

David Stephen Sorensen

April 6, 1960 ~ January 17, 2021

D. Stephen (Steve) Sorensen, much-adored husband, father, and grandfather died at his home in Santa Barbara, California, on January 17, 2021. His sudden death from a heart attack leaves a gaping hole in the lives of innumerable people.

Steve was a man of action and lived a big life. His wife, Shannon, says, “He felt like he could do anything, and he actually did a lot of it!” He brought sunshine into every interaction, with a native optimism and seemingly boundless energy. He was a loving family member, a genius businessman, a passionate rancher, a caring community member, and a leader in his church. The same description that had been true of Steve’s father was true of him as well: “He has the head of a businessman, the heart of a cowboy, and the soul of a disciple of Jesus Christ.”

He was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, on April 6, 1960, the first of seven children of David E. and Verla A. Sorensen. The family moved to South Pasadena, California, when he was a child. He served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Tokyo, Japan, from 1979-1981. On his return, he married his beloved Shannon Jane Paulson in the Jordan River Temple on August 18, 1982.

Steve studied accounting at BYU, and received an MBA degree from the University of Chicago. He put that training to work establishing and building a number of successful businesses. His children all remember being taught how to spell the word “entrepreneur” at an early age, and they saw in their dad the values of hard work, innovation, and determination. His interests and accomplishments ranged widely, but his staffing businesses were perhaps best known. Steve thought that his job brought dignity and a paycheck. He called his company Partners because he was a team player and wanted to give everyone opportunities.

In addition to his business success, he remained passionate about his family ranch. He was drawn to the land and the family heritage it represented -- it was a link to the generations that came before him and the generations that would follow him. He regularly took his children and grandchildren to the family ranch in southern Utah to pass on that legacy of hard work, respect for the land, appreciation for God’s gifts, and watching out for even that last stray cow. His kids knew that if they got out of line at home, their dad would soon have them at the ranch rising at dawn to work 12-hour days. But even more important than the physical labor was the opportunity to take solace and reconnect with God. He said that at the ranch he could feel God all around him. On horseback, alone with his thoughts in the beautiful wide open country, he instinctively felt drawn to prayer.

The same inclination to care expressed itself a hundred-fold in his interactions with his wife and family. His world revolved around Shannon, their eight children, and their 18 (so far) grandchildren. His kids say he was always working hard, but when he was with them, he was very present. When he walked into the room, his first move was always to pick up the nearest baby, whom he would carry around for hours. Saturdays were for attending soccer

games and volleyball matches, and bedtimes were for reading stories. He made time to have one-on-one conversations with each of his grandchildren, and led all the kids in singing cowboy songs on his ukulele. His partner in all of this was his wife, Shannon. They started each day going for long walks together, and talked or sent texts throughout the day. They were partners through and through.

Steve was a devoted member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. He has served in a range of official capacities, most recently as the bishop of a congregation of young single adults. Beyond his formal duties, though, Steve has served as a mentor, counselor, teacher, and cheerleader for countless individuals in his church community. “Go forward in faith,” he would often say. The hope of the gospel message meant everything to him, and he wanted to share that message with everyone around him.

His daughter Angela recounts a time when they were in kayaks and paddling hard, but making minimal progress against a strong tide. Steve suggested that there was a life lesson in their situation. We often can’t see the tides or currents that others are fighting against and can’t see how exceptionally hard they are paddling, he said. “God sees the tides and currents and will be able to judge everyone fairly, but the rest of us must be a little kinder, a little more understanding, and a little less quick to judge.”

Steve is survived by his wife, Shannon, and their eight children and 18 grandchildren: Jennifer Jane (her husband Dominic Anderson and their children Iris, James, Rosalie, Anders, Caleb, Lily, Jasmine); Charlotte Verla (her husband Cameron Archibald and their children Violet, Oliver, Aurora, Jane, Mabel, Amelia); David Jacob (and his wife Audrie Lindsay and their son Maverick); Angela Iris (her husband Alex Doermann and their children Frederick, Dieter, Dane, Marigold); Peter Paulson (and his wife Aspen Jones); Benjamin Stephen, Annabelle Rose, and Juliette Shannon. Steve is also survived by his mother, Verla Anderson Sorensen, and six siblings: Greg, John, Sheila, Kristen, Paul and Kathryn.

A memorial service will be held on Friday, January 22, at 11 a.m. and can be seen live or recorded at. http://bit.ly/honoringstevesorensen

A private family graveside service will be held Tuesday, January 26, at 12 p.m. https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82579040959?pwd=QjF0T2N4L1g2cTJsQ0NWSENrNVhHUT09

The family has requested that in lieu of flowers, donations be made in memoriam to give.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/humanitarian-aid