



## Sondra "Kay" McKee

February 25, 1938 - December 11, 2023

Sondra Kay McKee was born in Wichita, Kansas, on February 25th, 1938. She was placed for adoption by her birth mother (whom she met later in life) to Walter and Fern Schmitt (née Haymond) of Hutchison, Kansas. In the early years of World War II, the family, including her adopted older brother Rel, moved to Stockton, California. Soon after, they moved to Anaheim, where Walter found employment as a school teacher and coach. Sondra's mother attended Whittier College and also became a school teacher. Sondra, or 'Kay' as she was known to her friends and family, grew up in a prosperous post-war Orange County in the late 1940s and 1950s. She attended public schools in the Anaheim Union High School District, where she participated in the band and theater programs and met many of her lifelong friends. During one summer in the 1950s, she worked at a much smaller and simpler Disneyland, cutting and serving pies. Kay graduated from Anaheim High School in 1956.

The Schmitts were active members in the Anaheim United Methodist Church, and Kay was privileged to attend missions in the southwest United States and Hawaii. Both of these experiences would have a profound impact on her taste in art and interest in indigenous peoples.

Kay attended Occidental College in Los Angeles (a great source of pride for her entire life) and graduated in 1960 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. She attended many alumni events over her lifetime, including an early morning trip to view, in person, the Pasadena Rose Parade.

After college, Kay became a teacher in the Anaheim Union High School District at Oak Junior High School. After transferring to Orangeview Junior High, she met another teacher who also drove an MG sports car, Richard ('Dick') E. McKee, a Korean War Army veteran, originally from Polo, Illinois, and recent graduate of Long Beach State College. They married in 1962, and, in 1963, purchased a new home in Huntington Beach where they raised their family.

After staying home with son, Sean, and daughter, Erin, from 1967-75, Kay returned to a career in education as a preschool teacher, community college instructor, and administrator for the Head Start/ROP program at Prospect Elementary School in Orange, California. She earned a Master's Degree from California State University, Fullerton, in 1983, and then taught in the Bellflower Unified School District as a Resource Specialist until her retirement. She also taught classes to future teachers at Cal State Fullerton about the inclusion of special education students .

During their time in Orange County, Kay and Dick enjoyed visiting with teacher friends, including home prepared dinners and theater nights in Los Angeles or at the Segerstrom Theatre in Santa Ana. Kay realized part of her childhood dream of keeping equines when they purchased a team of sibling mules in the 1990s. She and Dick competed in and won ribbons at the Bishop Mule Days over several years. Kay was fond of crafts, including wood working, and made the family many wooden figures for dressing up their home during the holidays. Over their 59-year marriage, Kay and Dick traveled to 48 of the 50 United States, driving, camping and stopping to see relatives along the way. Kay and Dick retired to the small town of Etna, California, in 2002, to be near their daughter and her family, as well as adopt the slower-paced rural lifestyle they both longed for. They continued to care for their mules, sometimes entering community functions with a team and wagon. Kay volunteered at the Etna Library and was a member of the CattleWomen's Association. She was a member of the local Methodist church in Etna, and was a proud member of the Democratic Party. She donated regularly to Democratic causes and

candidates, as well as to charities that benefited children or animals.

After Dick's passing in late 2021, Kay moved to a senior apartment community in Medford, Oregon, where she spent time reading, going on small day trips, visiting with friends, and caring for her two cats.

In October of 2023, she entered a memory care facility in Grants Pass, Oregon, after developing rapid-onset dementia. Sondra Kay McKee passed away peacefully on December 11th, 2023, at the age of 85.

She is survived by son, Sean McKee (Jamie) of Grants Pass, Oregon, daughter, Erin Fowle (Jeff), of Etna, CA, former daughter-in-law, Cece Buckland (Steve) of Central Point, Oregon, and two grandchildren, Sarah and Kyle.

There will be a graveside service on Saturday, February 24, 2024, at the Etna Cemetery, in Etna, CA. The service will begin at 11:00am.

# Tribute Wall

DS

“ *This tree is being planted in your honor Kay. It shall provide protection for all living creatures, as you provided love and protection for family.*

Dayna and Jim Stagg - February 22, 2024 at 12:00 AM

AN

“ *We are thinking of you today and always. Love, Lili & Phil & Family*



Anonymous - February 22, 2024 at 12:00 AM

SH

“ *I can see where Erin gets her smile. Every time I attended a family function or one of Kyle's many games. Kay was always there sporting the biggest smile out of everyone.. Although I didn't know her well, I knew her by that smile I had no doubt that she passed that great trait down to her precious daughter. In world, where people are so busy being in a rush, sometimes just seeing the warmth of someone's smile, makes all the difference in the world. That's memory I will carry of Kate. I will use it as a reminder that no matter how hard life gets, it's always important to keep smiling!*

Shell Harville-Batchelder - February 21, 2024 at 12:00 AM

AM

“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Girdner Funeral Chapel*

A Memorial Tree was planted for Sondra "Kay" McKee - February 05, 2024 at 12:00 AM