

Paula Jean Kirkland was born March 20, 1948, in Salem, Oregon, to Calvin Clay and Rosella Eileen (Wilson) Kirkland. She was born just 11 months after her brother Tom, and they also had a little brother Robert. From the moment she was born, Paula was the love of her grandmother Grace's life. The kids grew up in the flats of Mehama, while their grandma Grace lived up the hill on Fern Ridge Rd. Many a trip was made in their little red wagon up the road to see grandma, and they wore that wagon out over the years. Paula and Tom attended the white schoolhouse on the hill in Mehama through 3rd grade, and then were bussed to Stayton after that. When Paula was in junior high, the family began a series of moves and the kids would attend many different schools, some in the Salem area and down in the Klamath falls area.

Some time during junior high or high school, Paula became acquainted with the Watters family from Salem. They had a house full of girls and took Paula under their wings as one of their own and they all remained close friends for Paula's entire life. Paula also spent time during her high school years living with her aunt Billie to help with Billie's four children while their mom worked.

After high school, Paula was living back in the Salem area and worked as a waitress for years at the Old Iron Skillet on Portland Road. She got involved with the Boys and Girls Club Bingo Hall in West Salem and took a job there as cook, then she ran the kitchen planning and ordering food. Paula began taking on other roles at the Bingo hall and soon basically ran the place even before becoming the official manager, making substantial amounts of money for the Club over the years. After more than 26 years at B&G Bingo, Paula retired in 2010.

Paula was the best mom there ever was to her only child, her son Scott. She loved her son fiercely and Scott adored his mom, and the two were always incredibly close. Paula was well known for the love she had for her family and her friends and she would do anything she could for anyone at any time. Over the years she gained many "bonus children" because she was always there for everyone and would take anyone under her wing. She cared for her friend when she was ill, making sure the kids were cared for while their mom was recovering.

One way she showed her love was cooking for everyone -she loved to cook more than anything and was proud of her ability to bless people with her gift. Many hours were spent watching the Food Network to hone her culinary skills and inspire creativity. Famous for her potato and macaroni salads, they were always completely gone by the end of an event even though she always made enough to fill a bathtub.

Classic rock was a huge part of Paula's life and she loved the hits from the 50s through the 70s. She would take any opportunity she could to dance and was so proud of her brother Tom who she taught to dance and who was soon outdancing her. If ever they were at a party and anything resembling a polka came on, Tom would grab Paula and the two would tear it up on the dance floor.

One of Paula's favorite things to do was to go to the casino, even though the last few months it was an exhausting endeavor as she struggled with health issues. Knowing she did not have much time left here on this earth, the family pulled together and gifted her some funds to make a final trip to Spirit Mountain, where she played to her heart's content for almost 9 hours, making some final cherished memories with those she adored. Just a few days later, on February 6, 2021, Paula passed away peacefully at her home with her beloved son by her side.

Paula was preceded in death by her parents and her beloved fur-baby Zoe the Shih-tzu. She will be profoundly missed by those she leaves behind including her son Scott Kirkland; granddaughters Katie, Samantha, and Ashley; brothers Tom (Marge) Kirkland and Robert (Ronda) Allen; numerous bonus children including Jessica Foster, Jason Bergstad, Ken Kirkland, Kevin Kirkland, Jim Spangenberg, Sam Doherty, Mike Lollar, Leta Cox, and many more; so many wonderful close friends and extended family; and her fur-baby Mila the cat.