John Walter Woodbury

August 7, 1923 ~ November 29, 2017

Our beloved John Walter Woodbury passed to join his parents, Angus M. and Grace Atkin Woodbury, and siblings on November 29, 2017 at 5:25 a.m.

Walt was born in St. George on August 7, 1923 as the youngest of six. He spent his childhood summers in Zion National Park helping his father, the first Zion Park Naturalist.

He married Betty Elaine Gunderson in the Salt Lake Temple in 1949. One of their first dates was helping his biologist Dad tag seagulls on Antelope Island. They spent the first 22 years of marriage living in Seattle. There they were members of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society performing for the World\s Fair and two operettas a year, for nine years. Betty and Walter celebrated 68 years of marriage this year.

Walt was a great scientist, teaching as a professor of physiology at the University of Washington and the University of Utah Medical Schools for nearly 50 years. One of his greatest scientific contributions was pioneering epilepsy research with his brother, Dixon, leading to its treatment with the Vagal Nerve Stimulator. He eagerly educated other physiologists on the Hodgkin-Huxley Theory of nerve function, and developed the "floating electrode" technique which measured for the first time electrical signals inside a beating heart. He authored many scientific papers and textbook chapters. He came to Salt Lake for a sabbatical to spend a year with Henry Eyring researching what became known as Eyring Rate Theory of ion channels. He decided to stay after being offered a permanent teaching position at the University of Utah. He loved mentoring and remained close to his graduate students throughout his life.

With a love for poetry, Walt wrote limericks to teach students and celebrate special occasions for his family. He also wrote hymn lyrics. He often introduced himself with: \"This puttery professor named Walt, Has rhythmical limerickal fault, His head\s a hot store, Of limericks galore, Hence no hair on his cranial vault\".

Walt was an active member of the LDS church and served as bishop of the University Ward in SLC.

He will be deeply missed by his wife, Betty, his children, David (Kathleen) Woodbury, Carolee (Gary) Lovell, Dixon (Susan) Woodbury and Michele (Paul) Nielson, and his 13 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, December 2 at 12 Noon at the University Ward, 160 South University Street. A viewing will be held Friday evening from 6-8 PM and Saturday 10:30-11:40 AM prior to services. Both viewings will be at the ward. Interment at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park.