Neil R Sorensen

February 24, 1927 ~ January 2, 2020

Neil R Sorensen passed away peacefully at home on January 2, 2020. He was born the third child of Parley Reuben Sorensen and Ivy Jane Dansie on February 24, 1927 at home in Draper, Utah. He grew up with his siblings, George and Velora, in small, rural Draper on the block occupied by many cousins, aunts and uncles. He worked on the small family farm, where he milked the cow, fed the chickens, gathered eggs, fed the pigs and weeded the garden. He and his group of friends were in high demand when it came time to harvest sugar beets because they were so fast. Neil attended Jordan High School, where he played football, basketball and tennis.

The day after graduation, in 1945, he joined the Navy and headed to California, then Chicago and Washington DC to train as an electronic technician. The Draper boy swam in both oceans, but never boarded a ship.

Following his time in the Navy he attended the University of Utah, then served as a missionary in the Western Canadian Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. In 1950 he attended BYU where he majored in mathematics.

It was there that he met LuAnn Merrill. He dated all of her roommates before he ever dated her. He must have been truly taken with her, because he kept dating her even after she beat him at bowling. LuAnn and Neil both graduated from BYU in 1952. They were married in the Logan Utah Temple on September 18, 1952. They returned to BYU where Neil received a Master's Degree in Physics. He continued his schooling, working on a PhD, at the University of Maryland and worked at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington DC.

In 1960, he returned to Salt Lake City to continue working on his PhD at the University of Utah. He was employed at Utah Research and Development Company, where he did research for his thesis. He received his PhD in Physics from the University of Utah in 1966, twelve years after he started it.

In 1967 Neil went to work for IBM as a systems engineer. He was part of the team that developed the first live freight-tracking system for truck transport. He moved to Portland, Oregon in 1972. In 1975 he was transferred to the IBM Cambridge Scientific Center where he worked on high-speed networking between computers, helping to develop the largest high-speed network in the world. Later, he pioneered client-server computing between desktop computers and mainframes.

In 1987 Neil took early retirement from IBM and moved to Layton Utah where he taught computer science classes at Weber State University until 1996. Neil and LuAnn welcomed four sons and one daughter into their home.

The children couldn't have asked for a better father. He took them fishing and camping. When Flaming Gorge reservoir was first being filled, he got his family up at 4:00 am and drove them to the reservoir in time to get some good morning fishing. He seldom had a chance to fish himself on these trips, as he spent all of his time baiting hooks, untangling lines and removing the fish that they caught from the hooks for his children. In those days of poor

sunscreen, the children learned that Nozema cream could reduce the pain of sunburn on the long car ride home.

Neil and LuAnn often invited others to participate in their love of the outdoors. They purchased a tent that was twice as big as needed for their family so that they could bring others along as they explored the backcountry in the northern Utah mountains.

Neil took his family waterskiing at Pineview, Bear Lake, and Palasades where he was always up early, ready be the first ones on the lake when the water was glassy. He spent many happy days exploring the canyons at Lake Powell and playing on the beaches with his children and their friends who came along.

Neil and LuAnn also shared their love of the outdoors with their grandchildren. They were always up for a camping trip, where they helped with babies and toddlers, making it possible for the young families to experience the outdoors.

Neil loved sports. He instilled that passion in many of his children and grandchildren. He loved playing racket ball, where he always managed to beat his opponent, no matter how accomplished, by the slimmest margin. He even gave pickle ball a try at the age of 91. He spent many happy hours at wrestling tournaments, foot ball games, soccer and softball as he cheered for children, grandchildren, and even great grandchildren.

Neil was an avid BYU fan. In the days before 24-hour sports networks, it was difficult to follow BYU from his home in Massachusetts, but there were many times when he was up late in the night with his boys watching a game played in California or Hawaii. Upon returning to Utah, he and LuAnn were season ticket holders for decades for both basketball and football. He was always a fan, even in challenging seasons. In his later years he loved following the BYU volleyball teams with his grand daughter.

Neil was a kind and loving father and husband. He had high expectations for his children's behavior, and lovingly encouraged them to meet those expectations. A gentle reminder that one was not acting in accordance with his or her potential was all that was needed to find internal motivation to do better.

He was well known as the biggest tease, but he was a gentle tease. He was constantly reminding his grand daughters to \"be a good little boy\" and his grandsons to \"be a good little girl.\" He would often greet them with a twinkle in his eye and say \"You know....I've been talking to your teacher...\" Many times he told us that Mom would let him come out of the doghouse any time he wanted to. He often answered the phone by saying \"Joe's Bar and Grill\" or \"Sorensen's Squirrel Cage. Which nut would you like to talk to?\"

He was a wonderful grandfather. He always managed to charm the babies, and was allowed the honor of feeding them their first ice cream. He sang to his grandchildren, read them stories, had sleep overs and launched the rockets they built, went camping with them and took them fishing.

Neil loved to make friends with everyone. At age 85, he walked the halls of the rehab center after his knee replacement, meeting all of the other residents and checking on their progress. He would leave the restroom at a BYU football game knowing the names and life stories of three new people. At Coscto, age 92, his daughter got a sample chocolate from the demo lady. Neil got four chocolates and a hug, along with the whispered admonition \"Don't tell your wife!\"

Neil served faithfully in many church callings. He spent many years in the Young Men's organization, helping to teach the rising generation how to be effective leaders. Perhaps one of his favorite callings was serving with his sweetheart in the Ogden Utah Temple for many years. He continued to serve weekly as a patron in the Draper Temple until his death.

Neil's loving nature was shown no better than during the years he cared for his wife when she developed Alzheimer's disease. Perhaps the hardest thing he ever did was to watch his beloved LuAnn struggle through the devastating effects of the disease. He was patiently, steadily, consistently by her side, caring for her with unselfish devotion and compassion. He gave and gave and gave until he was worn thin, emptied out, yet he kept on giving.

We know they are having a grand reunion, surrounded by loved ones and the love of God.

Neil is survived by children; Neil Robert (Marie Waters) Sorensen, Erica (Jim) Nordquist, Carl (Cindy Cobabe) Sorensen, Phillip (Kimberly

Peck) Sorensen, and Kenneth (Karen Hamilton) Sorensen, 22 grandchildren and 32 great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother George Alden Sorensen; sister Velora Sorensen Whetman; LuAnn Merrill, his wife of 59 years; and grandson Caleb Gary Sorensen.

A viewing will be held on Friday, January 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E. Dimple Dell Rd. (10600 S.), Sandy. Funeral services will be held on Saturday, January 11th at 11:00 AM at the Sandy Granite South Stake Center, 2130 East 10000 South in Sandy, with a viewing prior to services from 10:00 to 10:45 AM. Interment to follow at Larkin Sunset Gardens.