

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Remembering the Legacy of Gleda M. Estes: A Pioneer in Model Rocketry and its Educational Opportunities

Penrose, Colorado, April 3, 2024 - It is with heavy hearts that we bid farewell to Gleda M. Estes, an icon in the field of rocketry and a champion for education throughout her life and career. Gleda passed away peacefully on March 30, 2024 at the age of 92, leaving behind a legacy that will continue to inspire generations to come.

Gleda Kane was born on March 4, 1932 to Lester and Anna Belle Kane in a farming community near Clarinda, Iowa. As the youngest of eight siblings, Gleda attended grade school at a nearby one-room schoolhouse and later moved to Clarinda, Iowa in 1946 to attend high school. During her high school years, she lived with the William C. Hemphill family, doing housekeeping, cooking and childcare for her room and board.

With plans to prepare herself for a career in nursing, she worked part time at the local hospital during her senior year in high school. Then, in the fall of 1950, she began her freshman year at Central College in McPherson, Kansas. It was in chemistry class at Central that Gleda met her husband, Vernon Estes. Gleda and Vern were married on May 16, 1951. They lived their early lives together in the Denver area where their three daughters Betty, Sharon and Linda were born. Together, they embarked on a remarkable journey, pioneering an innovative family business and ultimately shaping the landscape of model rocketry with the formation of Estes Industries, Inc. in 1958.

As a co-founder of Estes Industries, Gleda was Vern's primary support and partner in their new business venture into the space-age hobby of model rocketry. A modest mail order company in its infancy, Estes quickly grew along with the budding US Space Program in igniting the imagination of our country and contributing to technological advances needed to grow the hobby of rocketry. Her keen administrative skills and dedication complemented Vern's technical ingenuity in the development of safe and affordable model rocket engines and model designs, making rocketry accessible to enthusiasts of all ages. Gleda's contributions helped lay the foundation for the modern rocketry movement, inspiring countless individuals to reach for the stars.

It was Gleda who did much of the work as they got their small rocket company off the ground. She rolled body tubes, typeset and printed instructions, stitched the first Estes catalogs on her sewing machine, handled the bookkeeping, packed rocket kits, and processed and shipped orders.

Following the 1961 move to Penrose, Gleda managed the largest division at Estes Industries. It was her department that ensured kits were produced and shipped on time. She managed the mass mailings of catalogs, Model Rocket News, and other publications. It was her job to oversee the opening of the mail, and make sure each order was shipped out in the afternoon mail. Everyone at Estes knew that when it came to serving the everyday needs of customers, Gleda was the Boss. As Estes grew, so did Gleda's division of the company. When Estes Industries was sold to the Damon Corporation in 1969, she was managing more than 150 employees.

Upon retiring from Estes Industries in 1972, approximately 35 Estes Industries plant supervisors paid tribute to her with a celebration of her many years of dedicated service to the company and its employees. Following her 'retirement', Gleda continued working with Vern in his entrepreneurial pursuits and took on investments of her own from their office in Canon City. She participated in a number of community economic and social organizations and was especially active in her church's youth and music programs.

Beyond her remarkable achievements in rocketry, Gleda was a passionate advocate for education. She recognized the importance of nurturing young minds and empowering future generations to pursue their dreams. In honor of her commitment to encouraging bright young women, her oldest daughter, through the National Association of Rocketry, established the Gleda M. Estes Scholarship, which provides financial support to female students pursuing degrees in STEM fields.

Over the years, Gleda made many friends among the model rocketry community and will be remembered not only for her enthusiasm in the hobby, but also for her kindness, generosity, and profound love for learning. Her legacy, through the scholarship bearing her name, will continue to inspire generations of engineers, innovators and young dreamers around the world.

Gleda is survived by her husband of nearly 73 years, Vernon D. Estes, and by their daughters Betty Geer, Sharon Estes, and Linda (Dale) Musgrave. Gleda also leaves behind six beloved grandchildren and nine great grandchildren along with eight step-great grandchildren and seven step great-great-grandchildren. She cherished her family and friends who will, in turn, cherish her memory for years to come.

In addition to local services through Holt Funeral Home in Canon City, CO, a Celebration of her life will be held in conjunction with the National Association of Rocketry Annual Meet in early August 2024 in or near Pueblo, Colorado. More information will be available on the Estes Rockets website.



IGNITE IMAGINATION

1295 H St. Penrose, CO 81240
www.estesrockets.com/gleda
gleda@estesrockets.com

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Gleda M. Estes Scholarship Fund through the National Association of Rocketry: <https://www.nar.org/donate-to-the-gleda-m-estes-scholarship-fund/>

Cards and letters may be mailed to Estes Rockets Headquarters, addressed to The Estes Family, located at 1295 H Street, Penrose, CO 81240.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Bria Yatsko

Director of Marketing

byatsko@estesrockets.com

Estes Industries

1295 H Street

Penrose, CO 81240

www.estesrockets.com

About Estes Industries Inc.

Estes Industries, founded by Vern and Gleda Estes in 1958, is the world's leading manufacturer of model rocket kits, engines, and accessories. With a commitment to safety, quality, innovation, and education, Estes has inspired generations of enthusiasts to explore the wonders of space through hands-on rocketry experiences. For more information, visit www.estesrockets.com.
