

National Academy of Public Administration

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Folks:

My name is Harald Leuba.

I was married to Nancy Kingsbury Leuba for 59 years.

She won YOUR Elmer B. Staats Lifetime Achievement Award a few years ago.

Unfortunately, that GLASS award fell over and got broken, I wonder if I could PAY you for a replacement.

I wonder MORE, if I might share her obituary with you. She died on 9/30/25, just hours after the Episcopal Priest blessed our marriage, and gave her last rites!

There is a poetry in the Priest's blessing. That church had refused to marry us in 1964, because I had been married before. But they accepted my confession and blessed our marriage in the hospital! Meanwhile, the lady who raised me was a Unitarian when she met my father and started a Unitarian Church in Phoenix, Arizona in 1942 when the family moved there from Chicago, during the war. My father moved us to Phoenix, BECAUSE, (he said) I was very sick, three weeks out of four in the hospital and allergic to 57 of the 60 most common allergies. They told my dad that I might live in Phoenix. I did. I had my last asthma attack as we crossed the Mississippi River.

Meanwhile, when I got to college, I started a Unitarian Fellowship – and had to borrow an Episcopal from across the hall to meet my quota of 10 student signatures. Of course, the “faculty” quickly got involved. That Fellowship grew into a real church in Las Cruces, New Mexico, one of it's members was Clyde Tombaugh; a spoonful of his ashes were sent to Pluto by NASA. Long before I met Nancy, I dated Dr. Tombaugh's daughter!

The lady who raised me, not my “mother”, converted herself to Episcopal by reading T.S. Elliott's poem, Spring. She wrote each word down on a long piece of paper (e.g. adding machine tape) and then under each word she wrote each of the Oxford English Dictionary's definitions. Then she traced a logical path through those words and when she was done she became an Episcopalian.

Nancy died on 9/30/25 just hours after the Priest blessed our marriage.

I am bereft, of course; there is nothing to say, but saying nothing doesn't say it!

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Obituary

Dr. Nancy Rowena Kingsbury Leuba passed away, *comfortably*, on October 1st, 2025 – in “hospice” at Suburban Hospital in Bethesda, MD. She had been bedridden for two years, following a fall in Australia!

Nancy was the first person in her family to go to college! She WENT to the University of Miami → General Motors gave her a scholarship that paid all her fees!

She graduated second in her class, having gotten a B in typing, but her grades were good enough that she was admitted to Johns Hopkins University where the “selection rate” is less than 1 in 100.

After graduating, Nancy worked for Human Sciences Research, where she published original research that demonstrated that most medical errors flow from “human error” → poor record keeping. Her report generated an employment offer with the National Bureau of Standards. And her experiences there, with data, lead to a position at the US Civil Service Commission. She came to the attention of Governor Dick Celeste who recommended her to a Management Job at the Peace Corps! When President Regan decided to “shut” the Peace Corps, he asked Nancy to provide “retirement letters” for every senior person – including herself. He accepted ALL the resignations – except Nancy’s – which he held for six months, and then suddenly accepted.

The Peace Corps had “retreat rights”, so the law allowed Nancy to return to the agency she came from and keep her salary, if not her “position”. She was given a “Clerk typist” job at the regional office in Washington.

Nancy was finally brought back to the Civil Service Commission main office and asked to head a “task force” to implement the new “Americans with Disabilities Act.” Careful as she has always been, she was in the room where all of the CSC regional managers were to meet to work on the implementation rules for the “Americans with Disabilities Act.”

When the first manager arrived from Denver he asked “Is there any way to get a cup of coffee?” Nancy asked how he wanted it and got it for him. When the Manager from St. Louis came in, “Denver” said: “I’ll ask the girl to get you some coffee.” Nancy did – and then went to the head of the table and announced:

"I'm Dr. Kingsbury, I called you all here today because, WE need to figure out how to implement the new Americans with Disabilities Act so that it will be fair and unbiased."

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Nancy's leadership style and dedication to results, brought her to the attention of Elmer Staats, Head of the US GAO (for whom I had ghost written a speech called "no room at the top") and he offered Dr. Kingsbury an executive position at GAO as the first woman ever hired from outside into an executive position. At first she supervised their Public Employment oversight; then she was asked to head the "Air Force Group" where she flew a C-5 simulator and brought consternation to Capitol Hill when she reported that some Congressmen were behaving like snakes re the Lockheed program. Since it was not widely accepted then (at least not by GAO and certainly not by Congress itself) that "snake" is a fairly high form of life, GAO "pulled" Nancy from the AirForce group and gave her a "catchall" duty to manage ARM {Applied Research and Methods}, where all the technical specialties: statistician, economist, survey design, graphic artists, technical writers, which had theretofore been distributed across other programs were collected in ONE unit.

Nancy supervised several hundred technical people; she testified to Congress on the "Travel Gate" scandal, and she earned TWO GAO Comptroller General Outstanding Achievement Awards, as well as the ASPA "Elmer B. States Lifetime Achievement award"!

