

Scott Wayne Thornton

May 7, 1952 ~ July 12, 2020

On July 12, 2020, in the early morning hours, our husband, father, brother and friend took off on his final flight. He was last spotted gliding through clear skies at sunrise, in what experts would call “optimal flying conditions.” His ground crew of 30, consisting of his wife Betsy, his 5 children, their spouses, 12 grandchildren, 4 dogs, and 3 horses were often seen with him in the years leading up to his departure. A local, familiar with the Thornton ground crew, described them as, “like the Partridge Family, but with no discernible musical talent.” All were present at take-off to ensure a safe and peaceful flight.

A number of interviews have been conducted in order to assess the character and flight plan of the pilot. However, it should be noted that several inconsistencies have been found in the various accounts of those who were close to him. Background on the Pilot: By all accounts, Scott’s early childhood was relatively unremarkable. However, after a near-fatal encounter with a milk truck, he began to exhibit extraordinary attributes. His sister Chris was quoted as saying, “after he got knocked over by that milk truck, he became the most steady, immovable, and grounded person I have ever known. Nothing could take him off course. He also started eating a lot of ice cream.” His brother Kurt, recalled, “even in his young adulthood, he was a leader in his family and community.” Childhood friend, Joel Vandenakker, recalled running a 9th-grade presidential campaign together as Batman and Robin. When asked who was Batman, Joel replied, ”Scott of course. He already had a utility belt.” Interviews from his other siblings, Jill, Greg, and Joni corroborate this information. His mother, father and brother Cary could not be reached for comment, but are believed to be waiting for him at his destination.

Reports of Scott’s extraordinary characteristics only continued to develop as he got older. While attending Olympus High School, he focused his efforts on skiing powder, working construction, jeeping in the desert, and growing his beard. Post high school, he backpacked solo through Europe over the course of several months. An experience that would lead to his love of adventure, culture, human connection, and curiosity of the greater world. Scott went on to serve a mission in Cold War West Germany in 1971. It was a foundational experience for the spiritual conviction that would define his life. While much is still classified about his time spent overseas, it is known he touched many lives and the Berlin Wall would later fall in 1989.

Upon his return, Scott attended the University of Utah, joined Sigma Chi, and planned for a future in business. However, his well-laid plans were altered after a chance encounter in the bookstore with a cute blonde coed. Lesli Rice is quoted as saying, “Once he met Betsy, it was all over. I have never seen such love and devotion.” This began a 47-year love story, which inspired five children, countless memories, several best-selling romance novels, and the rock ballad, “You're the Inspiration,” by the band Chicago.

Further reports differ in both the occupations and activities of the pilot. “Scott was a fly fishing guide,” stated Scott Rice. “He had fished all over the world, could tie a fly in seconds, and knew all the best fishing holes.” Doug & Wendy Preston presumed he was a professional skier noting that, “He traversed the Alps, heli-skied in Canada, and made powder tracks anywhere there was snow.” Steve and Kathy Fryer asserted, “He was a Card Shark. He could never pass up a good game. He won the last hand we played.” “I was under the impression that Scott was a golf pro,” claimed Rock Schutjer. “He played a lot of great courses and I was always trying to get into his foursome.” Jason Linder declared, “He was a pit crew boss worthy of the Tour de France and NASCAR. He was always there to cheer from the sidelines, supporting his family and friends.” Jake Mendehall remarked that, “Scott was a life architect. He could see potential everywhere; in people, places, and projects. He always looked for where he could help, improve, or create.” David Andreasen recounted, “He was our favorite manny. Always rescuing napping babies and caring for his grandkids.” Carly Thornton’s experience led her to believe he was a moral philosopher. “He thought deeply about life. He knew how to truly listen and give sage advice.” He also was reported as being: Mexican hotelier, frozen yogurt tycoon, food bank worker, real estate developer, marriage counselor, midlife cowboy, comedian, opera singer, weatherman, boy scout, and LDS Bishop.

Based on all accounts, we do not believe him to be dangerous-- just dynamic. The following is a list to help identify the pilot. He was often seen wearing: a baseball cap, golf shirt, wild-patterned socks, fly fishing vest, and his trusty $39 Timex watch. He is believed to be carrying: a case of Diet Coke, pocket knife, sunflower seeds, guitar, fly fishing rod, day planner, maps, passport, skis, sourdough bread, cherry jam, golf clubs, and several gallons of Huckleberry ice cream.

Leading up to his departure, Scott could often be seen exploring the deserts of Arizona and mountains of Utah with his partner in adventure, Betsy. Although she was present at his departure, we have been unable to reach her for comment. She was last seen riding her horse into the wilderness. As she rode off, Betsy was overheard saying, ”Although Scott was my greatest adventure, he always encouraged me to continue blazing my own trail.”

Items he left behind: A grateful community, loving friends and family, a legacy for his children and grand grandchildren, a dozen red roses with one white rose for Betsy, and a handwritten note with a simple message saying “Savor Life.”

All of these accounts are mostly true. You can choose to believe any or all of them.

Another story is that Scott was an outstanding member and leader of his family, friends, faith, and community. After 9 years of courageously battling Multiple Myeloma, Parkinson's, and pain, he was finally released from his service to this world. His deep faith and convictions guided him both in life and through his final days. Scott’s runway was lined with so much love. He leaves behind Betsy Dumke Thornton, Erin & Jason Linder, April & Rock Schutjer, Scott & Carly Thornton, Meagan & David Andreason, Ashley & Jacob Mendenhall, 12 adoring grandchildren and a host of 4 legged friends. He was preceded in departure from this world by his parents Wayne Thornton & Shirley Thornton Williams, Rex Williams, Katherine & Ezekiel Dumke, Jr. and brother Cary Thornton.

Thank you to his medical team from Utah to Arizona. They generously served Scott with their expertise and compassion while giving us the gift of time. We would like to thank all of those loved ones, family and friends, that crossed paths with Scott throughout the years. Wherever you find yourself in his story, please know you were an important piece.

Donations to be made in lieu of flowers. Please consider the Utah Food Bank and the Utah chapter of the Nature Conservancy.

Please send condolences, memories, video messages, or questions about future gatherings to rememberingScottThornton@gmail.com.