

Frederick "John" Appel

March 16, 1944 ~ October 15, 2024

Born March 16, 1944, to Howard and Susan Appel in Tonasket, Washington, Frederick John Appel (John) was the middle child of 7. He is preceded in death by his parents and his siblings King, Judy, Chet, Delicia and infant son Todd. He is survived by his sisters Jan and Goldie, and his wife Mary.

John spent his entire childhood and youth in the small town of Tonasket. He enjoyed motorcycles, fast cars, and his mom's good home cooking. Mary recalls an experience from their early years when John took her racing down Highway 97 in his 426 Hemi going 140 mph. John was a good athlete, and he enjoyed playing basketball, playing football, and running track (He held the school record in the 400-meter dash for many years). He attended one year of college and quickly decided that school was not for him; he needed to be outdoors working.

In 1964 John married a Tonasket girl he had known since childhood—Mary Beth Colbert. They welcomed six children into the family: Tony, Tim, Todd, Patty, Heidi, and Matt. Most of John's adult life was spent in Ventura, California, where he built up a tree trimming and removal service, the Eager Beaver Tree Service. Unlike most people, John actually loved going to work every weekday. His time was spent visiting with homeowners and helping them solve their tree problems. For several years, the Appel family lived back in Tonasket, where he built logging roads and cleared seed orchards for the U.S. Forest Service. Sometimes those jobs, as well as many other work opportunities, became working vacations for the entire family, with each person helping with equipment and surveying. His daughter Heidi shares that these times taught the children the value of hard work and how to be efficient. John adored his work with big Caterpillar tractors, and throughout his life he took every opportunity to drive any big machinery he could, driving big tractors until just last year.

In 1970 John and Mary became members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They were sealed together and with their children a year later in the Los Angeles Temple. John had many opportunities over the years to teach the youth at church as well as toddlers and infants with his wife Mary. John demonstrated his compassion and humility by working with people who were struggling in various ways. He and Mary were privileged to serve two senior missions for the church, one in West Virginia and one at a youth camp near Orlando, Florida. They met so many wonderful people and loved serving them. In his later years John enjoyed attending the temple regularly.

Beginning in 1991, John had the misfortune to fight the California Fish and Game and the Environmental Protection Agency in a legal battle over land rights for his property in Ventura. This property was his pride and joy. It was the setting of many ward parties, scout outings, motorcycle and gator rides, and fun times with the grandkids. The lawsuit went on for over 23 years. Despite all of the legal drama he knew he had rights, and refused to give in. Finally in 2014 he and his amazing attorney were able to win the case.

John has 15 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren. His grandchildren remember him as a loving, generous, and amusing man. He went out of his way to make every moment he had with them fun, doing his best to spoil them rotten, pumping them full of bottomless sugar, and often sending them home with a little cash or a few half dollars in hand. To his older grandchildren he freely offered his wise dating or marriage advice, suggesting things such as “love and lust are exactly the same in every way except for in the spelling,” that “having a man in the kitchen is the fastest and surest way to get a divorce,” and possibly more helpfully, to “always remember the three magic words, ‘You’re right Dear,’ and to mean it.”

John’s life was a life of hard work, service, and love of family and friends. His honesty and down-to-earth sense of humor will be remembered by all who knew him.

A funeral service will be held on October 26, 2024 at 11 am at 12345 South 2700 West Riverton Utah. A Zoom link can be provided by request. A graveside service will also be held on November 2, 2024 at 11 am at the Tonasket City Cemetery near Tonasket Washington.