

Dr. Stephen D. Matheson

April 26, 1934 ~ October 11, 2024

Dr. Stephen D. Matheson passed away on October 11th, 2024, at the home of his son Michael and daughter-in-law Yo Holmquist. He was 90 years old, and his passing was entirely peaceful. He led a very rich life of personal achievement and loving support for others. Like his beloved father and brother Scott before him, he passed in the autumnal beauty of early October. He leaves us in sorrow, but we are full of gratitude for his extraordinary generosity and unmeasurable love for his family and friends.

Dad was born in Cedar City in 1934, but home would always be Parowan, “the Mother City of Southern Utah,” as he proudly reminded us throughout his life. His parents Scott Matheson and Adele Adams Matheson were Parowan natives and people of exceptional ability. Dad would spend his summers in Parowan as a boy and teenager, living first in the family home with his maternal grandmother—whose favorite he always claimed to be--and then working long hours on the family farm. These summers were formative of Dad’s character and of relationships that lasted a lifetime. He adored his mother’s sisters Grace Adams Tanner and Carol Adams Wright, and he spoke lovingly of them in his final days.

Dad attended East High School in Salt Lake, where he made lifetime friends and graduated in 1952. He excelled at basketball, and he won the State championship in doubles tennis in successive years with partners Paul Griffin and Ralph Stephens, who remained his close friends until their recent deaths. It was also at East that Dad met Lorna Higgs, and a great high-school romance ensued. They married in 1954, both of them at the tender age of twenty, and their remarkable union lasted until Lorna’s death in 2007.

After two years at the University of Utah, Dad was accepted as a student at the University of Oregon Dental School in Portland. He graduated as a highly decorated student, and he and Lorna made Portland friends with whom they shared happy reunions for the rest of their lives. Following Dad’s graduation they spent three years in California, where Dad served as a Captain in the United States Air Force.

Returning to Utah in the early 1960s, Dad set up his dental practice and he and Lorna brought up their three sons. After lean years early on, Dad’s practice blossomed and Lorna took on the role of office manager. His patients, who were always considered good friends, appreciated both Dad’s expert dentistry and Lorna’s empathetic conversation. Dad’s outstanding skills and judgment as a dentist, along with his humanity and compassion, were the foundation of his eminently successful career, which lasted until his retirement in 2002.

Lorna’s death in 2007 was a profound loss for Dad. Together they were a force for good in the world for 53 years, builders of their community and of the many people whose lives they touched. Dad loved his neighborhood, his state, and his country. He was a great believer in the peaceful resolution of conflict and the foundational values of the American republic.

Dad greatly enjoyed fly-fishing in the later decades of his life, a development of his deep love for the land and waters of Utah and the Rocky Mountain West. His close friend Dr. Jim Warenski was a genial and constant companion on the stream, and the two of them were joined by Dr. Neil Kochenour for many annual fishing trips to the mountains and high plateaus of Southern Utah.

The last four years of Dad's life were spent with Mike and Yo, who sustained him with their love and nurturing care. The family is especially grateful for their dedication to Dad, which gave him the highest possible quality of life in his final years.

Dad is preceded in death by his wife Lorna; his sister Bonnie Anderson and Rollo Anderson; his brother Governor Scott Matheson and Norma Matheson; and his beloved grandson Lincoln Godfrey Matheson. He is survived by his brother Alan Matheson and Millicent Matheson; his three sons and their spouses, Stephen D. Matheson, Jr. and Teresa Matheson; Mark Matheson and Jennifer Falk; and Michael Matheson and Yo Holmquist; his grandsons Xavier Paul Matheson and Aidan Adams Matheson; and by many dear nieces and nephews and other family members.

Dad's intense and abiding love for his family and friends defined his life, and that love was amply returned. Our love for him will continue to grow in the years ahead and in the memory of this kind and generous man.

Our thanks to Valrie Elwell for caring for Dad over the last three years of his life. There will be a family graveside service. Please feel free to offer a memorial gift in Dad's name to the charity of your choice, or to the Scott M. Matheson Nature Preserve, P.O. Box 58326, Salt Lake City, UT 83156.