

Christian Skeen Fonnesbeck

July 10, 1940 ~ October 29, 2023

Christian Skeen Fonnesbeck was born July 10, 1940, in Provo, Utah and died October 29, 2023, at his home in the Avenues of Salt Lake City. His parents were Frank O. and LaRae Kerr Skeen Fonnesbeck.

As a baby, he was blessed in the 18th Ward chapel on A Street. He grew up in the Parley's neighborhood with his sisters Gerry, Annette and Kathryn and his brother Robert at a time when it was still semi-rural. He had an early love for animals and enjoyed the company of his chickens and dogs as well as neighborhood farm animals. He was active in Scouts, earning his Eagle Scout Award.

He attended several elementary schools, graduating from Rosslyn Heights. He attended Hillside Junior High, East High School and the University of Utah. He was a member of the Kappa Sigma Fraternity. He and his fraternity brothers commuted to school each day in his Isetta, lifting it over snowbanks as necessary.

He interrupted his education when he was accepted to the Marine Corps Officer Candidates School. He was soon honorably discharged from the Marines due to flat feet, narrowly missing the Vietnam War. He served an LDS mission to Denmark. While in Denmark, he developed a taste for the stinkiest cheeses and from that point forward any pastry more than a few hours old was deemed "stale." He also met some Danish relatives with whom he stayed in touch and visited whenever possible.

After returning to the U., he met Sydney Reed in an early morning German class. They were married on July 1, 1965. We are not sure why he enrolled in an early morning German class as he was not an early riser but are grateful that he made the effort.

He graduated from the University of Utah and the U. College of Law and worked for the State of Utah Department of Insurance before going into private practice as an attorney.

In the early 1970s, he and Sydney bought land on A Street from his grandmother Skeen, and they built a house in what had been his grandparents' dog yard. Chris and Sydney were involved in the neighborhood and worked to preserve the historical charm of the Avenues when developers had other ideas. He was well known for his nightly walks with various dogs and sometimes a cat.

His mother LaRae was determined to save the old 18th Ward chapel from demolition, and they worked together to raise funds and move the building. The White Memorial Chapel now stands across City Creek Canyon on Capitol Hill.

Chris and Sydney have three children: Melissa, Benjamin Douglas and Anna Christina. He was active with their education and activities, serving both the Boy and Girl Scouts, and was willing to edit school papers all night if necessary. He enjoyed long road trips and stopped to read every historical marker along the way, often causing distress for the rest of the family.

Chris was always interested in learning and was a prolific user of HB60 which enabled him to audit University of

Utah classes as a retiree. He loved the geology program and realized he had missed his calling as a geologist. He was the rare HB60 student who did all the assignments and took all the tests, staying up all night to study as needed. He enrolled in classes every semester until physical infirmities made it impossible.

He was a lifelong Democrat and enjoyed the fellowship of Unitarians. He loved a good conversation and always tried to include the outcasts and encourage the underdogs.

He loved his grandchildren and took every opportunity to spend time with them and teach them, particularly about history, dinosaurs, fossils and magnets. He was proud of his heritage and reminded his children often that our Danish immigrant and Scottish pioneer forebears conducted themselves with more fortitude than we displayed.

Chris is survived by his wife Sydney, his children Melissa, Ben (Jennifer Robinson) and Anna (Ryan Kratzer), his grandchildren Nick Anderson, Stella and Christian Fonnesbeck, Clara and Liliana Kratzer and his sisters and brother. He was preceded in death by his parents. He is also survived by dogs Dally and Shy who will miss his late-night treat dispensing.

A memorial service will be held at the White Memorial Chapel 150 East 300 North, Salt Lake City on November 29, 2023, at 11am. Chris’s remains will be interred in the family plot at the Logan City Cemetery at a later date – probably when it’s ice cream weather.

If you would like to donate in his memory, please consider KUER, which was a lifeline for Chris when he became housebound or The Boy Scouts.