

# ‘A mom to all of us’

**Goldenite JoAnn Thistlewood dies at age 85**



The Thistlewood family enjoys their time together. Pictured is JoAnn Thistlewood and her husband Keith with their five grandchildren, gathered for a family photo. JoAnn Thistlewood died at age 85 on Dec. 6. COURTESY PHOTOS



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JoAnn Thistlewood was an avid sports fan.

Particularly, she could be seen cheering on the Golden High School Demons and the Colorado School of Mines Orediggers at her children and grandchildren's basketball games. And it was rare for the Thistlewoods to miss a Denver Broncos home game, as her husband was a season ticketholder for about 40 years.

But one thing she never got into was golf, despite that her husband had purchased her her own set of clubs. Perhaps this was because golf is an individualized game, said Joe Thistlewood, JoAnn's son.

“And if it was something that was all about her, she didn’t want anything to do with it,” Joe Thistlewood said.

JoAnn Thistlewood, a longtime Golden resident, member of St. Joseph Catholic Parish, author and former volunteer director of the Christian Action Guild, died on Dec. 6, nine days shy of her 86th birthday.

“I’ll take care of it,” she would always say, said Marv Kay, a Golden community member who had known JoAnn Thistlewood for at least 60 years. “You could always count on JoAnn.”

It didn’t matter if it was the food from her own refrigerator, Kay added, if she heard of a family in need, she was there to help.

“I can’t think of anything she did that didn’t benefit the community,” Kay said. “Everything she did was positive and meaningful.”

JoAnn Stransky was born on Dec. 15, 1932, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. She was the oldest of four children. She eventually made her way to Colorado, earned a nursing degree and trained at St. Anthony’s Hospital. She established herself as a nurse sometime in the 1950s, working for Dr. R.G. Howlett and his son in Golden.

JoAnn and her husband Donald Keith Thistlewood married on Aug. 25, 1962. They raised two sons — Joe, 49, and Dave, 51.

Joe Thistlewood recalls the “old-school road trips” growing up, he said. “We always looked forward to getting together with family.”

JoAnn Thistlewood was a dedicated family woman and enjoyed spending time with her five grandchildren.

After her first son was born, JoAnn Thistlewood became a stay-at-home mom. When they started school, she got involved with a number of school programs and voluntary projects.

“She was dedicated to being involved with anything my brother and I were involved with, but she was also always looking out for all the kids,” Joe Thistlewood said. “She became known as ‘the mom to all of us.’”

JoAnn Thistlewood served as president of Mitchell Elementary School’s PTA and became a lifetime member of the Colorado PTSA. Noteworthy accomplishments from her involvement with the local schools include co-founding the Golden High School After-Prom Party, and she was behind the effort to move the one-room Guy Hill Schoolhouse to Golden. It is now preserved in Clear Creek History Park.

“Caring for people was her driving force,” Joe Thistlewood said, “throughout her whole life.”

This is observed from the years JoAnn Thistlewood spent running and volunteering at the Christian Action Guild (CAG) — a nondenominational volunteer-run nonprofit that operates a community thrift store open to the public, for which its proceeds fund the organization’s food bank for local families in need.

JoAnn Thistlewood’s community service efforts did not go unrecognized and she is the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. Just a few of these include the Charlie O’Brien Award from the Golden Chamber of Commerce, the Service Above Self award and the Paul Harris Fellow Award from The Rotary Club, the Anne Sullivan Award from the

Golden Lions Club, an award for excellence in community service from the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Mines Medal for community service from the Colorado School of Mines.

“She was passionate about Golden history and keeping that history alive,” Joe Thistlewood said.

She and Lorraine Wagenbach co-authored the book, “Golden: The 19th Century: A Colorado Chronicle,” which documents Golden history from 1859-1990. Jefferson County Public Libraries keeps six copies of the book on the shelves of area libraries.

JoAnn Thistlewood was an avid collector of antiques, particularly items that had a Golden tie. At one time, Joe Thistlewood said, she provided some of her Coors Porcelain to the Golden History Museum as on-loan artifacts.

JoAnn “was somebody who was good to everybody,” Kay said. “She always had a way of helping those in need. The Golden community lost a wonderful person.”