



Charlotte Jane Sillars

March 31, 1928 - February 12, 2023

Charlotte Jane Sillars passed away on February 12, 2023 at the age of 94 due to complications from pneumonia. She passed away on the birthday of lifelong companion, Malcolm Sillars, who preceded Char in death by four years. Char was a fiercely independent and tough-minded, but loving, woman who persevered through a myriad of health issues to stay in her own home, assisted by wonderful friends, neighbors, and caregivers. When asked how she was doing, Char's standard reply was, "Not bad for an old gal." Char was admitted to University of Utah Medical Center just one day after attending water aerobics, then spent her final time saying goodbye to family and friends and expressing gratitude to all who had helped her. Alert at the end and at peace, Char teased the attending physician for not letting her make it to her 95th birthday in March.

Charlotte was born March 31, 1928 in Los Angeles to Leslie and Uldina ("Betty") Grimm at the home of grandparents, Herman and Charlotte Emma Grimm. Char was the first of three children, followed by brothers Eugene and Richard. Char's toughness and make-do attitude were characteristic of her working class lineage. Grandparents Herman and Charlotte Emma were immigrants from Germany and Sweden, who met in Chicago where Herman worked as a butcher and Leslie was born. Betty's parents, Alexander and Sara Jane Fry, married in Billings, Montana where Betty was born, and eventually settled in Gardena, California where Alex worked for the LA County

road department after stints as an iron molder, shopkeeper, and painter. Growing up, Char saw little of her father except on Sundays, as Les worked 14 hour shifts, six days a week delivering bakery goods.

During school years, Char played different sports and ran track, regularly winning in sprints. She liked biology but “Anything to do with math and arithmetic I was dead against... It doesn't like me and I didn't like it.” Char and Mal met at Mark Keppel High School in Alhambra and continued their romance at Redlands College. Char dropped out after a year and went to work as a secretary, so that the couple would have some money while Mal continued his education. They married in 1948 and lived in the garage of a faculty member, cooking with an electric roaster and washing dishes in a bathroom sink. Three sons were born in close succession over three years in Ames, Iowa, after Mal took a job as debate coach at Iowa State. Money was extremely tight. Without a car, Char took the bus to shop for groceries and she washed cloth diapers by hand, drying them over a space heater in the metal barracks that served as family housing. Char recalled crying after Malcolm lost a few dollars playing penny ante poker with faculty because the family was so strapped financially.

The couple's later movements followed Mal's career, as he went on to teach at universities in California, Massachusetts, and Utah. Char again worked as a secretary to make ends meet while the boys were growing up, and she partnered in Mal's publications by typing and proof reading his work. Although Char supported and deferred to Mal career, she was in full command of many details of their lives. She cooked, decorated, packed for trips, drove the car, and shopped for everything, even picking out Mal's clothes and easy chair.

Char had a creative side expressed through crafts, decorating, and sewing. Early on, she stitched together homemade backpacks that the boys used on family trips into the Sierras and organized craft activities as Cub Scout den

mother. Later, Char made quilts by hand for each of her three sons, four grandchildren, and ten great grandchildren. Char also loved gardening, reading, puzzles, chocolate, feeding birds, and parties. Char and Mal hosted many parties and made lifelong friends wherever they lived. A typical Friday or Saturday night at the family cabin in the Sequoia National Forest involved trips up and down the mountain, sharing good times with friends wherever they gathered. Char was a loyal fan at University of Utah football and basketball events, where every call against the Utes was a bad one.

Char displayed a deep sense of fairmindedness and acceptance of diverse people. She would anger at any sign of bigotry, and she empathized with people in need. Char was adamant about supporting charities that fought hunger and homelessness and would tear up when talking about families who lacked basic necessities. Once they weren't living paycheck to paycheck, Char and Mal were extremely generous in supporting charities and family. Otherwise, Char was known for her spirited ("feisty") demeanor, often tinged with humor and backed by underlying affection for the people close to her.

Charlotte is survived by her three sons; Paul Sillars (Elisabeth), Bruce Sillars (Chris), Alan Sillars (Connie); four grandchildren, Nathaniel Sillars, Rebecca Botts (Bryan), Tara Mund (Bob), Kyle Sillars (Ginger); and ten great-grandchildren, Porter, Hannah, Landen, Levi, Wyatt, Mallory, Alix, Jaxon, Kai, Micah.

Tribute Wall



“ *Charlotte Jane Sillars*

October 05, 2023 at 07:49 PM



“ *My condolences on your loss. Char was a good friend to me for many years, and I'm so grateful for her wisdom and support, not to mention the fun times we had together. When I was a smoker, as was she, we'd adjourn outside to enjoy the view where ever we were, as well as having time for private conversation. I think of her frequently, as I do Mal.*

Sue Pendell - May 05, 2023 at 01:38 PM