



Carolyn Kerr

May 17, 1932 - August 8, 2022

The family of Carolyn May Olsson Kerr would like to share the passing of a remarkable woman who balanced love of family with a passion for science and activism in service of her community. Carolyn passed away in Pinole, CA surrounded by her family on August 8, 2022.

Carolyn was born in Oakland on May 17, 1932 to Reuben and Dorothy (Schuyler) Olsson. She grew up an only child, but was surrounded by a large extended family in Alamo who affectionately called her “Cuzz”.

Carolyn was always interested in science. Upon graduation from San Ramon Valley High School, she entered Samuel Merritt College to become a nurse like her mother. She quickly decided that she wanted to become a medical doctor and entered U.C. Berkeley to take the first step towards her dream. While attending Cal, she met a young man in her endocrinology class. His name was Robert Kerr, and by the time they graduated they were madly in love and engaged to be married. Carolyn entered medical school at U.C. San Francisco, where she was one of only four women in the 100-student class. Carolyn graduated with honors from UCSF School of Medicine in June of 1960.

Carolyn and Bob were married on August 11, 1957 in Danville, CA. In 1960, Carolyn gave birth to their first child, Linda, and they moved from San Francisco to Claremont, CA where Bob had taken a teaching job at Mount

San Antonio College. The couple had three more children: Stephen in 1962, Eileen in 1964 and Susan in 1967.

The family moved to Modesto, CA in 1970 when Bob became an instructor of Psychology at Modesto Junior College. While raising the children, Carolyn also spearheaded voter registration campaigns with the League of Women Voters, including a skit and song fondly remembered by her children. She and other LWV activists were at the forefront of a limited growth campaign to preserve Modesto's downtown and McHenry Avenue businesses in the 1970s.

At first the family lived in the Davis High region of Modesto, but after a few years the yard became too small for Carolyn's expanding organic garden. The family moved on to a three-acre farm near Denair in 1974, where the two would live for another 40+ years. A small almond orchard was planted, harvested and processed all by hand, and the kids joined 4-H and FFA. Many sugar beets, chickens, rabbits, lambs and pigs were raised on the farm. Carolyn volunteered at Gratton School and was elected to the Hughson Unified School District board while her children attended those schools.

In 1982, Carolyn earned her teaching credential and taught science at Wakefield School in Turlock. This love of teaching soon translated into a job teaching anatomy and physiology at Merced College. In later years, the family would regularly encounter her medical students in doctor's offices around the valley. The feelings of admiration and love for the woman who introduced them to the beauty of the human form and how it functions were universally expressed.

Carolyn and Bob had many interests beyond their farm, including nature and travel. They shared their love of nature with their family. Summers were spent camping in the Four Corners region, rainy northwest states, the Sierra Nevada and coast ranges of California. Once Bob was done teaching for the summer,

the family would pile into the green 1964 Travelall and camp for a month. The two were early adopters of seatbelts – the Travelall was a special order with seat belts, though despite that, the kids got to sleep in the “way back” of the car as Bob and Carolyn drove them through the night to the next adventure. In the 1980s Carolyn discovered a new hobby - genealogy. Trips to the East Coast combined historical sites and ancestral locales. The family would travel to Salt Lake City to work on genealogy over many a Christmas break from school. Carolyn joined the Stanislaus County Genealogical Society where she worked for many years compiling and digitizing many local historical records, which have become invaluable tools for families doing research in Stanislaus County.

Following their retirement in 1994, Carolyn and Bob traveled extensively to Europe, Latin America and Australia and continued to camp and go birding throughout California and Oregon. Carolyn spent many hours in her organic garden, and taught her grandchildren a love of gardening and farming. The grandchildren loved spending time on “the farm” with Grandma Kerr.

Children and grandchildren have also been affected by Carolyn’s love of science, politics, history, and nature. Some are small scale farmers, some became or are studying to be scientists. Some have amazing gardens or strong connections to nature, and many are active in local politics and advocacy for those in need.

Carolyn is survived by her beloved other half, Robert and their four children: Linda Brandt (David) of Pinole, CA, Stephen Kerr of Redmond WA, Eileen Kerr (Darin Haydock) of Turlock, CA and Susan Kerr (Nelson Siefkin) of Denair, CA. Carolyn’s eight grandchildren include: Kara Franklin (Robert), Chelsea Brandt, Ethan Brandt, Lucas Brandt, Madeleine Kerr, Frances and Morgan Haydock, and Robin Siefkin.

A memorial service will be held for Robert and Carolyn Kerr at the Mary Stuart Rogers Building on MJC's West Campus on May 20, 2023 at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please send memorial donations to The Nature Conservancy at: <https://preserve.nature.org/page/81523/donate/1>.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAY 20. 1:00 PM (PT)

Modesto Junior College - West Campus
2201 Blue Gum Ave.
Modesto, CA 95358

Mary Stuart Rogers Building

Tribute Wall



“ Carolyn Kerr

January 28, 2023 at 09:01 AM



“ *It is with sadness and my sincere condolences to read about Carolyn's passing. While I haven't seen Carolyn for many years (maybe 50 years) I will never forget her, her amazing intellect and especially her sunny smile as we watched our kids enjoying Modesto Parent Participation Nursery School. We were all neophytes at parenting but somehow we seemed to grow in confidence and skill as our leader Ann Dutton assured us everything was going to be okay. There were days when one of us always felt we had failed, but there was Carolyn ready to provide a comforting word, a wise comment ...even a hug if was necessary. We were all a family of caring moms (and Dads too). Memories I will always cherish.*

Please give your dad my sympathy as well. I never saw him at MJC that he didn't share a smile, encouragement and curiosity about how my teaching was going. They must have been a very special couple.

Caroline's obituary was a perfect example of how amazing she was. As I said, I'll never forget her. Cammie Lear

Cammie Lear - September 12, 2022 at 04:06 PM