Ruth Ailee Nelson Fuller

May 13, 1930 ~ November 24, 2021

The Condensed Life of Ruth Ailee Fuller
(A saint and a sinner, soft hearted and hard as nails)

Born Ruth Ailee Nelson May 13, 1930 in Missoula Montana to Alfred and Anna Nelson.

Alfred and Anna met at Chicago Evangelical Institute and were wed. Alfred went on to become a Presbyterian minister. The family quote from him was, “The sinners love me and the hypocrites hate me.” He was a pastor in Michigan, Wisconsin, Missoula, Montana and Nashville, Tennessee. Ruth reminisced fondly that when in Nashville and approx. 4 yrs. old, her father would sneak off with her and go to black churches where they would enjoy the music. Her mother was the faithful helpmate/wife always assuring a hospitable and warm environment to all who entered their home. Ruth's father died in 1939 of cancer. Ruth was 9. At an early age Ruth had to grow up early while caring, contending, and competing with 6 brothers.

Alfred and Anna had 6 boys and 1 girl. Ruth's brothers in chronological order:

*John served in WWII and was in the D-Day landing, made it to Germany and the death camps but was later wounded by a land mine. He spent 6 months in a German hospital. After the war he became an engineer and a rodeo cowboy.

*Jim went into the Army and was in the Battle of Saipan and Okinawa. After the war, being of a small stature, became a respected jockey.

*Bob joined the Army and after the war, became a rodeo star on the National Rodeo Circuit.

*David joined the Air force. He was decorated for being a radio operator during 49 cargo flights into Korea during its civil war. He was later killed in a hunting accident in Missoula, Montana.

*Charles, Ruth's only remaining sibling, joined the Air force and gained an education in air traffic control which he continued into a career. He retired in Albuquerque, N.M. where he managed a National Air Traffic Control Center.

*Paul (Fuzzy) was killed when 12 years old. He and his best friend were pushing a bike home with a flat tire and were killed by a drunk driver. This was a great family tragedy. This happened about 1947-48. Here the boys had survived the war and then this. My father said that he and Fuzzy loved to play chess together.

Ruth married Andy Keller shortly after the war in Missoula, Mont. He had been in the Army and had lost an arm in Okinawa. He later became an insurance agent in Missoula where he and Ruth met and were wed. In 1948 their son, James Keller was born in Missoula. Later they moved to Pasco Wash. which was directly across the Columbia River from Andy Keller's family home in Kennewick. In 1951, they had Verdella Keller. Unfortunately, two or three years later they were divorced. The children went into Andy Keller's custody. The children rarely had the opportunity to visit with their mother until they had graduated from high school. This was a deep source of sorrow

for Ruth the rest of her life.

Ruth also had a son Robert Keller. He was a year older than his brother James. Unfortunately, he was mildly mentally challenged and was institutionalized at age 5-6. He was in the Washington system until the mid 70's when Ruth and Lee brought him to Salt Lake City. He was a great family blessing to us all. He loved his cats like they were family.

Ruth finished high school in Missoula, Montana and from then on had a working career.
While working for United Savings Bank in S.L.C. she controlled a bank hold up insuring no one was harmed and later received great accolades for her bravery and how she controlled the situation.

In 1959, she met Lee Fuller, an Army recruiter. They met at the Palace Hotel in Missoula where she had been a waitress in high school. Her brother John had taken her there for an evening of ballroom dancing. Lee was there and asked her to dance. Afterwards, she commented to John, “He sure is a good dancer.” People today still comment on their ballroom dancing skills. Again, in 1961, brother John took her to a Missoula rodeo where their brother Jim was riding in the Sheriff's posse. However, Lee was also in the Posse and a friend to brother Jim. Lee asked Ruth out to dinner and 8 months later they were married. Thus, Lee had his faithful/helpmate for life.

They spent 9 years in Missoula. In 1968-69 Lee was sent to Vietnam and was there during the Tet Offensive. Previously, he had also served in The Korean War. In 1969, they moved to Butte Montana where he continued as an Army recruiter. In 1974, they moved to S.L.C. Utah and rented an apt. in the Sugar House District. Lee had now become head of the entire recruiting program for the Army. In 1975, they bought a house in Midvale, Utah. And in 2004, they moved to Draper, Utah where they lived out their final days.

In the mid 70's Ruth and Lee brought Robert Keller home to finally be part of the family that he had so long desired. Nothing could have been better. Lee quickly adopted his role as Father and Ruth now had one of her babies to fawn over. This she did with relish until Bob would say, “Mom, go away and give me a little peace and quiet.” Ruth and Lee helped Robert live independently in his own apartment for a good number of years until the effects of emphysema were getting the better of him. Bob moved into the basement of their Draper home until his death in 2013.

Verdella Keller moved to S.L.C. in the 1980's. In 2003, while living alone, she began to develop Alzheimer’s from which she passed away in 2013.

Lee, after retiring from 30 years of active service, continued a working career for Chapman Realty. From Scott Chapman's description, it sounds like he spent most of his time planning parties and golf outings. During Lee's last 15 years or so, he developed a number of complications with heart and back along with a minor back operation that nearly fully paralyzed him. He passed away in 2018.

She had adamantly cared for Verdella, Robert, and Lee. This left Ruth alone with no one to care for. Three years later, she passed away in 2021 six minutes before midnight and Thanksgiving.

James Keller's observations from the above obituary:

1)Like her mother, Mom presented a warm, inviting home of hospitality. This was of paramount importance to both her and Lee. She said there were times they would do without in order to save money so as to accommodate visiting family and friends which were many and often.

2)Perhaps the death of her father placed the onus of caretaker on her shoulders at an early age and this was part of the development of her character which would benefit those closest to her later on in life.

3)So, who was babied more? Bob or his cats; Tipsy, Snowball, Bandit and Snuggles? Truthfully; I think Lee loved those cats as much as Bob.

4)While Mom was getting on in her years and had her own age related problems, she was somehow was able to take care of Verdella with Alzheimers, Robert in his final stages of Emphysema and Lee's with his myriad of difficulties. She was a superwoman!!

Recently, I heard 4-star General Jack Keane discussing the operations of the Russian military in the Ukraine. Paraphrasing him, “Generals like myself and General Petraeus are dime a dozen. The most import Generals are the good logicians of which there are very few.” That's what Mom was, a master logician. This is how Lee put it. “I'm

about as useful as a fly on a horse’s rump. Thank God Ruth's driving the train. She does all the bookkeeping, meals, Dr. appointments and errands...She's also a great cook as evidenced by that pot hanging over my belt.”

James Keller's general observations:

1)Lee told me she rode his ass from the moment they were married and if it weren't for her, he wouldn't of amounted to nothing. Unfortunately, He gave my wife the same advice. Somehow it works.

A funny story. Mom told me she thinks Lee married her when he did as it was opening weekend for hunting season and getting married would give him extra time off. He loved spending time with my uncles (Mom's brothers). After the wedding, Lee and my uncles loaded up and went big game hunting. Mom went along. The first day, and my mother, not being very tall, was attempting to trudge through deep snow where she finally broke down in tears. Lee looked back at her and said, “What's wrong?” She said, “This is supposed to be our honeymoon.” He replied, “Well, you're the one that wanted to come along.”

2)Regardless, she loved to travel with Lee except on their honeymoon. They went wherever there were great sites to see, nice golf courses, fishing, horse racing and gambling. They went to Mazatlan, Costa Rica, Hawaii, Panama, Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, New Zealand to name a few places and more often than not took Bob.

3)She was a loyal daughter, sister, mother, and wife. She was firmly dedicated to her Christian faith and displayed that by how she lived it out with all who knew her. This was especially notable in her compassionate listening abilities, attentive questions, and sage advice.

4)Her favorite time of the year was Christmas as evidenced by the tremendous number of Christmas decorations found in the house after her passing.

My final image of Mom, in a hospital bed, holding my right hand in her left hand and no longer looking at me but rather up. She then professed her unrighteous position before a Holy God while expressing gratefulness to God for sending His Son, Jesus the Christ, The Messiah to provide a way to the complete fullness of life and righteousness as They had promised. She then lifted her right hand straight up and said, “I want to be like Stephen.” She brought her hand down and fell asleep and died a few hours later. That was our last interaction. At first, I was a bit puzzled as I raced through my mind trying the remember a common person, we knew named Stephen. My wife chimed in, “Stephen of the Book of Acts.”

I will close with this. Acts 7:51-59. Saul of Tarsus, later Apostle Paul, writer of numerous New Testament books, has been tasked by the Sanhedrin to hunt down, kill or arrest all the Jesus followers.

In this passage, Stephen (one of Jesus' disciples) is speaking before the High Council in Jerusalem and says, starting at Verse 51: “You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear, you have always resisted the Holy Spirit, the same as your fathers did! Which of the prophets have your fathers not persecuted? Yes, they killed those who announced the coming of the righteous one whom you now have betrayed and murdered—you who have received the law through the mediation of angels and have not kept it.

As they heard this, they were enraged in their hearts and gnashed their teeth at him; but he, full of the Holy Spirit looked up into Heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand, and said, “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at God's right hand. “But they, shouting loudly and holding their ears, rushed upon him in a group and threw him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses placed their clothing at the feet of a young man named Saul.

So, they stoned Stephen as he called upon the Lord saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Falling on his knees, he called out loudly, “Lord do not hold this sin against them.” And with these words he fell asleep in death.