Jerald Ray Izatt

September 22, 1928 ~ January 2, 2015

Jerald Ray Izatt passed away peacefully surrounded by his family on January 2, 2015 in Salt Lake City at the age of 86. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Mary Ann Louise Fassler Izatt and four of their five children. He was born on September 22, 1928 in Preston, Idaho, the son of Angus John Izatt and Leora Christensen Izatt. Jerry attended public schools in Idaho and Utah, graduating from East High School in Salt Lake City. He enrolled at the University of Utah and soon started dating Mary Ann. When he received his mission call, he sold his car and used the proceeds to buy an engagement ring for Mary Ann, who waited for him to return. He fulfilled a mission in Germany from 1949-1951, serving as one of the first missionaries to arrive in the war-torn country where he and his companions walked and biked through the rubble to minister to stricken survivors.

Upon his return from his mission, Jerry and Mary Ann were married in the Salt Lake Temple on October 18, 1951. Jerry was a natural scientist who excelled in physics and mathematics, and received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Utah in 1952. Following graduation he and Mary Ann moved to California, where he worked in the aerospace industry and he and Mary Ann started their family. However Jerry's quest for knowledge soon led him back to graduate school, and in 1955 they headed east to Baltimore, Maryland where in 1960 he earned his Doctorate in Physics from Johns Hopkins University.

The proud son of a teacher, Jerry had a long and distinguished career as a scientist and educator. He was a Professor of Physics at New Mexico State University from 1961-1970, at University Laval in Quebec, Canada (where he lectured and conversed in French) from 1970-1981, and at the University of Alabama from 1981-1996. He was a leading researcher in optics, laser physics and infrared spectroscopy and authored dozens of research articles on these topics. He and Mary Ann enjoyed international travel throughout their lives as he was invited to spend sabbaticals and to visit leading laboratories around the world, and to attend and organize international conferences. He supervised the Master's and Ph.D. theses of more than a dozen physics graduate students, many of whom went on to become leaders in industry and academia. He was particularly devoted to developing innovations in physics education, and helped lead efforts to study and improve teaching methods organized by the U.S. National Science Foundation and the Optical Society of America.

Jerry was a devoted Latter-Day Saint who loved the gospel and LDS theology and served in many positions in the Church throughout his life including bishoprics and stake high councils. A memorable part of his and Mary Ann's life were the years they spent in Quebec City, Canada from 1970-1981, where Jerry served as Branch President for many years and enjoyed activities ranging from physically building a meeting house for the branch to playing in the University softball league. Jerry was a devoted father to his five children who love him dearly and to whom he endowed his love for learning, education, and long family discussions.

Jerry filled his life with activities and adventures which he loved sharing with his family and friends. He loved hiking and playing ball, and played with and encouraged each of his children in sports. His family's many travels were filled with camping and exploration of new places, sites and languages. He enjoyed woodworking, yard work and building substantial improvements to his houses and properties. He was an avid reader in English, French and German, and enjoyed listening to music. For the latter part of his life he especially enjoyed fishing and camping at his cabin in the Uinta Mountains, where he and Mary Ann welcomed visits from their children and grand-children.

Jerry is survived by his wife Mary Ann; his children, Richard Angus (Carole) Izatt, James Arthur (Mary Ann) Izatt, Nancy Lynne (Greg) Bemis, and Joseph Adam (Susan) Izatt; and their families comprising 11 grand-children and 22 great grand-children. Jerry was regretfully preceded in death by his daughter Peggy Jean Izatt.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 11:00 a.m. at the Willow Creek 7th Ward, 2115 East Creek Road, Sandy, UT, where family and friends may visit Wednesday evening from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. and Thursday from 10:00 to 10:45 a.m. prior to the service.