



Marie Nin Paongo

October 2, 2023

Marie Nin Paongo, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister, aunt, and friend, passed away at the age of seventy-eight, on October 2nd, 2023. She leaves behind a legacy of love, charity, service, and unwavering faith. She was preceded in death by her parents, Choung Ah Nin, and Polly Tatana Nin, as well as her siblings Buck Nin, Dolly Keung, sister-in-law Carol Nin.

She is survived by her loving husband Sosaia Paongo, eight children and their spouses, Leialoha Pakalani (Christopher), Lisiate Paongo (Tilila), Adiloa Kauvaka (Martin), Lavon Tonga (Ben), Candace Lavaka (Kesomi), Vaokakala Moala (Jared), Hala Paongo (Kayla), and Temana Paongo (Julie), 27 grandchildren, her younger sister Muriel Samuel, nieces and nephews and several hanai children gained over the years.

Marie's early years were spent in Kawakawa, New Zealand. She loved working with her sister Dolly in the garden, helping her father make homemade noodles, and selling vegetables and fruit. She had a happy childhood and many fond memories of going to church, helping the missionaries and fun times with her whanau (family). Some of her greatest attributes around love of family, caring for others and a strong work ethic came from growing up in New Zealand.

She graduated from Church College of Hawaii in Laie, Hawaii with a bachelor's degree in English. While there she worked as a tour guide and dancer in the Polynesian Culture Center. She was able to dance at the Hollywood Bowl and she was also featured in post cards, marketing materials and many newspapers during her college years. Marie was also selected as Miss Na Hoa Pono in 1967. The best part of working at PCC was that she got to meet her husband there. While she helped many celebrities navigate their Polynesian experience, she was most proud of being in the movie, Paradise Hawaiian Style with Elvis Presley.

Marie loved reading, journaling, singing, dancing, creating recipes, and church service. She was a remarkable cook and could create the most amazing meals with whatever she could grow or buy in Tonga. Her Sunday, Christmas or birthday dinners still make her the top chef. When President Howard W. Hunter, then Elder Russell M. Nelson visited Tonga, they complimented her cooking, hosting and care. Marie was a Jane of all trades, a leader of many and a creator of more.

She worked tirelessly as an English teacher at Liahona High School, for Church Schools Tonga. She taught over 90,000 students over the course of 28 years. She was a wonderful instructor, a brilliant mentor and trusted advisor to students, colleagues, and a friend to all who knew her. Marie was a mover and a shaker. Among her many passions, Marie collected encyclopedias, and recipe books. She helped to teach hundreds of youths a rock and roll number to mark a Jubilee celebration, in addition to hosting and implementing a national speech, debate, and quiz competition between all the high schools in Tonga.

Marie was also instrumental in creating the School Certificate Exam curriculum and examination used for decades. Marie described Tonga as a special place for her despite hurricanes and earthquakes, she raised eight

children there and exemplified the adage, “Bloom where you are planted and transplanted.” Marie’s greatest joy was derived from her family. She possessed a boundless love for them and would go to any length to care for their needs. Marie was marked by her genuine nature, an absence of guile, and an innate generosity that endeared her to all who knew her. There was never a family home evening without a ‘hip hip hooray’ for birthdays, or a Christmas without handwritten notes, or family gatherings without her expressing love and gratitude for the Lord, for her husband and for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A devoted member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Marie’s faith was stalwart and steadfast. Even in moments that were difficult, she made attending church and the temple a priority. She spent many years in Tonga holding three or more callings either at a ward or stake level. She spent her life serving with dedication as a Relief Society, Young Women, Primary teacher or leader, a temple ordinance worker, the wife of a Bishop and Stake President and a service missionary.

Near the end of her life, despite being overcome by dementia and being in a wheelchair, she was certain and so sure of the blessings of being a covenant woman. Her testimony about the goodness of God, her faith in priesthood power, and dedication to attending and serving in church is her legacy. We can attribute her eight children and seven grandchildren serving full-time missions part of what she shaped and influenced.

Her favorite scripture was 2 Timothy 4:7 – “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”. “Well done thou good and faithful servant” is applicable.

In the final years of her life, when traveling or communicating became

challenging, Marie continued to emanate love and joy to those around her. By simply being in her presence, you could feel her warmth as she still had the remarkable ability to make others feel cherished, happy, and loved.

Her husband describes her as godly, holy, virtuous, lovely, and eternal. Her children revere her as loving, safe, always hopeful, smart, and resolute. Her grandchildren will remember their grandma as the wisest, funniest, kindest, and happiest grandma ever. Her counsel to “Give service with all your heart, mind, might, mind and strength” is how she lived and who she was. Marie Paongo’s passing leaves a deep void in the hearts of those who knew and loved her. However, her memory will live on through the countless lives she touched with her kindness, generosity, and abiding love. She will forever be remembered, and her legacy will continue to inspire acts of goodness, love, and compassion.

Special thanks to the caregivers, nurses and staff at Canyon Home Care and Hospice, the Lehi 41 st Young Men who brought sacrament each Sunday to her, and the Serenity Funeral Home.

A memorial (nofo’aki putu) will be held on
at their home at
1482 E 330 N, Lehi.

Monday, October 9 th , from 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Funeral services will be on
Wednesday, October 11th at
1920 N 500 W, Lehi, Utah 84043
Beginning at 8:00 am

Previous Events

Nofo'aki Putu

OCT **9.** 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM (MT)

Paongo Family Home
1482 East 330 North
Lehi, UT

Funeral Service

OCT **11.** 8:00 AM (MT)

Lehi 41st Ward
1920 North 500 West
Lehi , UT 84043

Tribute Wall

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“ I loved Marie because she loved me. We connected at CCH in 1967 and her circle of friends invited me in and it meant the world to me. Later we were in Provo when we each had our first child and we socialized then, and still later in 1984 we went to Tonga and Marie treated us to a picnic at her beach, we were treated royally. And low and behold many years later we were buying gas in Laie at the little gas station there and who should shout at me but Marie. I had no idea they were in Hawaii and not Tonga. We were meant to be friends even if time and space kept us apart. She holds a special place in my heart.

She once told me over lunch in Kailua about Saia's mission and what a powerful missionary he was to go out with out anything but his testimony. As she related this story to me I was overwhelmed with the love she had for him, and he for her. Until be meet again my dear old friend, time isn't anything when we know we'll be friends forever. My love to Saia and her family, she was so proud of all of you!

SUE SANFT - October 06, 2023 at 10:10 PM