

James Lawrence Deaton

November 16, 1924 ~ May 13, 2020

James Lawrence Deaton, beloved father and grandfather, died May 13, 2020 in South Jordan Utah after a battle with three forms of cancer. He was in many ways an ordinary man. He had strengths and weaknesses, and experienced his share of highlights and heartbreaks.

He was also a man who had a mission to perform and he did it. Interestingly, it was only near the end of his life that he began to recognize he'd been a man on a mission and, even then, was reluctant to admit or accept such an idea.

He was a man born in humble circumstances, facing the hardships of the Great American Depression without the support and guidance of a father, or a stay-at-home mother. He was neither provided nor encouraged to obtain a formal education. His only "professional" education came through correspondence courses which were in effect self-taught.

What he did have, and what he made remarkably effective use of, were two knacks or talents. One, he was uncommonly good at making friendships and building strong working relationships with people regardless of their status—leaders, peers, and subordinates alike. Two, he had an extraordinary gift for math.

Leveraging these two gifts, James became arguably the most influential and effective highway engineer the State of Utah has ever employed. He was the Project Engineer or District Director on a large number of Utah's most demanding construction projects during the 1960s, 70s and 80s. It would be hard to name a highway engineer in the State of Utah who has had a greater impact on today's existing highway infrastructure than James L. Deaton.

James was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on November 16, 1924, the son of Samuel Lawrence Deaton and Ruth Schlappi. His marriage to Shirley Mae Reynolds May 24, 1946, was later solemnized in the Manti Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

James was a devoted husband and father, one who provided well for his family. Many memorable vacations and family outings are part of the precious memories he leaves behind in the hearts of his posterity.

He was preceded in death by his wife and son James Que (Christy) Deaton and his brothers and sisters; Maxine (Keith) Olson, Henry Owen (LaRae) Deaton, Dorothy (Stanford) Mason, David (Marlene) Deaton. He is survived by sisters Annette (William) Young and Lorene (Elliott) Jordan; and his children, Dennis (Susan) Deaton, Gary (Teresa) Deaton, JaLee (Mark) Harris, and Kelly (Sandra) Deaton; 21 grandchildren; and 51 great-grandchildren.

From the perspective of time, one can plainly see he was a uniquely suited individual who accomplished a remarkably significant, yet unheralded, mission during the course of his life.

Well done, James L. Deaton. Mission accomplished!

A small family service will be held on Sunday May 17, 2020 at 12:00 p.m. at Larkin Sunset Gardens Chapel, 1950 East Dimple Dell Road, (10600 South) Sandy, Utah. Online condolences welcome at larkincares.com.