



Kathleen Fitzpatrick Parlier

November 6, 1930 - February 11, 2026

Kathleen Fitzpatrick (Schaffer) Parlier

Kathleen was born 6 November 1930 in Fresno to Hugh A. Schaffer and Louise Alcott (Osborne) Schaffer. She passed away in her Kingsburg home on 11 February 2026 after an amazing life of over 95 years.

In the early 1900s Kathleen's paternal grandparents moved from Illinois to California and her maternal grandparents moved from Tennessee to Central California. Her parents Hugh and Louise married and settled in Camino, California where Kathleen attended elementary school. After graduating from Placerville High School she first attended College of the Pacific in Stockton then transferred to Fresno State College. During Christmas break, Kathleen was visiting her favorite 1st cousin Doris who lived in Reedley. While at Christmas dinner at Doris' in-laws, Kathleen met Merton, who had recently left the US Army. According to Kathleen it was love at first sight, and a love that never faltered.

On 14 April 1951 Kathleen and Merton B. Parlier were married in Selma while he was completing his studies at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on the GI Bill.

Following Mert's graduation from college, they moved from San Luis Obispo where son Greg was born, to Reedley for a very short time, then to Tulare

where daughter Melissa and second son Sandy were born. They then moved briefly to Kingsburg before moving to a Parlier farm where the kids started elementary school. Finally, they settled at their permanent residence in Kingsburg which became the "home place" on 16th Avenue. All three children would later graduate from Kingsburg High School.

Kathleen and Merton personally designed and built their new home in Kingsburg in the early 1960's. They would spend the next 50 plus years there together.

Kathleen first worked for the Fresno County Library while she still lived in Parlier. After moving to Kingsburg, she worked in the Selma library with her good friend and mentor Mrs. Sadie Saint. When the opportunity to move to the Kingsburg Library came, she took it. Kathleen was the librarian in the Kingsburg Library for 20 plus years. Early in her time there she helped the library move from Smith Street to a larger home on the west end of downtown Draper Street. Her work allowed her to get to know and appreciate as public library patrons, many folks in these communities. Perhaps noteworthy too, as Kingsburg librarian she frequently enjoyed exchanges with several of the KHS faculty and staff which, of course, was a creative, anonymous way of keeping tabs on her kids.

For several years, Kathleen and Mert were triple Blue Star parents while all three of their children simultaneously served in our military services: Melissa was a MedTech in the US Air Force; Sandy and Greg both retired as US Army colonels. Kathleen and Mert travelled widely, and often, to visit their far-flung children and grandchildren, including overseas to Europe, and were always present for special events.

While living in Parlier and for several decades after, Kathleen was an integral member of "the Cookie Party Women" which originally formed as a group of

young mothers who gathered to make Christmas cookies by the dozens. She and dear friend Josie Melgard anonymously founded the April Fool's Day gathering which involved mailed creative invites (such as a message in a Chinese fortune cookie) then gathering with husbands included for cocktails and dinner at a Central Valley restaurant. This group of couples remained and gathered as friends throughout their lives.

Kathleen enjoyed several hobbies and many interests. Obviously an avid reader, she enjoyed good fiction, particularly if historical, and loved poetry. Among her favorite poems is "Sonnets from the Portuguese" by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, especially #43.

She taught all her children and grandchildren at an early age to be kind to animals. Although the family had 3 dogs successively when they lived on the farm in Parlier, at heart she was a cat lover, with countless kittens and cats sharing their homes over the years. Perhaps her very favorite was Truffle whom she rescued as a kitten from the SPCA shelter in Fresno. On her frequent phone calls with her grandkids she would always close with: "Don't forget to kiss your kitties for me."

She loved music, everything from classical to Roy Orbison to Quartetto Gelato. And she was always playing something (usually a classical symphony) on her Bose Wave Music system she kept in her kitchen.

She inherited her mother's love of flowers, especially irises and roses, which filled her front and backyard flower beds for many decades. Every Fall her front lawn would become a golden carpet of leaves from her four large Ginkgo trees.

She enjoyed gallery and antique shopping especially with her younger sister and best friend, Susan. She collected many beautiful paintings and pieces of art. Entering the Parlier home was like visiting a museum, or at least an art gallery. She kept meticulous histories of everything she collected, much of which she gifted to others over the years.

She and Mert were universally famous for their homemade ice cream, often either lime or lemon picked from the citrus trees in their own yard. Kathleen not only enjoyed good meals, she created them. She was a superb cook and baker especially if the recipe involved chocolate. They loved to picnic and enjoyed countless visits to Napa-Sonoma for wine tasting and annual Thanksgiving family reunions. Their favorite day trip picnic location was Huntington Lake, which reminded Kathleen of her childhood in Camino.

Kathleen made time for a variety of volunteer positions: Cub Scout Den Mother; advisor for countless 4-H projects; and Rainbow Mom. She was a sports enthusiast, cheering on her childrens' many KHS teams, and then her grandkids too. She especially loved competitive figure skating.

An absolute master of the lost art of letter writing, she possessed a unique knack to search for, then select the perfect card for any occasion. Her many letters were colorfully descriptive, full of quaint prose, and always deeply heartfelt.

Kathleen led a transcendent life. She easily combined seemingly opposite human qualities. Always poised and proper in every respect, yet with her infectious giggle always so fun loving. Certainly not shy, but often reserved; she could "walk with Kings nor lose the common touch."

She leaves to celebrate her life her three children and their spouses, Greg Parlier (Judy), Melissa Sandoval (Daniel), Sandy Parlier (Julie), and adopted

daughter Karen Manuel; six grandchildren, Jamie Lynn (Bryan), Drew (Meleane), Warren, Tim, Amy, and Andrew (Lysha); brothers-in-law Gary Fowler and Monte Alvis; numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. She is preceded in death by her parents Hugh and Louise; husband of 65 years Merton; younger brother Hugh A. Schaffer Jr; younger sister Susan (Schaffer) Fowler; and grandson Steven Parlier.

A great granddaughter of the American Revolution who lived to our Nation's semi quincennial year, Kathleen Parlier was truly a woman for all seasons now off to the Ages. She has not "lost" her life; rather she gave it to her family and friends. For her children and grandchildren, she was - and always will be - our Guardian Angel.

Remembrances may be sent to Shriners Children's at shrinerschildrens.org.

There will be an Ice Cream Social in Kathleen's memory on Saturday, June 27th from 1-4 PM at her home. All who knew her and want to share memories with her family and friends are welcome.

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Creighton Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.