



Kathleen Chang Brafford

APR 19, 1924 - AUG 1, 2023



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Kathleen Chang Brafford has brought talent and courage to a challenging life that spans a century. She was born in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi Province, about 350 miles southwest of Beijing, China, on April 19, 1924. As the second of five children, she was blessed with loving and progressive-thinking parents. Her father was an astute Real Estate Investor and Businessman, becoming CEO of an armament and ammunition company during the administration of General Chiang Kai-shek. In 1937, Japan invaded China endangering the vital armament plant of Mr. Chang. Kathleen's family was forced to move to a safer interior part of China, in Sichuan Province. It was a fearful eight years of Japanese bombing until Japan surrendered in 1945. Kathleen was educated in China at a Christian co-ed boarding school sponsored by Oberlin College in Cleveland, Ohio. After the war, she received a BS Degree in textile engineering in Tianjin, China. In 1947, fighting between Chinese Communists and Nationalists broke out. Not wishing to be involved in supplying munitions for a civil war, Mr. and Mrs. Chang and their two younger sons moved to British Hong Kong, and plans were made for Kathleen and her older brother to seek advanced degrees in the United States.

In 1949, the two Chang siblings arrived in the United States. Kathleen enrolled in North Carolina State University's graduate engineering program. Kathleen was a pioneer for women as she was the first woman to receive a Master's degree in textile engineering. In the summer of 1950, she met and married a North Carolinian, London (Joe) H. Brafford, Jr.

In 1951, the couple welcomed a baby boy, Wayne. The following year, Joe fulfilled his ROTC obligations as a commissioned officer to fight in the Korean War. His young wife and son stayed in Raleigh, where she worked as a chemist for the State of North Carolina. In 1954, Kathleen became an American citizen. In 1959, they chose to make Charlotte, NC home because it had become an important textile center. Kathleen worked for Celanese Corporation as a dyeing and



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finishing research chemist, while Joe worked in chemical coatings at Sherman-Williams Company.

After retirement in 1992, Kathleen and Joe moved to Memphis, TN to be close to their son and his family. Kathleen was able to continue her lifelong pursuit of painting especially watercolors. At age 91, Kathleen moved to Trezevant Manor where she enjoyed painting with other fellow residents. She was a member of Christ United Methodist Church.

Kathleen is survived by her son, Harley Wayne Brafford, daughter-in-law, Helen Johnson Donelson, three grandsons, Jonathan Micah Brafford (Courtney), Owen Hadley Brafford, William Pennson Brafford (Erin), two step granddaughters, Taylor Fikes Davis (Brian), and Lucy Marie Fikes, and nine great-grandchildren. Preceding her death of August 1, 2023, were her Husband, London (Joe) Hadley Brafford, Jr., and her daughter-in-law, Dorothy (Scottie) Wilson Brafford.

A Private Family Graveside service will be held for the immediate family at a later date. If so desired, contributions can be made to Trezevant Episcopal Home designated for the Scholarship Fund or a charity of your choice.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Kathleen by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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