Richard Whitehead Young Thurman

March 7, 1921 ~ August 26, 2017

Richard Whitehead Young Thurman, 96, died on August 26th, 2017 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Born on March 7th, 1921 in Salt Lake City, to Henrietta Young and Samuel David Thurman. Richard was an adventurous boy who spent many hours of his youth exploring the mountains surrounding Salt Lake City and falling in love with classical music and literature. At the age of 16, he chose to leave the LDS Church in which he had been raised for an intellectual and spiritual path of personal investigation into the meaning of life. He remained close and loving with his family.

Richard entered active service in January 1943 and was a participant in the invasion of Sicily, and served as a paratrooper in Italy through the end of WWII. Having lost three of his dearest boyhood friends ‚Äî Bob Moffat, Chick Worley, and Tinny Lloyd ‚Äî to the war, upon returning home he determined to live as fully as possible with a sense of perpetual gratitude for his survival, and as an ongoing testimony to them.

Richard married the great love of his life, poet and pianist Marie Anton, in 1948. After graduating from Utah State University, they lived for some years in San Francisco pursuing their writing and commitment to the artistic life, returning in 1958 to have and raise their children amongst extended family on both sides. Richard became an O. Henry Award winning author whose story, "The Countess and the Impossible," has been anthologized countless times and utilized by individuals, church groups, and therapists as a guide to pushing one\s self beyond boundaries to try to achieve "impossible" goals. The story brought letters of thanks to Richard from around the world, arriving as recently as 2017 over sixty years after its initial publication. Richard was for many years the Director of the University of Utah Press.

Always charismatic, Richard had a huge effect throughout his life on the people who knew and almost inevitably loved him. He was a complicated man known for his intellectual brilliance, humor, and genuine interest in others. Even at the end of his life when many physical capacities were lost to him, he never lost his curiosity, his elegance, or his joy.

He is survived by his children, Alexandra Thurman, and Thomas Thurman, his nephew Christopher Shugart, who was like a son to him, and by his adored grandchildren, Keir Willett, and Olivia Allen. Survived as well by his great friends Ricklen Nobis, Gregory Parascenzo, and Hudson Webster. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother Samuel and two sisters, Janet and Marilyn, and by his beloved wife, Marie, on August 31st, 2007.

Thanks from the family for the enduring friendships of his care companions Susan Tolman and Jamie Koehler, care manager Amanda Lambert, social worker Angie Braegger, and for Dr. Philip Kithas and the devoted staff of the William Christofferson VA Home, where Richard spent his last years making new friends and enjoying the final adventures of his long, rich life. A private family memorial will be held at a later date.