Russell Alan Toronto

August 15, 1952 ~ June 28, 2016

Russell Alan Toronto, a.k.a. "Beach", passed away on Tuesday, June 28, 2016 encircled by his wife, Paula, and children after a hard-fought battle with heart disease. Some say his heart was so big from helping so many that it wore out all too soon.

Russ was born on August 15, 1952 in Salt Lake City. He was the first of seven children of Alan and Carma Toronto. He was a loyal and trusted brother, father, spouse and friend, never drawing attention to himself, always concerned for others\ welfare first. Russ was a gifted athlete from the start, involved in both playing and coaching a variety of sports. Excelling at baseball in high school, he was awarded a scholarship to play for the University of Utah and began his career as a left-handed pitcher. He continued on, playing semi-pro baseball in New Mexico. It was there that Russ picked up a side job at a local hospital as a nurses' aid taking care of elderly patients. From that experience he realized that he wanted to enter the field of medicine.

He first caught a glimpse of the love of his life, Paula Hansen, at Hillside Jr. High School. Years later he married his crush in the Salt Lake Temple on June 21, 1978. With Paula by his side, they made it through medical school at the University of Utah, residency and 13 years practicing as an emergency room physician, all while raising five children. True to Russ's nature, he saw a need and decided to fill it, combining his two passions when he started his practice as one of Utah's first sports medicine specialists. Russ was known for working long hours and taking extra time with his patients, caring enough to listen to their concerns and thoughtfully solving their medical needs. Sharing that same love of sports with his patients, he thrived on getting them "back in the game". Just about everywhere Russ went he would run into grateful patients.

When not tending to patients, Russ could be found coaching on the baseball diamond, playing basketball, walking the dog on the golf course or cross country skiing in the mountains. An avid gardener, like his father and Italian predecessors, he spent his "free" time cultivating tomatoes and landscaping a beautiful garden alongside his wife "Polly". They shared a love of the beach and Hawaiian culture and put on many wonderful family gatherings together. One of the joys of his life was creating a respite from the world for his family in their family home and yard. As a father, his favorite pastimes included annual vacations to Laguna Beach, body surfing alongside his kids, and working in the yard listening to his favorite tunes. As a grandfather, he was famous for his golf-cart rides, trips to the toy store by the beach, cheering on his grandkids from the sidelines and tending to every little bruise and cut.

Russ's life creeds which he lived by: Be a friend to all, don't worry about what other people think, always remember the "little guy", and stand by your principles. His siblings credit him with the legendary phrase "Life's a groove", pronounced by him on his 16th birthday when asked for words of wisdom to remember him by.

He served in many LDS church capacities - he loved to study and share his extensive gospel knowledge through his callings. He had a strong testimony of the gospel, and an unwavering faith in his Savior, Jesus Christ.

He is survived by his wife Paula, sons Adam (Jenny) and Christopher (Aysia), daughters Brooke (Mark) Murdock, Maile (Scott) Olson, Jaime (Christopher) Sidwell, 16 grandchildren, mother Carma and siblings Jayne, Steve, Tom, Elaine, Carolyn and Sharon.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, July 9, 2016 at 1:00 pm at the LDS Stake Center at 1320 Wasatch Drive, 84108. Viewings will be held at the church on Friday, July 8th from 5:00-8:00 pm and on Saturday from 11:30 am -12:30 pm, prior to the services. Interment will occur at Larkin Sunset Lawn Cemetery. Online condolences may be shared at www.larkinmortuary.com.

In lieu of flowers, get out and play your favorite sport with the ones you love.