three-course meals almost every night with those secret ingredients: love and butter. Helen's spaghetti sauce which took three days to cook was legendary. Her pot roast was other-worldly. And her Christmas leg of lamb was a culinary creation unmatched in any modern kitchen.

In 1981, Helen married Frank Lawrence Gabler from Boise, Idaho. Frank loved Helen deeply and moved to her home in Sandy, Utah. Frank and Helen took Seth and Sean on several meaningful family vacations such as The World's Fair in Vancouver; Banff; Disney World and The Epcot Center in Orlando; the Oregon coast; the Four Corners and all the Utah national parks; and a two-week trip up Lake Powell in a houseboat, to name a few.

In the late 1980s, Frank and Helen commenced a spiritual journey in search of the magic and the mysticism that permeates all things. They studied astrology, crystals, energy work, Native American lore, and anything else worthwhile that could raise their spiritual knowledge and awareness. They hosted a study of Jewish and other ancient texts in their home once a week for several years. At one point, Helen went through the extensive process to convert to Judaism, learning how to read Hebrew texts. During the last five years of her life, as a result of extensive spiritual care from counselors and visiting teachers, Helen returned to the LDS faith of her childhood.

Frank passed away in 2002, and Helen threw herself into her love of QVC and The Home Shopping Network. Her frequent shopping led to over-the-air interactions with some of the presenters on the networks. She always had to tune in for the “special of the day”, many of which became gifts to family, friends, and acquaintances. Helen developed quite a close relationship with her mail carrier, UPS, and Amazon delivery drivers. Helen provided substantial financial support for efforts in India and other places to rescue children and women from sex trafficking. When she was able, Helen loved to participate in the activities of her young granddaughters, Sierra and Izzy.

Helen’s greatest joy in life was raising her sons when they were babies. Her second greatest joy in life was hosting the veritable army of cats that came and went from her home over the years. Sometimes random elderly cats Helen had never seen before would make the pilgrimage to her backyard to curl up and die. Helen was able to experience those two great joys during the last 10 months of her life due to the outstanding care, dedication and love of Helen’s caretakers, including Sharon, Sharon’s daughter McKenzie, several others, their menagerie of animals, and most of all baby Oliver. Helen loved to hold baby Oliver before he went to bed. The family’s six cats resembled some of Helen’s favorite felines she had owned through the years: Pony, Tigger, Minx, Snuffy, and others. Kitty Kitty watched over Helen carefully and resembled her most favored cat, Pony. Coco, the energetic fluffy Pomeranian, insisted on helping Helen each morning. These miracles of life gave Helen exponential joy in her last days.

Helen was preceded in death by her parents, Marion Seth and Maurine Derrick Horne; her older brothers, Richard Seth (died in infancy), and Roger Marion (Carol, deceased); her younger brother, Gregory Greenwood (Debbie); and her husband, Frank Lawrence Gabler.

Helen is survived by her younger brother, William Douglas (Margie); her younger sister, Nevi Bonnina Maurine Brooke (John); her cousins, who she raised for a time, Elizabeth Derrick Grant (Horace) and her son Leston; Roger Matthew Derrick (Linda) and his daughter Sonja; her sons, Seth Carroll Thomas and Sean Bernard Thomas; and her granddaughters, Sierra Jade Thomas and Isabel "Izzy" Nicole Thomas.

Family and friends may pay their last respects at a viewing to be held at Larkin Sunset Gardens at 1950 East Dimple Dell Road (10600 South), Sandy, Utah 84092 from 6PM to 8PM on Friday, April 12, 2024. On Saturday, April 13, 2024, an additional viewing will be held from 9:30 AM to 10:45AM at the Willow Creek 9th Ward at 2115 E. Creek Road, Cottonwood Heights, Utah 84093. A brief private prayer and comment session will be held after the viewing before the graveside dedication and interment at Salt Lake Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations instead be made in Helen H. Gabler's name to The Other Side Academy. https://www.theothersideacademy.com/ .