James W. Gilson

December 12, 1948 ~ July 10, 2016

James W. Gilson, age 67, passed away on July 10, 2016, following complications sustained during his fourth open heart surgery.

Jim was born in Salt Lake City on December 12, 1948, to Vervin R. and Illa Jean Gilson. His childhood in Salt Lake was filled with joy, as well as what was described by his father as "saddled with unfortunate childhood accidents." Whether it was swallowing of batteries, biting of live electrical cords, or walking in front of other kids on swings, his mischievous personality was apparent from a very early age.

Jim graduated from Highland High School in 1967. His time on the football and wrestling teams, as well as his position as Student Body President, left him with a host of memories and friendships that followed him throughout his life. After high school, he attended the University of Utah, where he graduated with a degree in Economics, and later the University of Utah Law School. He practiced law for the next thirty years, all the while consciously avoiding becoming "the lawyer."

Jim was married to Sharon Ruff on May 28, 1971, and they remained happily married until her untimely death on June 17th, 1999. Together they welcomed James Nicholas and John Christopher, in 1980 and 1982. Jim shared his love of travel with both of his sons, and despite his aversion to camping, endured several exhausting week long trips with them during their time in scouting. Washington DC, Gettysburg, Boston, San Diego, and Maui were all favorite and frequent family destinations. He shared his passion for American history, and particularly the Civil War, on many of these trips, and somehow managed to keep quite literally everything "within walking distance."

After Sharon's death in 1999, Jim became reconnected with Meg Averett, who he would later marry on May 19th, 2001. Together they enjoyed traveling, with each other, and with their newly expanded families. A dissection of his ascending aorta, as well as two heart valve replacements and a neurological subdural hematoma made him a medical miracle in this time and forced his retirement, but despite these health challenges, his sense of humor, zest for life, passion for travel, and love of history never faded. Trips to Europe, the East Coast, Hawaii, and Malibu remained frequent in his retirement. He was grateful to spend many of these trips with his father, including him on several vacations honoring his service in World War II.

Since his marriage to Meg, his family has grown to include several additional children and grandchildren, as well as a pack of spoiled rotten shih tzu dogs that held a particularly soft spot in his heart. During this time, his most demanding and simultaneously cherished role in life was that of being a grandpa. Experiencing youth through the eyes of his many grandchildren has been a joy beyond what he could have ever imagined. Whether it is reading, going to movies and baseball games, barbequing or just mowing the lawn, the time spent with his grandchildren has meant the world to him.

Jim was preceded in death by his parents, first wife Sharon, and his brother Phil. He is survived by his wife Meg, and their children, Chris, Courtney, Nick and Alyson, Whitney and Josh, 12 grandchildren (CaryAnna, Zach, Tristan, Katie, Ramsey, Emily, Elijah, Riley, Madeline, Payton, Violet and Judd), great grandson Noah, his brother Larry (Barbara), numerous nieces and nephews, and more lifelong friends than can be counted or mentioned.

A funeral service will be held at 6:00pm on Sunday, July 17th, at Red Butte Garden, 300 Wakara Way in Salt Lake City, followed by a celebration of life from 7:00 , 9:00. In lieu of flowers, Jim would certainly ask you to instead brighten someone's day. Whether it's spending quality time with a young family member, a strategically placed whoopee cushion, or butter on the ceiling at a fancy restaurant, know that he is smiling and laughing with you.