

Billie Lee Merrill

June 17, 1943 – April 4, 2021

Billie Lee Merrill, 77, of Sioux Falls, South Dakota passed away on Easter morning, April 4, 2021 at Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls with her family by her side.

Funeral service held on April 9, 2021 at Linwood Wesleyan Church in Sioux Falls. Buried at Dell Rapids Cemetery in Dell Rapids, SD

Born the beloved first child of Thelma Elaine (Bolender) and Herbert Lee Stout on June 17, 1943 in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, Billie became the older sister to Kathleen Ann (Stout) McDonald on June 21, 1948 and Christine Sue (Stout) Robison on October 17, 1952. As a military family, the Stouts moved frequently according to Lee Stout's deployments, the family moved to Honolulu Hawaii in 1950.While there Billie began school at the Honolulu School for the Deaf before returning stateside in 1952. She attended several schools in the Midwest until the family relocated to California in 1955, at which time she began school at the California School for the Deaf in Berkeley where she would remain until her graduation at age 18. (Class of 62)

Living away from home and only reunited with her family during school holidays was difficult for a girl who valued her relationships with her family above all else. After graduation Billie returned home with her family as they first moved to Northern California for a few years before returning to the San Fernando Valley to live close to her maternal grandparents, her much loved Nano and Pop Pop.

It was in Van Nuys where Billie met her future husband, Kenneth Marvin Merrill. At first he was the date of her best friend even as Billie dated Ken's best friend, Kenneth Herrick. But it soon became obvious that both only had eyes for each other and on August 1, 1964 the two were married in Los Angeles, California. Both Kitty and Chris (called Tina, while growing up) recall how their sister would try to pull the "poor me, I have to live away from home all the time, I shouldn't have to do chores when I do get to come home" fine. It never worked. Billie and Kitty used to love walking from their home in Seaside California to the boardwalk and Fisherman's Warf in Monterey, just walking along Van Nuys Boulevard window shopping, or gossiping over teen magazines at the Rex-All Drug store. For Billie, Kitty was her very own baby doll, and when Chris was born, she held it against her for several years that she lost Kitty as a living doll when Kitty took Chris as her very own living baby doll. It also took Billie a few years to forgive her sisters for being girls and not boys, her preferred choice. With each birth, on learning she had a new sister, Billie would demand her parents to "take that baby back and get my brother!"

In childhood and adulthood, the sisters always had each other's back. It was one thing for them to fight among themselves, but no one else better try! In fact, Kitty and Billie would both pretend to be deaf when they would go to the movies as teenagers. Kitty would interpret the movie and, pretending to be deaf also, eavesdrop on the comments made by the boys who always took notice of two beautiful girls. They loved to go swimming at the Fort Ord base swimming pool where they always tried to pick up boys and watch while their father, Sargent Stout would remind the young men just who the girls belonged to.

Billie's greatest love was her family. She loved her husband and her children. While she and Ken both depended on Kathy as their first-born for interpretive services throughout their lives, they also valued the time spent simply being together as a family unit. Billie and Ken followed Kathy when she moved away from Utah to South Dakota and were followed soon after by her sons John and Ben. Marvin took up residence in South Dakota following his discharge from military service.

Having her adult children close was the greatest gift, and then of course there were all the grandchildren which gave her even more joy.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Kenneth Marvin, her parents, Thelma Elaine and Herbert Lee and numerous aunts and uncles.

Survived by her daughter, Kathryn Linda Dorsett, and her children, Cody and Kristina (Liberty Lake, Washington); her son, Marvin Lee (Randi) and their children: Colton, Allison, Jade and Dalton. (Harrisburg, South Dakota), her son, John Kenneth and their beloved cat, Sinbad. (Sioux Falls, South Dakota) her son, Benjamin Stout (Angela) and their children: Braxten, Madisyn, Isabella and Ashlyn. (Harrisburg, South Dakota); her two sisters, Christine (Belen, New Mexico) and Kathleen McDonald (Paris, Arkansas) and many dearly loved nieces and nephews and many close friends.

Billie knew and loved her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and raised all four of her children on the Word of God. She had only one reservation in dying and that was to leave her beloved sisters, children, and grandchildren behind. But Billie is reunited with those loved ones who have preceded her in death and who are welcoming her into Everlasting Life within the sheltering arms of her God. Billie is now perfected, even as the Bible tells us, without pain or sorrow, and awaiting the day when her loved ones join her in Heaven. God Bless, Billie. We will miss you.