Natalie Vonja Mincek Bates

January 10, 1972 ~ April 3, 2018

Natalie Vonia Mincek was born on Jan. 10, 1972, in Provo, Utah, the daughter of Zdravko and Christina Nibley Mincek.

She grew up in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, a short stroll from the Atlantic Ocean. Along with her younger brother, Alex Mincek, she spent summer days on the beach and tennis courts at the Ponte Vedra Inn and Club, where her father, Z, was the tennis pro. The family took frequent trips to Utah, where she spent time with her grandparents and played and hiked with her cousins, aunts and uncles.

Even as a child, Natalie turned run-of-the-mill childhood hobbies into meticulous pursuits, Alex recalled. She kept her sticker collection in a sprawling series of three-ring binders. And when she developed an affection for seashells, she didn't just comb her local beach. She studied each type of shell, and made it a point to collect prized specimens on family trips.

In her teenage years, Natalie was an outgoing and talented athlete, competing on the varsity tennis and soccer teams in high school. She was voted best all-around classmate her senior year, and graduated in 1990 from Allen D. Nease High School in Jacksonville.

Back then, she wasn't much of a scholar, Christina recalled. "Like all true Florida girls, her main goal as a teenager was working on the perfect tan," said Christina, who stayed home with the children when they were young and later worked as a high school English teacher.

Once Natalie got to Brigham Young University, however, her academic interests intensified. She developed a deep love of science and earned her undergraduate degree in molecular biology, followed by a master's in biochemistry at the university in 1999.

While at BYU, Natalie met Joel Myres, a fellow scientist who worked in the same lab.

They dated for years and then married in June of 1997.

Two years into their marriage, and while Joel was pursuing his medical degree at the University of California, Irvine, he was diagnosed with metastatic melanoma. After a fierce, 18-month battle to save his life, he died in 2001, at the age of 31.

Back in Provo, Natalie began work on a research project that grew into the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation, an initiative Natalie had been affiliated with since graduate school at BYU.

At the foundation, Natalie developed a reputation as a smart, conscientious researcher, rising in the ranks until she was eventually named director of research and development. In 2006she decided to apply to business school and signed up for some test preparation classes. Ali and Jill recall that Natalie called to tell them about her handsome

instructor, Abe Bates. She was shy and her friends said she came up with excuses to follow up with him after her class ended. After a couple of free tutoring sessions, Abe recalled, he asked her out on a date.

The two married in September of 2008 in Millcreek Canyon in Salt Lake City while Abe was completing law school at the University of Utah.

In 2009 Natalie was accepted into one of the nation's top executive business programs, a dual executive master's degree offered by Columbia University and the University of California, Berkeley. She continued working full time at the Sorenson foundation as Abe began his law practice.In 2011 Natalie and her brother Alex both graduated from Columbia -- she with a business degree, he with a doctorate in music composition -- a serendipitous moment that was a source of pride for their parents.

Her talents in science and business were soon put to good use. In 2012 Natalie was a driving force behind the acquisition of the Sorenson foundation by Ancestry. She then helped oversee the launch of Ancestry's DNA testing product and since January of last year served as senior director of AncestryDNA and strategic initiatives.

On a tribute page devoted to Natalie on Ancestry's website, colleagues described her as a smart and caring mentor who pursued her work with a quiet tenacity. "She would tell me, "you don't need to be the loudest person in the room to be heard," one colleague recalled. "Be confident, be yourself and deliver."

On March 14, 2013 , "Pi Day" -- Natalie and Abe welcomed their son Braden Chandler Bates into the world. He became the center of her life and she found it immensely rewarding to watch their baby grow into a bright, sensitive and joyful little boy.

Natalie will be remembered for her quiet, confident, thoughtful, inquisitive and ambitious; her calm perseverance in the face of personal adversity; her warm, loving, and loyal devotion to family; and to her legacy.

Natalie blessed everyone whose life she touched, from colleagues and friends to family, her husband and her son, who will carry her legacy forward.

Funeral service will be held on Tuesday, April 10th at 2:00 pm at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E. Dimple Dell Rd. (10600 S.) Sandy. Interment to follow at Larkin Sunset Gardens Cemetery.