

Roberta C. Larsen

Feb 19, 1926 – Dec 2, 2019

“Classy Lady”

Roberta C. Larsen, born Roberta Fay Carpenter on 9 February 1926, slipped the bonds of mortality on December 2, 2019, after a rich, full, happy life. Our mother was a naturally happy person, often reciting a line of poetry, or a funny saying, or singing part of a song to fit the circumstances of the moment. She had a good sense of humor and was quick with a cute comeback when the conversation was flowing. She was a classy, elegant lady who was always put together beautifully from her perfect hair and earrings right down to her outfit-matching shoes. Her eyes were bright blue, and her smile was beautiful, ready, and uplifting.

Roberta loved plays, musicals, classical music, the symphony, and good stories and classic literature. She had a beautiful soprano voice and loved to perform solos and in choirs. She sang bedtime songs to all her kids, and the family enjoyed the songs we all sang around the campfire with the Carpenter side of the family over the years.

Roberta was the seventh in a family of eight – five girls and three boys – all born in Vernal, Utah. She had red hair and freckles, which she said at the time was “almost disgraceful,” and certainly wasn’t considered attractive. It was hard for her to overcome those early years of feeling unattractive and inferior, but she hid it well. She made others feel accepted and loved unconditionally, but had a harder time extending that acceptance to herself.

Roberta’s family moved to Salt Lake City in Roberta’s teen years, where she graduated from West High School. Her best friend throughout life was her sister Catherine “Casey” Nebeker. They shared life’s up and downs together, raising their families, walking at Murray Park or Fashion Place Mall each morning, gathering the sisters for card games and camping, and supporting each other in everything.

Roberta loved the gospel and was active throughout her life in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. She served an 18-month mission in Ventura, California from April 1949 to October 1950. She married Merlin N Larsen on May 11, 1951 in the Salt Lake Temple, and together they had four children: Doug, John, Mark, and Lori. In their early married years Mom and Dad began helping to provide for, and care for, both of their own mothers, setting an example of respect and love for us children to see.

Mom and Dad enjoyed home and family. They had a large vegetable garden, and Mom always planted flowers. They both took great pleasure in remodeling the two homes they lived in during their life together, one on 59 East Miller Street in Murray, Utah, and later on 4602 South 600 East in Murray. They valued their friends and neighbors through the years in each of these homes, attending Sunday meetings and other activities and serving in various callings first in the Murray 8<sup>th</sup> Ward, and then the Millcreek 8<sup>th</sup> Ward. Mom loved her sisters in the Relief Society and enjoyed attending activities with them for some time, even after moving to assisted living. Throughout their married life they also enjoyed many get-togethers with Dad’s friends from Brigham City, who became Mom’s friends as well.

Mom never liked to cook, but she always did it so well. She brought family together for Sunday dinners regularly. For many years she invited family and friends to a delicious buffet every Christmas. She made all our birthday cakes. Her fruit cakes and divinity at Christmas were enjoyed by many. She and dad made popcorn balls every Christmas as well, which they shared with extended family and friends. Mom canned fruit and vegetables, made jam, and always shared the bounty from her garden with others. She and Dad were generous with time and money in helping others, especially their own family.

Mom was an excellent seamstress, making clothes for herself and her family, and also re-covering furniture. In the late 70s or early 80s she volunteered many hours teaching Vietnamese women, the "boat people," how to use sewing machines at a refugee center, so that they could learn a skill and find work.

Mom and Dad always did everything they could to be of service to their family and neighbors. Over the years as 21 grandchildren came into their lives, Mom and Dad were wonderful grandparents, attending special occasions, recognizing birthdays, organizing big Easter Egg hunts, and providing their home as the gathering spot. "Grandma's Ice Cream Parlor" became a favorite of everyone in the family, as Mom would keep her freezer full of "31 flavors" and allow people to serve themselves as much as they wanted.

After their family was raised, Mom and Dad were able to do some traveling throughout the continental USA, which they enjoyed very much. They decided to serve a mission together, and were a bit surprised when they were called to the same mission Roberta had served in before – the Ventura California mission. They worked as proselyting missionaries and also in the office, serving from July 1989 to August 1990.

Roberta enjoyed work. She worked as a secretary at Fort Douglas when she about 19 years old, during WWII. As a young adult she worked at Zellerbach Paper Company running the office machines and doing other office work. Throughout her life she was always precise and organized. She never did anything halfway, which sometimes plagued her, because she couldn't! Mom lamented being "slow geared," and wished that she could be quicker about things, but she always got a lot done, and it gave her a lot of satisfaction.

When Dad became ill around 2005, Mom became his care giver. She gave loving, dedicated care of him until he passed in April 2008. For the next few years, Mom enjoyed visiting Casey and Don in Mesa during the winter months where they were "snowbirds." She and Casey continued to walk together. Mom continued doing the things she had always done – yard work, housework, gathering with family, enjoying her friends, watching PBS, remaining curious about the world. She loved the independence of driving.

It started to become evident around 2016 that something was different for Mom. She began to have a harder time managing. She would forget things, be late, confuse the date, lose her way when driving to familiar places. Over the next three years, the cruelty of dementia gradually took over. Mom never lost her basic sweet nature and her concern for others. Her biggest worry throughout was that she was

letting someone down or had forgotten to do something important. She would ask “What should I be doing?” and would always think she was in charge of a dinner or activity that she wasn’t managing well.

Mom was still walking with a companion every morning until August of this year, and was still finding refuge in reading the Mitford books. A bad fall on August 6, broke her shoulder, and propelled Mom into a very difficult, painful four months of decline. Although she was confused and anxious, Mom knew her family and close friends when they visited her, even if she didn’t always remember names. She said, “I didn’t know it would be so hard to say goodbye,” and definitely had a hard time letting go. There was a joyful feeling in the room when she passed to the spirit world, and we know she is happy and pain free now, and that we’ll see her again.

Roberta is survived by her four children and their spouses, Doug (Gwen) Larsen, John (Joyce) Larsen, Mark (Dixie) Larsen, and Lori (Chris) Weintz. She has 21 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Preceded in death by one grandchild and one great-grandchild.

Mom requested to be cremated, which was carried out on December 5. A memorial service to honor her life will be held on Saturday, January 18, 2020 at Jenkins-Soffe Mortuary (1007 W South Jordan Parkway, South Jordan). Visiting hour starts at 10 a.m., with a family prayer at 10:45, and the memorial service at 11 a.m. Interment of Roberta’s ashes will be at the Redwood Cemetery (6500 S Redwood Road, West Jordan) directly following the memorial service.

Our family expresses gratitude to the many caregivers who ministered to Roberta over the past three years, with special thanks to Robyn, Tess, Sitela, Dr Holland, R.N. Christian, and CNA Linda. Also special thanks to Melanie H, and to Beth and Riley. We appreciate so much the kind and respectful care our mother and grandmother received from her Aspen Senior Care companions, and from many who worked at Pacifica Millcreek Assisted Living, Pheasant Run, and Brio Hospice.