

Ruth LaRae Nielsen

October 25, 1941 ~ December 17, 2025

Ruth LaRae Nielsen (October 25, 1941 - December 17, 2025) was born in Oakley, Utah to Turk and Utahna Frantz, the youngest of four children. From a young age, LaRae was very talkative and loved a good conversation more than anything. In fact, LaRae was pretty much a friend to everyone she met. Whether you'd bumped into her at the grocery checkout line at Harmons or known her for years, there wasn't a person who couldn't help but be caught by her infectious energy, warm smile and her way of making you feel at ease, like you'd known her forever.

All the loving platitudes apply to LaRae – she was a caring daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother.

But she was more than that.

She was resilient. Her four older children remember how after a divorce, she raised them for many years as a single mother. She worked at the very first Kentucky Fried Chicken to pay the bills — even waiting on the one and only Colonel Sanders. Later, she worked diligently as a school lunch lady, retiring after over 20 years of service. She never talked about those years as a hardship — only as a chapter that proved she could do hard things with grace. She worked long hours, stretched every dollar and somehow still made home feel warm, joyful and safe. Her children remember a mother who showed up every single day, not with complaints, but with humor, determination and an unwavering belief that everything would be okay. And somehow, it always was.

She loved music and everything that came along with it. Singing, dancing and having a fun time were all of LaRae's most favorite pastimes. She loved to jitterbug — a dance she could do well into her 80s. As fate would have it, her dancing shoes also helped her catch the eye of James LaMont Nielsen, who she had a crush on in high school and who she frequently referred to as "the best dancer in all of Bingham High School." They married in 1971 and he became a devoted husband, loving father to her five children and a perfect partner for LaRae.

She was creative. She loved painting, decorating cakes and crafting and any activity where she could put her imagination to work. Not a holiday would pass where she didn't make themed quilts and pillowcases for her grandkids – gifts stitched with love that would last a lifetime. She loved to collect antiques and to fill out her scrapbooks, recognizing that each moment becomes a memory only if we take the time to preserve them.

She was an award-winning photographer. On her first and only trip outside the United States, traveling through England, she spotted a beautiful but simple house, cloaked in an overcast grey, and instantly knew it was the perfect shot. She requested to pull over immediately — she simply had to capture it. LaRae's creativity won her the Smith's photo contest, an accolade she proudly boasted to everyone she met.

She was a giver. After a lifetime of caring for her own family, one of LaRae's favorite jobs was working at an assisted living facility, where she could put her motherly skills to work once more, showing the same warmth and

compassion for others that she showed to her own family. She was a very proud Democrat who instilled a love of current events and politics in her posterity. A lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, LaRae also loved the Temple, the warm feeling of the gospel and sharing it with everyone she met.

She was a fighter. In her 40s, she fell ill with colon cancer and successfully beat it – one of her finest achievements. In her later years, she faced a different type of battle with Alzheimer's, which tested her in ways no one could have prepared her for. As her memories faded, the love she gave never left. Her family continued to see flashes of the woman they knew so well — in her smile, her laughter, the way she responded to music and the comfort she found in familiar faces. Even as the disease progressed, LaRae remained loved, cared for and surrounded by the people whose lives she had shaped so profoundly.

Most of all, LaRae wanted to be remembered for being a good mother. She was also a wonderful person – the kind of person who showed up, cared deeply and lit up the room by simply being in it. She leaves behind a legacy wrapped in her love, her laughter and the memories she so thoughtfully created. Her legacy lives on in every recipe, every quilt, every photo, every story and every person lucky enough to have met her.

She was preceded in death by her husband, sister Betty Khilstrom, son-in-law Shawn Haycock and is survived by her brother Sherrell "Shug" Frantz and sister Gloria Prescott, her five children: Randy (Melanie) Nielsen, Darrell (Shelly) Nielsen, Sharee Whalen, Ruth Ann Haycock and Angie Gunnell along with her 14 grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

On behalf of her family, a heartfelt thank you to the Ashford of Draper. Their kindness, attention and dignity gave LaRae peace and comfort in her final days, for which her family will be forever grateful.

A celebration of LaRae's life will be held on Saturday, January 10, 2026, at 10:00am at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E 10600 S, Sandy, UT. Visitation will be held prior to the services from 9:00am to 9:45am, as well as Friday, January 9, 2026 from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at Larkin Sunset Gardens.