



## Dianne Ruth Nielson

April 2, 1948 - November 7, 2019

Dianne Ruth Nielson, dedicated wife, mother, grandmother, public servant, and friend, died suddenly of a heart complication on November 7th at her home in Salt Lake City. She was 71.

Born April 2, 1948 in Elgin, Illinois, Dianne attended Beloit College in Wisconsin, where she met her best friend, Dennis. She graduated in 1970, married Dennis the same year, and continued on to New Hampshire for graduate school. In 1974, Dianne became the first woman to receive a Ph.D. in Geology from Dartmouth College.

Professionally, Dianne was an ardent and fair-minded advocate of the environment who served the State of Utah in a number of energy and environmental policy positions. She began her public service career at the Utah Geological Survey and was soon thereafter appointed as Director of the Division of Oil, Gas, and Mining by Governor Scott Matheson. Over 27 years, and until her retirement in 2011, Dianne served six Governors, including appointments as Executive Director of the Department of Environmental Quality by Governor Mike Leavitt and as Energy Advisor to Governor Jon Huntsman. Dianne will be remembered for her pragmatism and ability to unite divergent groups to find common ground on complex issues of significant consequence.

At her wedding, Dianne asked that a passage from Ruth (1:16-17) be read: "Don't urge me to leave you or turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people." This sentiment laid the foundation of what would become her life's joy - partnerships and family. She lived a life of service to her community and her family, teaching patience, kindness, and compassion. Dianne's life was full and happy, and those who loved her are committed to continuing her legacy. Her sudden loss is profound and we will miss her so very much.

Dianne was preceded in death by her parents Dorothy and Howard Gerber. She is survived by her husband of 49 years, Dennis, and her adoring children, Christina (John) and Preston (Amanda). She is also survived by her brothers, Bob and Matt, her mother-in-law, Gerri, and countless other family and friends. She was the proud grandmother of two brilliant girls, ages 8 and 4, who she loved dearly and got to see nearly everyday. She was eagerly awaiting the arrival of a grandson in January.

An open-house celebration of Dianne's life will be held at the IJ & Jeanne Wagner Jewish Community Center (JCC) on December 14th from 5 - 8 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift to Utah Clean Energy or the Early Childhood Center at the JCC.

# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

DEC **14**. 5:00 PM - 8:00 PM (MT)

IJ & Jeanne Wagner Jewish Community Center  
2 North Mario Capecchi Drive  
Salt Lake City, UT 84112

# Tribute Wall



“ *Dianne Ruth Nielson*

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October 22, 2023 at 08:21 PM



“ *Dianne Ruth Nielson*

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October 05, 2023 at 07:13 AM



“ *Dianne made a difference to the world in which we live through her efforts to address environmental degradation, climate change and energy policy. Her fairness, integrity and intellect were unsurpassed. She brought out the best in those of us who worked with and for her. She will be dearly missed. Our thoughts are with her family whom she cherished.*

*Denise and Thomas Chancellor*

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**Denise Chancellor** - December 14, 2019 at 03:38 PM

MN

“ Dianne was serving as head of the air pollution program under Gov. Leavitt of Utah when I was Assistant Administrator for Air and Radiation at U. S. EPA under President Clinton. Our administrations and our two agencies were on a collision course over the 1990 Clean Air Act requirement that areas with frequent air quality violations institute mandatory inspection and maintenance for cars and light trucks. Because of her creativity, persistence and good data, Utah was the first and only state to escape I&M. She was able to prove that Utah vehicles were cleaner than their counterparts in the rest of the country. Despite the extreme rigidity of the statute, EPA lawyers agreed to carve out an exemption based on the fact that the program was unnecessary. It was a triumph of common sense.

Mary D. Nichols  
Los Angeles, CA

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**Mary D. Nichols** - December 14, 2019 at 03:44 AM

JV

“ Julie BG and UMass Group and Marianna Voevodeskya purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Dianne Ruth Nielson.



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**Julie BG and UMass Group and Marianna Voevodeskya** -  
December 12, 2019 at 06:42 PM

MW

“ Dennis, Christina, Preston and family, we are so very sorry to learn of Diane's passing. She was a brilliant and caring woman who contributed in so many ways to the people of the State of Utah and to all those who knew her. We send sincere condolences and love to you all. Mike and Wynn Wright

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**Mike Wright** - November 18, 2019 at 11:05 AM

RC

“ Dennis, I was shocked to read the story of Dianne's passing in yesterday's Trib. I tried to call you, but sadly, my address book is badly out of date. I assumed there would be an e-mail address in a subsequent obit so waited; it appeared today. I have no experience to compare to your loss! A 50+ year relationship, nearly 50 as man & wife. She was a truly extraordinary woman; you are an extraordinary man; yours was an extraordinary partnership! My vocabulary is inadequate! It was my privilege to know you and consider you my friends. My sincerest and deepest condolences. Bob Christopher

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**Robert G Christopher** - November 17, 2019 at 09:13 PM

TM

“ Diane was an amazing Director of Oil Gas and Mining. She fought for her employees and at the same time was a very kind person who truly cared for the people who worked for her. She will be missed by everyone! Tom Munson

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**thomas munson** - November 17, 2019 at 12:30 PM

AM

“ Sorry to hear about Dianne passing. I hold her in high regard. She did a remarkable job in her positions of great responsibility with the state of Utah in the stewardship of the environment. Condolences to her family.

*Alarik Myrin*

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**Alarik Myrin** - November 17, 2019 at 12:01 PM

PD

“ Although we did not have the privilege of knowing Dianne, we feel we did. We know of her through Christina and John. It is a profound loss for them and their little girls as it is for all who knew her. She must have been extraordinary (Christina is so like her). We only hope that those who were lucky to know her are comforted in having witnessed a life well lived.

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**Paula Davis** - November 16, 2019 at 09:39 AM

AA

“ Dianne was such a remarkable woman - strong and kind, generous and open. Her devotion to the environment, love of all life, and her legacy endures. Blessings to the family and community as we miss her but celebrate her phenomenal impact on our lives.

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**andrea ashbridge** - November 14, 2019 at 07:42 PM