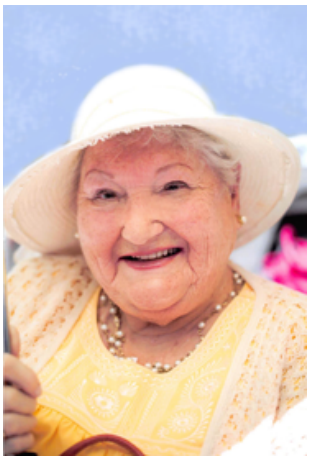

Sibylla (Billy) Helena Johanna Brinksma VanKeizerswaard

November 2, 1931 ~ April 15, 2021

Our dear mother, Oma, sister, and friend was quietly released from this life on Thursday, April 15, 2021. She was a fierce warrior and example of courage, fortitude, and determination as we witnessed her battle with renal failure and a host of other afflictions for the past seven years.

Born in Zaandijk, North Holland, the Netherlands on November 2, 1931, to Anne Auke Brinksma and Elisabeth Maria Bakker, she was raised in Amsterdam where she endured the Nazi occupation of her homeland during World War II. Oma was a supreme storyteller and she shared her experiences during the war not only with her family, but she was also invited to speak in numerous elementary schools and to youth groups where she emphasized that “freedom was not free” and required vigilance, protection, and sacrifice. She never took the freedom she enjoyed in her adopted country of the United States of America for granted.

While a young girl, she studied at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, and showed great promise as a solo pianist. Her talents were utilized when at ten years old she was introduced to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints serving as the organist for the Amsterdam Branch even before her baptism at the age of 12 and all during the war. At the close of the war, when missionaries for the church were again called to serve in the Netherlands, a shortage of sister missionaries resulted in her calling as a full-time proselytizing missionary at the age of sixteen. She emigrated from the Netherlands to Salt Lake City, Utah in 1948. Many friends from Amsterdam were also emigrating during this period, and in 1950 Jacob C. VanKeizerswaard arrived with his family. They reunited and married on July 25, 1951 in the Salt Lake Temple.

This same group of Dutch friends, consisting of their Sunday School class in the Amsterdam Branch of the church, reconvened and referred to themselves as “The Dutch Fireside Group”. They met together monthly in one of their homes for “Fireside” socializing, teaching, and discussing the gospel of Jesus Christ. They were celebrated for meeting 60 consecutive years and invited to visit with President Thomas S. Monson where he honored them.

Sibylla served faithfully her entire life in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. She was frequently called on to accompany numerous choirs and soloists. She often served as organist, and choir pianist. She loved serving as Primary chorister on both the ward and stake level. She also served as Relief Society president of the First Ward, Park Stake.

Sibylla and Jake resided in Nürnberg, Germany (1982-1986) where Jacob worked as a civil servant for the U.S. Army. While living there, Mom served as a Relief Society Counselor in the Stuttgart Servicemen’s Stake. Sibylla often spoke with great fondness about the friends and relationships established while living in Germany.

Mom was proud to call herself a “Penney’s Girl” working for J.C. Penney Co. as a sales clerk. She also worked as a dental assistant for Dr. Edward G. Hale for many years.

A prodigious and expert knitter, she created countless sweaters and baby items. Whenever a baby was born in the

neighborhood, they received a pair of hand-knit baby booties made by Sibylla. Children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are all proud of their “Oma Sweaters”!

Mom was a supreme hostess and had a gift for warmly welcoming everyone, helping them feel comfortable and part of the family. An expert cook, she prepared and served delicious meals and was constantly baking cookies, and sweet treats to share with guests and neighbors. Her generosity, hospitality, and sincere interest won many loyal friends.

Sibylla is survived by her children, BetteJo and Carl McLelland, Provo, Neil and Marilyn VanKeizerswaard, Salt Lake City, Pam and Bret Hortin, Sandy, and Valerie and Michael Mooney, West Jordan; 14 grandchildren and 18 great-grandchildren; brother and sister-in-law, Andrew and Lucita Brinksma, California, and many cousins both in the United States and the Netherlands.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Jacob (Jaap), her parents and sister, Minke, and her grandson, Joseph Bret Hortin.

Funeral Services will be held Friday, April 23rd at 12 noon at the 10th Ward Chapel, 420 South 800 East, Salt Lake City. Friends may call Thursday evening at the Larkin Mortuary, 260 East South Temple from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and at the ward chapel one hour prior to services. Internment, Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 East Dimple Dell Road, Sandy. Please visit larkinmortuary.com for options to watch a broadcast of the funeral services as well as other details.

The family wishes to especially express our sincere gratitude to the loving staff at the Kolff Dialysis Clinic at the University of Utah for their compassionate care and friendship for the past six years that Sibylla has been a patient there.

We love you, dear Oma! “Well done thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” Matthew 25:21