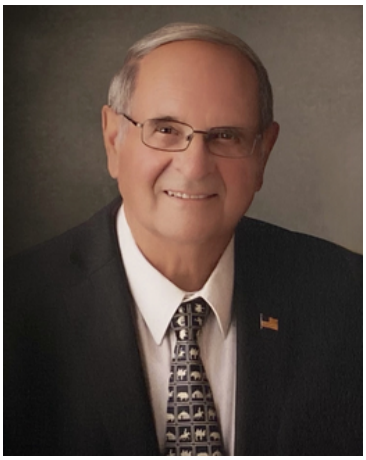


Bruce Richard Christensen

May 3, 1940 ~ May 6, 2024

Bruce Richard Christensen passed away on May 6, 2024, after a brief battle with interstitial lung disease. He was with his son, Bryan, when he peacefully passed at LDS Hospital.

Bruce was born on May 3, 1940, in Bountiful, Utah to Sophus Martin and Laura Astle Christensen. He grew up in Bountiful and lived an idyllic rural Utah childhood filled with sports, mischief in the mountains, farming, and family. He graduated from Bountiful High School in 1958 and enrolled in the University of Utah. He studied at the U for two years before leaving on a mission to Finland.

Bruce served in the Helsinki, Finland mission from 1960-1962. Bruce loved the Finnish people and his fellow missionaries, and he enjoyed speaking and reading Finnish for the rest of his life. He arranged his travel home from his mission with stops in the Soviet Union, France and England for sightseeing and “cultural enrichment.”

Upon returning from his mission, Bruce returned to the U and graduated in 1965. He was a lifelong U fan and loved to celebrate U sports victories, especially when Utah beat teams where his children and grandchildren went to school: The Air Force Academy, Maryland, BYU, USC, Temple, UMass, Harvard, and UVU. In fact, some grandkids are wondering if Grandpa did not compose texts before he passed to be automatically sent during the 2024 Utah football season.

While working at the “This is the Place” monument as a tour guide, Bruce met the love of his life, a recent Norwegian immigrant named Lilly Borge. At the conclusion of Lilly’s tour Bruce made sure she signed the visitor logbook. Sensing an opportunity that could not be passed up, Bruce looked up the address and contacted her for a date. They quickly fell in love and were married in May of 1965 in the Salt Lake City Temple.

Knowing he would be drafted into the United States Army during the Vietnam War, Bruce decided to join the United States Air Force. He was commissioned as an officer in June 1967. Bruce proudly and honorably served his country in the Air Force for 23 years, retiring in 1990 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Bruce and Lilly had three sons, Russell, Reed and Bryan. Bruce and Lilly raised their family all over the world from Mississippi to Virginia to Washington, DC to Turkey to California to Ohio to Germany to Alabama to Maryland to Germany (again) and back to Maryland where Bruce retired from the National Security Agency (We can only admit he worked at NSA since he’s passed away (haha). When he first entered the service he got quite the grilling over his little visit to the USSR after his mission, and it was a while before Uncle Sam finally decided he was not a spy…at least not a Russian one).

Upon retirement, Bruce and Lilly left their adult sons behind and returned to Utah; however, Bruce was far from slowing down. For more than 20 years, Bruce taught math at Salt Lake Community College and LDS Business School. He enjoyed running into former students around Salt Lake City and on the ski slopes and catching up on

their academic progress. Bruce also volunteered at local shelters and treatment centers, trying to pay back to the community which he dearly loved.

Bruce and Lilly also thoroughly enjoyed their time as citizen volunteers during the 2002 Winter Olympics and Bruce proudly wore his volunteer Olympic jacket for many winters afterward. As evidenced by his Christmas cards and many pictures shared via social media and text, his winter uniform was either the Olympic coat or a Norwegian sweater, both worn proudly.

Bruce served in a variety of church callings from working at the Utah State Penitentiary to Bishop to High Council and almost every calling in between. In the 30+ years since Bruce returned to Utah, he touched many lives with his patient, reliable and consistent service. Fewer things brought Bruce more enjoyment than a robust gospel discussion where nothing was off limits except intolerance or mocking.

Bruce loved living in Salt Lake City. He regularly walked in the mountains, throughout Salt Lake City and many other places across the west. He was also a regular at the Steiner Aquatic Center. Steiner, as he called it, combined a lot of what he really enjoyed: Olympic glory, swimming, exercise, proximity to the U and, most importantly, friends. Bruce had a regular group of workout buddies with whom he swam and then swapped war stories (literally) in the hot tub. It was a sad day for Bruce whenever the outdoor pool closed for the season.

Bruce was most proud of persuading Lilly to marry him and the family they produced. They had three sons and raised those sons across the country and world. Bruce is survived by Lilly, Russell and Bryan. Sadly, his second son, Reed, passed away in 2020 from glioblastoma and is survived by his wife, Jonnett and their four children. Bruce looked forward to a reunion with Reed. Between the three sons, there are thirteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren (and counting).

Bruce lived a life of service. He served his country; he served in his church; but, most of all, he served his family by his example of work, integrity and dependability. He was always there for others and his family. He will be missed but leaves a proud legacy.

The memorial service will be held on June 1 at 11 am in the 21st Ward building of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints located at 668 2nd Ave, Salt Lake City.