



Sara Lee Gibb

December 30, 1937 - April 12, 2019

Sara Lee Heilesen Gibb passed away peacefully at her home Friday, April 12, 2019 surrounded by her family. Funeral Services for Sara Lee will be held at the LDS Chapel, located at 450 South 100 West, Orem Utah. A viewing will be held Friday, April 19, 2019 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. and Saturday, April 20, 2019, from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m. Funeral at 11:00 a.m.

Sara Lee was born in Rexburg, Idaho and grew up in the shadow of the Grand Teton Mountains in Teton, Idaho, USA. Sara Lee and J. David Gibb were married on July 29, 1965, in the Idaho Falls Temple. They have five beautiful children, fifteen grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Sara Lee is the daughter of Ralph Ammon Heilesen and Thora Ellen Ricks Heilesen. She has five older sisters and one younger brother. She was preceded in death by her parents and two sisters.

She started her illustrious career in 1962 as head of the Dance Department at Ricks College in Rexburg Idaho. In 1965 she and David moved to Provo, Utah, and Sara Lee started as a Dance Professor at Brigham Young University. She retired 44 years later as the Dean of the College of Health and Human Performance. Listed below are some of her most notable accomplishments.

She developed the dance teacher preparation program at BYU, and has mentored numerous teachers now placed in higher education, and public education institutions, and private sector schools throughout the world. She founded the BYU Children's Creative Dance Program with Virginia Tanner as consultant. This program continues today to influence generations of young dancers. Sara Lee was invited to give keynote speeches and teaching residencies in Japan, Korea, New Zealand, China and most recently, she was invited to read a paper at a prestigious conference at Oxford University in England. She was instrumental in organizing and directing the first study abroad program in China for BYU dance students. From 2003 to 2009 she hosted a BYU 'Leadership in Arts Education' conference for Chinese arts leaders and educators, bringing 92 distinguished guests to BYU. This program continued under the direction of Jiamin Huang after Sara

Lee retired.

Sara Lee was honored to be a founding member of the National Dance Education Organization and served as President for two years, and was on the NDEO Board of Directors since its inception in 1998 until several years after she retired from BYU. As an advocate for the arts Sara Lee completed 8 years of service as a member of the Board of Directors of the Utah Arts Council (a governor's appointment) and served as Chair of the Board for the last 3 of those years. Subsequently she was elected to the national board of the prestigious NASAA (the National Association of State Arts Agencies). She was president of the National Dance Association, and served 6 years as the United States Representative for daCi, (Dance and the Child International) and was instrumental in starting the daCi USA chapter, where she continued on the board for three years. Sara Lee has received numerous awards and recognitions throughout her career, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from NDEO, and the Karl G Maerser Distinguished Teaching Award from BYU. She was a published author and the list of her publications, research projects, and creative works was extensive.

Sara Lee's greatest joy and sense of fulfillment was not found in her professional career. She found her greatest satisfaction when surrounded by her family, and in her tireless and extensive service to her Lord. She touched the hearts and minds of every age group as a teacher, mentor and counselor. She was a legendary gospel doctrine teacher, and the organist in every ward in which she and David lived. When she played her beautiful prelude music, people actually listened. She carried this wonderful spirit of love, desire to serve, and her ability to be a righteous influence, with her into the mission field. She and David fulfilled two missions together. They spent two years serving in the Asia Area of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Days Saints, living in Hong Kong, and another 18 months in the England Leeds Mission. They still regularly receive correspondence from people in those missions who's lives they touched. When Sara Lee would talk about her mission experience, she would always stress the great blessings to be received from being in the service of the Lord.

She was an avid gardner that seemed to have an innate ability to make things grow. She spent much of her summers working in her beautiful gardens and caring for her 12 fruit trees. She then spent her falls canning and preserving her bounty. She delighted in sharing her fresh fruit and vegetables with all her family, friends and neighbors.

Of all the places she and David traveled throughout the world, her favorite place was with her children in the family cabin in Island Park, Idaho. The family has endless happy memories of their times there together. Shortly before she slipped peacefully through the

veil, she stated that her only regret was that she would not be able to go to the cabin just once more.

She leaves a void that cannot be filled. Her family is confident however, that her special abilities, her boundless energy, and ability to love unconditionally, must be needed beyond the veil even more than they are needed here. We will miss her laugh, her gentle touch, and her remarkable example of what it truly means to be a righteous daughter of God.

Funeral Directors: Utah Valley Mortuary

Cemetery

Orem City Cemetery

1520 North 800 East
Orem, UT, 84097

Events

APR 19 **Viewing** 06:00PM - 08:00PM

Orem Stonewood Stake Center
450 South 100 West, Orem, UT, US, 84058

APR 20 **Viewing** 09:30AM - 10:30AM

Orem Stonewood Stake Center
450 South 100 West, Orem, UT, US, 84058

APR 20 **Funeral Service** 11:00AM - 12:00PM

Orem Stonewood Stake Center
450 South 100 West, Orem, UT, US, 84058

Comments



“ My heart sank when I just now discovered that Sara Lee had passed on. She was an exceptional woman in every way, keeping her faith and family at the centre of her life while providing so much joy, energy, wisdom, talent and guidance to all with whom she came in contact. Through our association with Dance and the Child International (daCi), I came to know her as a dance education colleague of enormous influence, both nationally and internationally. I'm so thankful that her accomplishments were acknowledged by students, colleagues, associates and international collaborators alike before she passed away. My life has been truly enriched by our brief but deeply meaningful associations.

Mary-Elizabeth Manley April 8, 2020

Mary-Elizabeth Manley - April 08, 2020 at 03:32 PM



“ I go way back with Sara Lee. She was the one who showed me love of Dancing and a young girl in Teton Valley when she herself was just a teenager. She gave lessons at a very minimal cost so we could all go. I have followed her career all these years. So sad to read of her passing. She was always ON POINTE in everything she did.

Deena Mann - May 19, 2019 at 03:27 PM



“ I first met Sara Lee in NDA in the mid -1970s and went on to work with her in both NDA, and then NDEO as we formed that new organization. She was ALWAYS full of joy and confidence and that smile of hers carried us all through many challenging and difficult times professionally and personally. We will miss you, but I am so grateful and blessed that you were a shining star in my life and the lives of so many others. Heaven has gained a most beautiful Angel who will always be in the hearts of her family and friends who loved her dearly.

Love,

Marcia L. Lloyd

Marcia L. Lloyd - April 24, 2019 at 05:57 AM



“ I always loved seeing Sara Lee at NDA, then NDEO, and of course daCi. What a kind, generous woman--and how much her work in dance education meant to so many. She was one of a kind, for sure.

Susan Stinson - April 23, 2019 at 04:41 PM



“ I am so saddened to hear of the loss of Sara Lee. She was one of my first dance teachers as a child, I grew up dancing with her daughter and she was someone I worked with through both by Bachelors and Masters's degree -- she was my Committee Chair for my MA Thesis. She was a bright beacon of joy and an amazing example of how to share the love of dance with everyone. I am the teacher and dancer I am today because her guiding light and influence. Her love and wisdom live on through those she worked with. I am blessed to have known her.

Melinda Blomquist - April 23, 2019 at 04:10 PM



“ I am so saddened to hear of the loss of our dear friend and colleague. I shared participation in many different organizations with Sara Lee and at each meeting we always shared a wonderful moment. From an official position as chair of Dance and the Child International (daCi) I express the condolences of an entire organization that continues to benefit from her selfless devotion. From a personal position I am missing those wonderful moments that reminded me, no matter how busy we were, to celebrate the joy in being in the company of treasured colleagues.

Susan Koff - April 23, 2019 at 12:54 PM



“ I am saddened by the loss of Sara Lee Gibb. She was a very active supporter of Dance and the Child International (daCi). It is with daCi that I first met and worked with Sara Lee. She was always a diligent, kind and considerate person. One of my fondest memories of Sara Lee was in 2001 in Salvador, Brazil where the daCi Board was meeting. Sara Lee and I went shopping in the huge, busy market. She scoured the market diligently and found the most beautiful night dresses for her grandchildren, which, I believe, she gave them for Christmas. Her excitement encouraged me to look for those special gifts on my travels and it is at those times I think of her.

Ann Kipling Brown - April 23, 2019 at 12:44 PM



“ Every member of the National Dance Education Organization has lost a great leader.
Good bye dear friend.
Myron Nadel

Myron Nadel - April 22, 2019 at 10:05 PM



“ On behalf of NDEO and dance students everywhere:

The flowers come and go
Filled with light
Breath and color
Reminders
That some things
Can be counted on
To bud and bloom
Linger awhile
Then die
The meaning of their life is known
By the hands that held them
The bowl that contained them
The air that was filled
With their fragrance
And
The breath-taking change
They made in the Universe
Wherever they were
by BettyMcAfee

With our deepest sympathies,
Suzie Henneman, President, NDEO

Suzie Henneman - April 22, 2019 at 06:47 PM



“ I interacted with Sara Lee as a member and then as Executive Director of the National Dance Association. She was a delight then, as well as through the transition from NDA to NDEO and into the new organization. She was always smiling and ready to pitch in for whatever needed to be accomplished. I will always remember her kind encouragement and quiet laugh during our many encounters. So many of us in the dance educational world will hold fond memories of her in our hearts.

Luke Kahlich

Luke Kahlich - April 22, 2019 at 06:06 PM



“ When I attended the daCi meeting at UU in 1991, I didn't know anyone. On the first evening, Sara Lee saw me standing alone and invited me out to dinner with her family and friends. It was an incredibly kind gesture. That is the Sara Lee I remember. Kind and lovely.

I am sure that good memories will bring your family great blessing.

Jeanne Traxler

Jeanne Traxler - April 22, 2019 at 05:46 PM



“ Sara Lee gave me small smiles and little winks as she encouraged my path through the NASD and NDEO professional worlds. Her intuitive insights as a deep listener allowed for her advise to be appreciated and perfect in every given moment. I will always remember as I left my post on the NDEO board of directors, she handed me my certificate of thank you and we both whispered "I love you" in each others ears. I will forever take that little whisper with meand I will listen for her in the whisper of the wind...reminding me to listen to others carefully and with care.

Susan Kirchner - April 22, 2019 at 12:52 PM



“ Sara Lee was a mentor and pillar of support for me during my terms as NDA president, NDEO president and as Executive Director of NDEO. It was a privilege knowing and working with her. Her grace in challenging times as well in good times remains a model to me of how a true leader should perform. She will be missed.

Susan McGreevy-Nichols, ED NDEO

Susan McGreevy-Nichols - April 22, 2019 at 12:14 PM



“ Sara Lee contributed greatly to the field of dance education. I remember her from many conventions and conferences over the years. Her kindness and mentoring spirit will be truly missed. Suzie Henneman

Suzie Henneman - April 22, 2019 at 10:12 AM



“ Sara Lee was such a lovely gifted person. We have admired her greatly and appreciated her many talents, as well as her service.

-Myrle Roundy

Myrle Roundy - April 21, 2019 at 01:37 PM



“ I remember when Sara Lee Gibb was my methods professor 20 years ago, and her vibrant, determined, and in many ways serious approach towards her students and her craft. “The medium is the message” and I knew from Sara Lee that I’d better care about my conduct, my preparation, my future students, and how the heavens looked at my efforts-everything she modeled was coming through. 12 years later I sat across from her desk in her dean’s office at a hiring interview and I think it’s the closest thing I’ll have in this life to being interviewed by God. She could look at you with those powerful eyes and see deeply. She cared so very much about things like courage, integrity, charity, and embodied them.

Rebecca Lewis - April 20, 2019 at 08:11 AM



“ What a dear, dear friend. Responsible for me being hired at BYU, Sara Lee was always an amazing example to me personally in every aspect of our lives. She knew my weaknesses and loved me anyway. She will be sorely missed but I know that the family must have mountains of treasured memories to soften their loss. Fondly and with sincere sympathy, I pay my deepest respect.

Sandy Allen - April 20, 2019 at 02:12 AM



“ I’ve been wracking my brain trying to think of the right words to describe this woman and my interactions with her. I look at her long list of awards, and I know that was never her motivation. She just did! She was the epitome of an educator, who managed to find that delicate balance between having a strong standard and finding the strengths of the pupil. She was “no nonsense” but kind.....a woman with a purpose....always! I miss her inspiration, yet I know, wherever she’s at, dance will follow!

Joni Judd - April 20, 2019 at 12:11 AM



“ The Arlin Kuhni family lived next to the Gibb family in the 70s and we Truly love Sarah Lee. Our back yards faced each other with no fence and we were able to chat frequently. Many happy memories. Love and sympathy to the Gibb family. Arlin & Kathie Kuhni.

Arlin Kuhni - April 18, 2019 at 05:37 PM



“ I shared the following tribute on my FaceBook page:

My lifelong mentor, Sara Lee Gibb has been called back home. I am so grateful to have known her and to have called her my friend. She lived with passion and with conviction and taught me to do the same. She taught me how to really see and love my students and to believe in myself as a teacher, and as a human being. She challenged me to be better than I was and to push myself beyond what I thought I could do. She taught me to find joy and humor in life's most difficult circumstances. Through her example, she taught me about diplomacy, about service, about being a tireless advocate for the arts, and to seek after for all things that are virtuous, lovely, of good report and praiseworthy. She taught me how to be a better servant of our God and a better version of myself. Rest in peace, my lovely Sara Lee. I will miss you and cherish my memories of all that we have shared together.

To the Gibb family:

Thank you for sharing your wonderful wife, mother and grandmother with me. I'm so grateful for all that she has done for me. I'm also grateful for having had the opportunity to teach and know each of Sara Lee's three beautiful daughters. In each of you I see her beautiful smile, her vibrant personality and her goodness. I send my deepest love and condolences for a loss that I know is felt deeply by your family. Please know of my love for all of you.

With love,
Pam Musil

Pam Musil - April 16, 2019 at 10:20 PM



“ First she was my teacher; then she was colleague. I have many wonderful memories of Sara Lee Gibb. She has influenced countless people through her life's motto of service. I was privileged to go on the first Dance Study Abroad to China in 2003 with Sara Lee and Jiamin Huang as the program directors and chaperones. We had so many adventures together, learning about the wonderful culture of Chinese Contemporary dance, Wu Shu, and Folk Dance. My mother, Jan Rogers , also told me about how Sara Lee took the time to console her. My mom's mother died while she was in college as a dance major, right before her wedding. Sara Lee made sure my mom had someone to talk to. I remember Sara Lee, teaching me the methods that would influence my moral standards for protecting my students and creating safe, growing experiences for all ages in dance. She is a powerful, gentle soul with a long legacy influencing students and the global community for good. Love you Sara Lee!

Arwen Rogers - April 16, 2019 at 09:39 PM



“ In 1966 as I started as a Dance major at BYU, Sara Lee, became my adviser, We continued as friends even as each of all my children attended school in Provo 25 years later. She always welcomed our visits as the years passed. The funniest moment we shared is when she mentioned how surprised and happy she was to hear how I used my dance degree to have my own dance studio and then after the birth of my spina bifida son, worked in Special Education in Adapted Physical Education. I owe all my great teaching to the example of Sara Lee. You are loved and missed.

patty chatterley - April 16, 2019 at 07:05 PM



“ Sara Lee was a truly inspirational woman. I remember her as Dean of the College of Health and Human Performance, and she added a special dimension to her role - since she was the first and last woman to serve as dean of that college. She will be missed. Maggie Shibla, Exercise Sciences Secretary, BYU

Maggie Shibla - April 16, 2019 at 02:55 PM



“ We were privileged to meet Sara Lee when she served her mission in Hull and found out to know her is to love her. Sending love, prayers and condolences to David and all the family. A truly special lady and friend. Xx

Linda O'neill - April 16, 2019 at 12:18 PM



“ Sara Lee graced my life with her mentorship and leadership in encouraging me to develop my personal teaching philosophies that have helped me develop so many students/athletes over the years. Her gift was the ability to engage with each individual and recognize their needs. She was instrumental in developing many master teachers.

Colleen Long - April 16, 2019 at 01:33 AM



“ Sara Lee was a key mentor for me when I was doing my Masters Thesis. I was not a dance major, I was an Athletic Trainer. She kindly introduced me into the world of Pilates and allowed me to pursue research with dancers in that area. I had always looked up to Sara Lee as a legend. It was an honor to work alongside her and learn from her endless well of knowledge. May you as her family feel peace and comfort at this difficult time.

Lisa Mortensen - April 16, 2019 at 01:29 AM



“ Sara Lee was a powerful and compassionate leader in our field. I worked closely with her in NDEO and have profound admiration for her. She was a beacon in the world of dance education.

Bill Evans - April 15, 2019 at 11:34 PM



“ From my first arrival at BYU as a bright-eyed 17-year-old, Sara Lee has been such an example and mentor for me! What a great blessing she has been in my life. Teaching her three beautiful daughters Angie, Mindy, and Laine in the BYU Children's Dance Program which she created has helped to set and focus the direction of my teaching and philosophy. Her example of leadership, scholarship, teaching, service, and motherhood have helped to guide my way for almost 40 years! Beyond my sight, I know she is surrounded by friends, colleagues, and family. Those of us left to mourn her passing will carry with us a part of who she is! Until we meet again! Love you! Sara Lee

Kathleen Sheffield - April 15, 2019 at 05:48 PM



“ Loved her - one classy lady. Deepest condolences to the family.
Ginny Wilmerding

Ginny Wilmerding - April 23, 2019 at 10:08 AM



“ Sara Lee Gibb was a great advocate for dance and dancers. She always had an encouraging word, an articulate comment or an astute observation about choreography, scholarship, administration or pedagogy. She graced my life as a dance professional and for her influence and role-modeling, I am forever grateful.

Sybil Huskey - May 08, 2019 at 03:52 PM



“ Oh Sara Lee,

Just yesterday as Jiamin Huang and I discussed our next creative dance teaching excursion to China, I saw your passion vibrantly alive in her. She is joyously continuing your legacy of dedication to China, creative dance, and daCi!

Jiamin is one of the many who are forever changed by your mentorship.

Thank you for all the purpose you continue to inspire in those of us who had the privilege of knowing and working with you. Your love for dance, teaching, family, and the Savior continue to influence me deeply. I am so grateful for your vision and faith.

Marilyn Berrett - June 04, 2019 at 12:51 PM



“ I just became aware of Sara Lee's death. In our early days of teaching, we were both debate coaches, she at Sugar Salem HS and I at Butte HS in Idaho. We were both very competitive and had a lot of fun. We both became Deans. My last contact with her was when I was Dean at the U of Portland and she was recommending a faculty applicant. Great memories of those early days in our career.

Verne Duncan - February 27, 2020 at 06:08 PM



“ I have just discovered that our dear Sara Lee has passed! I am not sure how I missed it!!! It is almost a year since her death but for me it is a fresh blow. I served on the NASD Commission on Accreditation and it was a gift and a blessing to work with her. We were both on the Commission during 9/11 and spent a very poignant week together in Salt Lake City. She was a calm and gentle presence and the time with her helped all of us to survive those first days after 9/11. She was a beautiful human being in addition to being a great leader and friend. I send love to her family and all those who still grieve her loss.

Lori Katterhenry - April 06, 2020 at 04:49 PM