

Donald Lee Adolphson

April 30, 1944 ~ October 9, 2023

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30 April 1944 – 9 October 2023

Don slipped away peacefully following a heart attack at the University of Utah Hospital on a beautiful autumn morning. He had been diagnosed over a decade ago with Familial Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease, Aphasia and Alzheimer's Related Epilepsy.

He was born in Seattle, Washington to John and Eliza Clyde Adolphson. During his childhood, his father's career as an engineer took them from Seattle to Denver, back to Seattle and finally to Sacramento, where Don graduated from Sacramento High School. While attending Sac High, his older brother, Jack, and he played on the tennis team. Tennis was a sport they both loved and at which they excelled. After their father died unexpectedly when Don was fourteen, Eliza and Jack maintained the family's membership at Sutter Lawn Tennis Club in Sacramento. The brothers improved their tennis, played many tournaments and made multi-generational lifelong friendships at Sutter Lawn.

Don attended the University of California at Berkeley and graduated with a BA in Mathematics. He excelled in his math courses and played on the Cal Berkeley tennis team.

During his high school and university years, Don had diverse summer jobs: He made Orange Julius drinks at the California State Fair; served tables at a Lake Tahoe area ski resort; did computational math for the army at Fort Huachuca in Arizona, and again applied his interest and skill doing computational math for Harvey Greenfield, PhD, who was working on the artificial heart team at the University of Utah.

In the fall of 1966, Don drove across the country to Madison, Wisconsin to begin graduate school. While in Madison, Don continued to play tennis and compete in local tournaments, became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, met and married the love of his life, finished an MS in Computer Science and pursued a PhD in Computer Science. Before finishing his PhD, the family, which now included an infant son, loaded their car with baby paraphernalia and two Siamese cats and moved to Seattle. Madison was a landmark time and place for Don!

Don began his teaching career as an Acting Assistant Professor of Quantitative Methods at the University of Washington in the fall of 1970. He taught graduate courses in Quantitative Methods in the Finance, Business Economics and Quantitative Methods Department of the Business School. He looked so young that an older professor mistook him for a student in the faculty lounge and asked, "Can I help you, son?"

During the Seattle years, three more children joined the family. Don finished his PhD and soon became an Associate Professor and gained tenure, which made teaching at the university and living in their beautiful neighborhood overlooking Puget Sound and the Olympic Peninsula a lifelong possibility. However, in 1981 Don was offered and accepted a position in the Marriott School of Management at Brigham Young University, where he taught in the MBA program and later in the MPA program. He continued to teach long after Alzheimer's and Aphasia had compromised his cognitive functioning, masked for a long time because he had always been an exceptionally absentminded professor. But finally at the beginning of fall term in 2012, Dr. A – as most of his students called him – left BYU on full medical leave. He retired officially one year later after a career of doing what he loved – teaching students to succeed in quant courses that many dreaded at first but no longer dreaded after a semester with Dr. A. He was always generous with his time and energy, spending extra hours in his office with students who needed mentoring, listening to their concerns and aspirations, and encouraging them to find their way.

Don not only enjoyed his university teaching. He also enjoyed and excelled at teaching when called to in his LDS wards over the years. Although he was certainly capable of leading, Don was not designed to be a manager or administrator. Don was designed to teach and lead by his example. He cared deeply for his students, friends and, of course, especially his own family. He was always supportive of his wife and four children, whom he loved beyond words. From the time they were infants, he was sad when they were sad and happy when they were happy. He felt a special joy in watching each of them discover and develop their individual interests and talents. He loved well and was well loved.

Don was preceded in death by his father and mother, and sadly by his older brother, Jack, whom he greatly admired.

He is survived by his loving wife, Judith, to whom he was sealed in the Salt Lake Temple by Elder Thomas S. Monson in 1969. And, thankfully, he is survived by all four of his children and his eight grandchildren. These families are:

John (Sherry), Tobias, Liam; Matt; Lillian, Malachi, Elijah, Gideon; and Peter (Annie), Chase (mother Kaily deceased), Olive and Tille.

Don is also survived by his sister-in-law, Ruth Adolphson, nephews David (Vanessa), Thomas (Kristy) and niece Molly (Spencer) Hurtt and great-nieces and nephews, Marissa, Blake, Lilly, Logan, and Lanie.

The family is very grateful to all those involved with the Avenues Tennis Group; the Gleeful Choir led by Emily Christensen for people living with dementia; Neighborhood House Adult Daycare; Capitol Hill Senior Living's residential memory care unit; the University of Utah Hospital and the U of U Health Clinical Neurosciences Center; and Dr. Rachel Mitchell, our PCP over the decades. And we will be forever grateful for dear friends from the Wisconsin, Washington and Utah years.

Faith, Family and Friends made it all possible.

A memorial celebration for Don will be held Saturday, November 4th from 11:00-12:00 p.m. at the LDS 20th ward building, 107 N. G Street, Salt Lake City UT. An Open House will immediately follow at the same location.

Because Don's brain was donated to the University for Alzheimer's research and his body cremated and his urn already interred at the Salt Lake City Cemetery, there will be no graveside service.

If anyone would like to donate in memory of Don to Neighborhood House Adult Daycare or Jewish Family Service which offers support services for families experiencing dementia, the links are included below:

Neighborhood House, 1050 W. 500 S., Salt Lake City UT 84104 is a private nonprofit 501c(3) www.nhutah.org/donate

Jewish Family Service, 495 E. 4500 S., Suite 100, Salt Lake City, UT 84107 is a nonprofit 501c(3) www.jfsutah.org

To watch the memorial celebration online you can click the "Watch Services" tab on the top on the obituary page which will automatically take you into the Zoom.