



Karen Lee Hopkins Balthaser

December 11, 1955 - July 10, 2016

Karen Lee Hopkins Balthaser, beloved wife, mother, sister, Grammy, and all-around amazing human being, passed peacefully on July 10, 2016 in her Trabuco Canyon home at the young age of 60. After easily beating cancer two years ago, it returned and Karen ultimately succumbed to the disease. Her life will be forever celebrated and remembered by many, especially husband Richard Balthaser, daughters Kirsten Hopkins Frazier and Natali Hopkins, stepsons Zachary Balthaser, Tyler Balthaser, son-in-law Bob Frazier, “daughter-in-love” Tiffany Kennedy, grandchildren Dillon, Lilly, and Gracie Frazier, brothers Chris, Claude, and Craig Bradley, and sister-in-laws Patricia, Ann, and Jeanell Bradley. Karen also blessed the lives of a large extended family with many cousins, nephews, nieces, and friends who all had the good luck to have her in their lives. She is now united with son Nick Michael Hopkins and parents Don and Bettie Bradley.

Karen Lee Bradley was born on December 11, 1955, in Tacoma, Washington. As the oldest child, Karen spent much of her early years outdoors building treehouses, creating fairy gardens and generally trying to keep her three brothers out of too much trouble. After Washington, the family lived in Las Vegas before planting permanent roots in Brea, California. From a young age, Karen loved to dance. From modern, to hula, to tap, she excelled at all. She continued dancing at Brea Olinda High School on both the dance and drill teams, and was a member of the homecoming court her senior year. She graduated high school in 1974 and would go on to build the rest of

her beautiful life in Orange County.

Her inherent desire to help people and excellent work ethic manifested in some of her earliest jobs. Karen enjoyed working at Drum's Drug Store, at JCPenney as a supervisor for the women's fashion department, and especially at Cannings Hardware Store with her brother Claude.

Karen married David Hopkins in 1977 and brought three beautiful children into the world – Nick, Kirsten, and Natali. Karen was a constant nurturing presence in their lives and applied her trademark passion and energy to countless endeavors. She was team mom for their soccer and little league teams, led Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, and served as PTA president at Brea Junior High where she spearheaded the construction of the marquee that still stands today. Elementary and middle school teachers quickly grew to appreciate having the Hopkins children in their classes, because they knew Karen would participate as a class mom.

Karen's loving nature was especially evident when her son Nick, fell ill with leukemia. Nick left an indelible impression on many family and friends, and ultimately passed at the too-young age of 20. Karen organized extensive fundraising campaigns for the Leukemia Society after Nick was diagnosed, just one more example of her big, beautiful heart.

After her daughters had grown and begun their own lives, Karen attended Cal State Fullerton where she received a Bachelor's Degree in English and a special education teaching credential. Karen embarked on a teaching career dedicated to helping those who needed her most; as an educator with at-risk youth in rehab centers, juvenile detention centers, group homes, and later as a special needs teacher's assistant with autistic children. She respected her students, no matter their circumstances, and they respected and trusted her in turn.

Karen began a new chapter in her already full life when she met Rick Balthaser in 2000. They moved to Trabuco Canyon and were married in 2007. Rick came with two stepsons, Zack and Tyler, and

Karen Balthaser jokingly referred to herself as their “Wicked-Step-Mother.” She fell in love with the beautiful and rural canyon life, and was welcomed with open arms into many organizations. She served as Secretary for ETI Corral 357, volunteered for O’Neill Park and Canyon Fire Watch, and served on the Fourth of July parade planning committee.

Karen, a lifelong animal lover, amassed a loving menagerie that includes horses Sunny and Stormy, dogs Lucy, Sam, and Toby, cats Duke and Daisy, a dozen-or-so chickens and Hunni-Bunni the rabbit.

Even with Karen’s many wonderful accomplishments, she would be the first to say that her proudest accomplishment was being “Grammy” to grandchildren Dillon, Lilly, and Gracie.

Words cannot convey what Karen means to those lucky enough to have her in their lives. She brought love, passion, enthusiasm, goodness, laughter, and a humble and quiet strength to everything she touched and every relationship she built. She will always be remembered in the families she created and brought together. She has gone too soon, and we will always miss her.

Please join us in celebrating Karen’s Amazing Big, Beautiful Life:

Friday, July 22, 2016, 2:30 Memorial Service at Memory Garden Memorial Park, 455 W. Central Ave, Brea, California. Cool, colorful, or tropical attire welcome.

The Celebration will continue at the Circle S Ranch at 5:30, 16211 Jackson Ranch Road, Silverado, California. Join us for a BBQ Dinner, opportunity to share memories, slide show, and live music. Please bring a memory and a dessert (optional) to share!

Donations in Karen’s honor can be made to Make A Wish Foundation. A link has been provided below.

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Previous Events

Memorial Service

JUL **22**. 3:00 PM (PT)

Memory Garden Memorial Park & Mortuary

455 W. Central Ave.

Brea, CA 92821

(714) 529-3961

info@memorygarden.com

<https://www.memorygarden.com/>

Tribute Wall

CT

“ *She was beautiful inside and out. I will miss her smile and sense of humor. We have all been blessed to know her. May Karen rest in peace. Condolences to the family.*

Candy Tagliavento - July 22, 2016 at 12:00 AM

DS

“ *Sweet Karen, she had such a huge heart and shared it with everyone and every creature big and small. I'm honored to have known her as a neighbor, and most importantly as a friend. She leaves a big hole in the hearts of many.*

Deb Shrider - July 22, 2016 at 12:00 AM

JR

“ *Karen was an Angel on earth! So much Fun & Caring in one person! Our thoughts and prayers are with you all in celebrating Karen and keeping her close in memories*

Jim and Pam Richardson - July 21, 2016 at 12:00 AM

KG

“ *Rick and Family, I am so sorry to hear of your Karen's passing. Although I didn't know her I can tell by your photos and postings that you and she had a rich and beautiful life together. I wish you peace at this time of despair and I hope you know there are many of us thinking about you.*

Kathy Griffith - July 21, 2016 at 12:00 AM

PS

“ *What a wonderful example Karen was to us all on how to be a loving Mom, Sister and friend. We feel blessed for having known her. She will be missed by everyone but we know she is with God. May God bless the entire family and give you strength through the promise of Jesus.*

Peg Savala - July 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MF

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with you all. Such a great person. Her smile was infectious. Her dedication and love of her family was present in everything she did.*

Mary Martinez and family - July 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM

FT

“ *A loving and giving person on earth. And now an Angel looking over all in heaven.*

Frannie Turner - July 20, 2016 at 12:00 AM



“ *I knew Karen for many years. She was fun, beautiful, strong, passionate, spiritual, loving and just an all around amazing lady. She was loved by many and will be missed. She was rare. She was never self-absorbed and always focused outward towards others.. You are with Jesus and will have eternal happiness! One day we will all meet again! RIP Karen! You lived a life pleasing to God!*

July 19, 2016 at 12:00 AM

BP

“ Karen had the sweetest smile and the most loving gentle energy. My life was enriched to have known her. Her wonderful love for animals was impressive.

Brynne Van Putten - July 19, 2016 at 12:00 AM

SM

“ She definitely lived a beautiful life. What she gave to others in her lifetime, sums up who she was. A caring, funny, loving friend and family member. I feel blessed to have known her. The warm memories I have will stay close to my heart. Condolences, love and prayers for her family ?

Sharon Sam Randlett Major - July 19, 2016 at 12:00 AM