



Joan Marilyn Neilsen

November 3, 1940 - May 15, 2026

In Loving Memory of Joan Marilyn Neilsen, 85 Born November 3, 1940 •
Passed May 15, 2026

Surrounded by the love of family and the legacy she so gracefully built, Joan Marilyn Neilsen completed her earthly journey on May 15, 2026, at the age of 85. Born on Sunday, November 3, 1940, at the old Dee Hospital in Ogden, Utah, Joan's life was a tapestry of faith, family, learning, and creativity.

Joan was the cherished daughter of James and Reva Silver. Her father owned Ogden Iron Works, and the family home on the hills of Ogden was filled with laughter, warmth, and spirited competition. Alongside her sisters, Debbie and Charlene, and her brothers, Jim, Ron, and Steve, Joan grew up active and adventurous—never far from a friendly game of badminton, baseball, horseshoes, or a bit of good-natured roughhousing.

A proud alumna of Ogden High School, Joan continued on to Weber State College, where she earned her bachelor's degree in education and, later in life, her master's in the same field. The stage was her second home: she shone in drama and theatre, often landing lead roles—including portraying Joan of Arc at Weber State. That same presence and passion carried seamlessly into the classroom.

For more than 30 years, Joan devoted herself to elementary education. She loved teaching children—truly loved it—and it showed in every lesson, every laugh in the hallway, and every student who walked away believing in themselves a little more. Her excellence was recognized statewide when she was named Utah’s Teacher of the Year. She was also selected as one of just 50 educators from across the nation invited to Washington, D.C., to meet with the U.S. Secretary of Education and share insights from her years of teaching. While she often joked about “going back to the classroom,” those who knew her understood the truth behind the smile: her heart never left it.

Joan was the loving mother of three biological children: David Paul (May 29–30, 1962), whose brief life left a lasting imprint on her heart; Michelle Denise Stewart; and Todd Matthew Bair. Later in life, Joan found a profound and gentle partnership with her husband, Mardel Nielsen. In him, she discovered kindness, patience, understanding, and a joyful, stress-free chapter. After Mardel’s passing, Joan moved to Draper, Utah, to be nearer to her children, embraced by family as she lived out her days with grace.

Joan’s spirit was lively, pretty, energetic, and endlessly talented. She poured herself into art classes and poetry, always dreaming of writing a book about her remarkable life. Though that manuscript remained unwritten, her story is etched in the hearts of those who loved her—in the colors of her paintings, the cadence of her poems, and the radiance of her example. She reminded everyone around her to embrace creativity, joy, and the courage to begin again.

She is preceded in death by her infant son, David Paul, and her beloved husband, Mardel. She is survived by her children, Michelle and Todd; her brothers, Ron, and Steve; and a loving extended family, colleagues, students, and friends who will carry her memory forward.

As we remember Joan, we honor her legacy of love, strength, resilience, and wonder. Her laughter still echoes, her lessons still guide, and her kindness still lights the path for those who follow. Though she is no longer with us, her spirit lives on in the lives she touched and the dreams she inspired.

Upcoming Events

Graveside Service

MAY **28**. 11:00 AM (MT)

Salt Lake City Cemetery
200 N St E
Salt Lake City, UT 84103