



Evelyn Jean Colter

September 24, 1935 - December 11, 2015

09/24/1935 – 12/11/2015

Friday, December 11th, 2015, this world suffered an overwhelming loss with the passing of Evelyn Jean Colter. How do we begin to describe this prolific woman we called, Wife, Mom, Evelyn...? We'll start near the end of her life, when she sternly instructed her daughters NOT to bury her at Fort Logan – no stacked grave for her! She wanted her own space, and her last instruction was “Don’t be cheap!” This, coming from the woman who, on every family celebration, pulled out the re-used plastic ware – the family affectionately called “Evelyn ware.” For those that don’t know Evelyn well, you may think that she was being “thrifty.” For those of you that knew the depth of her being, you understood that this was one of her many examples of environmental conscientiousness. She was an environmentalist well before it was the “cool” thing to be.

Born September 24th, 1935 to parents George and Jeannette Gilbert in Flint, Michigan, Evelyn grew up in Mount Morris, Michigan. She was the youngest of three children, with a sister, Elaine, and a brother, George. Evelyn was diminutive -- all of 4 feet, 11 inches tall, but every inch of her had a thirst for life. One day, as fate would have it, a tall, handsome cowboy from New Mexico strolled into town in a traveling show with his cow with seven feet named Molly. Evelyn eventually fell for that cowboy known as Freedus! She always said they met in a chicken coop – but that’s another story. This young

woman, working at the Delco factory in Michigan, was destined for the adventure of her life – moving across the country, following Freedus' military career, and eventually landing in Denver, Colorado.

Evelyn was well-read, achieving Valedictorian of her graduating class, with a full scholarship to DU, but decided on family instead. She was artistic, and the family discovered only recently that some of her early art included fashion design. She had an affinity for painting landscapes, perhaps because she had such a love for nature. She had an eye for photography, and created her own “library” that recorded family history through her collection of photos. Many of the photos were of one of her favorite holidays – Christmas. We used to kid her about switching out the Christmas decorations on the tree for Valentine's Day ornaments, and then Easter. She could hardly wait to go to Hersh's each year to pick out her tree, and usually one wasn't quite enough. Another ritual was attending the annual Stove Prairie Christmas Holiday Festival.

One of her greatest gifts to her children was her interest in all cultures, embracing diversity, and a commitment to treat everyone – no matter what age, ethnicity, or class -- with respect, dignity, and equality. Freedus and Evelyn's home was always open to anyone. It was routinely a favorite guessing game as to whose car was in the driveway, how long they'd be staying, and who got to give up their bed this time! Her open door policy couldn't have been demonstrated more lovingly than when she agreed to open her home to a little boy named Kim.

While serving in the Korean War, Freedus met a little Korean boy who had been the mascot of the battalion Freed was assigned to. He eventually became the caregiver of this little mascot, who was given the nickname Little Beaver. Without having met Kim in person, Evelyn suggested to Freed that they make an attempt to adopt him. It goes without saying that Kim eventually made his way to Colorado as the first addition to the Colter family, but not

without a few bumps in the road. You see, Freed and Evelyn had applied to adopt Kim, but were denied the adoption because they were raised under differing religions. Determined to challenge this decision, Evelyn responded to that “No” by writing a heart-felt letter asking the agency to consider that Kim would be much better off with a family that loves him, rather than the alternative of growing up in a war-torn country with no known living relatives. Upon receipt of the letter, the decision was reversed, and in September, 1958, Kim made his way to the Colter family within 3 weeks of the birth of Janice. February, 1961 marked the arrival of Cynthia, and Lynda arrived in August, 1966.

Evelyn was a woman that could be described as having that “Katherine Hepburn” spunk. Some of you may remember the time when Freed and Evelyn purchased a home in a residential community in Laporte. Evelyn decided to paint the home goldenrod yellow. Shortly after finishing the top story, she received in the mail a letter from the homeowner’s association requesting that she change her color selection, as it didn’t meet the specifications of the association. Unbeknownst to Evelyn, the goldenrod color didn’t fall in the “earthtone” color options allowed in the neighborhood. While other homeowners might elect to accommodate the request, Evelyn seized the opportunity to make her own statement. She painted a one story high “Happy Face” on the side of the house with a tongue sticking out. We imagine that some neighbors were likely horrified, but family members took it in stride, realizing that Evelyn wanted to provide a “visual” of her view on the matter. Eventually, she received a letter from the association conceding that since Goldenrod was a flower that lived on the earth, they had decided it technically could be considered an earth tone and they would be delighted if she could finish painting the house Goldenrod Yellow. She did, painting the rest of the house first, leaving the happy face as the last touch-up.

Most recently, Evelyn recorded in her family photos an event she was most proud of – Kim and Freedus were able to participate in the “Honor Flight”

program, and attended a ceremony in Washington D.C. in honor of those who served in the Military, including the Korean War. Freedus and Kim were able to tour the Korean War Memorial together, sharing memories of a time long past, when they first met.

Evelyn enjoyed spending time with friends and family from across the country. She met many of those friends through Colter's Western Arts and Jewelry, the business she owned and operated for more than 35 years. She always looked forward to good conversation, and a good cup of stiff, black coffee. She especially enjoyed trips to National Parks in Utah, hiking with Cynthia and family friend Linda Sonnen. Archeological digs at Crow Canyon were among Evelyn's favorite memories, as well as occasional trips to places like Santa Fe, where she could visit the historic churches and museums. She also loved spending time with her friends from The Questers. As the years passed, she enjoyed watching kids of family friends grow to become adults with their own families. Having lived in Colorado since the late 1950's afforded Freed and Evelyn the gift of many dear friends whose friendships they cherish. She was overjoyed with seeing friends and family during Freed and Evelyn's 50th wedding anniversary. When given the choice of a get-together with friends and family, or a cruise to Alaska or trip to Hawaii, they chose seeing their friends and family. During most any event, you would likely see Evelyn carrying a camera. Photographs were her way of preserving those precious moments. Sadly, toward the end of her life, Vascular Dementia robbed her of the ability to use a camera. However, through the challenges she endured, she continued to persevere with unwavering courage, surrounded by friends and family that will love her always and forever.

During our last family Thanksgiving dinner together, someone asked what Evelyn was grateful for. Her response was, "Everything."

Evelyn is survived by Freedus Colter (husband); George Gilbert (brother) and

wife, Martha; Lavelma Parks (sister-in-law); Veta Chloe London (sister-in-law) and husband, Ernest; Kim Colter (son) and wife, Valerie; Janice Thompson (daughter) and husband, Bob; Cynthia Colter-Wilson (daughter) and husband, George; Lynda Colter-Bergh (daughter) and husband, Chris; and loving grandchildren, great-grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Cemetery Details

Grandview Cemetery

1900 W. Mountain Ave.
Ft. Collins, CO 80521

Tribute Wall



“ *Ev will be in my heart forever. We were soul mates, my heart is heavy. My deepest sympathy to you Freed, girls and Kim. I love you all so much. My only good thought is she is in a better place and not in misery, she was always so independent, of course she didn't want to be a burden. RIP dear friend....*

Phyllis Kommert



Phyllis Lombardi Kommert - December 18, 2015 at 09:26 AM



Our day at the Denver Zoo

Phyllis Lombardi Kommert - December 18, 2015 at 09:28 AM

LC

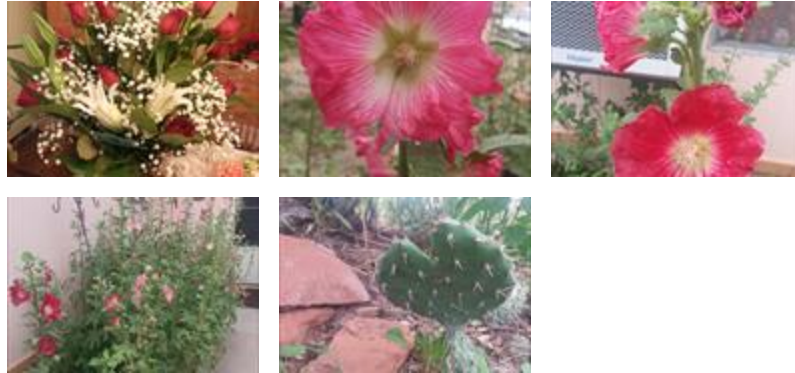
“ *28 files added to the album Beauty in Mom's Eyes*



Lynda Colter-Bergh - December 18, 2015 at 09:04 AM

LC

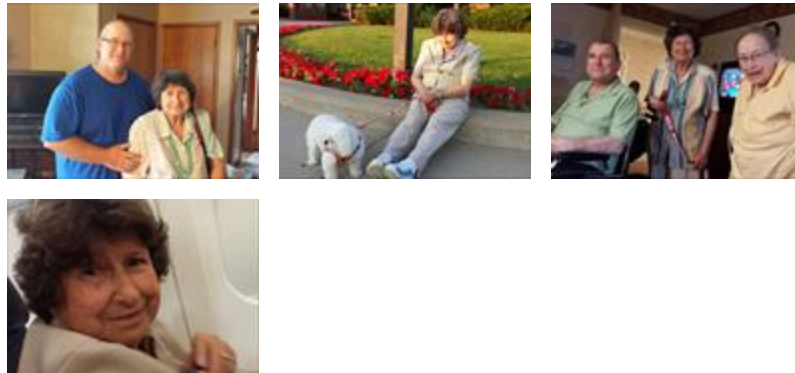
“ 18 files added to the album *New Album Name*



Lynda Colter-Bergh - December 18, 2015 at 08:22 AM

LC

“ 4 files added to the tribute wall

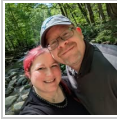


Lynda Colter-Bergh - December 17, 2015 at 04:05 PM

LC

During our last trip to see her brother, George, Mom saw two ladies that had Dementia in his nursing home. She pointed to me with her crooked little finger and declared "I am NOT going to be one of those little old ladies that doesn't know who anybody is and I am NOT going to live the rest of my life in a place like this. I'll die first!" I told her I believed her, (and I did). I think Mom's tumor was her way of checking out and going home. She got her way and for that I'm grateful. She had one last wonderful trip to Michigan and we had some wonderful memories since then that I will always cherish. Thanks for teaching me to appreciate the beauty in all that surrounds me, Mom. I love you.

Lynda Colter-Bergh - December 17, 2015 at 04:10 PM



She was the sweetest woman and she will be missed dearly.

Glenna Hart - December 18, 2015 at 01:32 AM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Evelyn Jean Colter.*



December 16, 2015 at 04:30 PM



“ *Heart's Companion Bouquet was purchased for the family of Evelyn Jean Colter.*



December 16, 2015 at 03:45 PM

PP

“ My name is Penny Williams Plumley, My family and I lived next to the Colter's on Vine drive. Freed and Evelyn were wonderful neighbors, we enjoyed being their neighbors. Our Dad and Freed were good friends, and all of us kids played together.

I'm so sorry about Evelyn's passing, I Pray for Faith and strength for the family.

Penny L Williams Plumley

Penny I Plumley - December 16, 2015 at 01:51 PM

JB

“ Please accept my condolences on the loss of Evelyn. She was like a second mom to me growing up in Bellvue. She always treated me like one of the family and I always felt welcome in Freed and Evelyn's home.

Janet Metcalf Barczewski

Janet Barczewski - December 15, 2015 at 08:16 PM

YC

“ The Colter family almost had 5 children if Uncle Freed had gotten his way by taking me home with them. I had my little doll-size suitcase packed and ready to go, only to be stopped by my parents (George and Martha) from crawling into their car. Aunt Evelyn would have gladly welcomed me into her home, just like she welcomed me many years later. When I was 17 years old and was having a communication breakdown with the principal of my high school, who maintained that I was never going to be "anyone" and was only going to "graduate, get married, and have kids" and on the verge quitting school, I had the opportunity to complete high school in Colorado and so I traveled from Michigan to Colorado and finished the last half of my senior year at Poudre Canyon High School. Aunt Ev became "mom" for the few months that I lived in the midst of the Colter family. Those months of being a "Colter" hold some of my best memories. Aunt Ev and Uncle Freed took great care of me and celebrated my graduation day as if I was their own daughter. I have hundreds of memories of time spent with Aunt Ev and Uncle Freed, but the above is probably one of the most important ones of my life. I will miss you Aunt Ev.

Yvonne Cunkle

Yvonne Cunkle - December 15, 2015 at 12:08 PM