James “Big Jim” McConnell Jr

October 27, 1939 ~ December 27, 2021

James “Big Jim” Farrell McConnell, Jr. passed away quietly in his sleep with his sweetheart Donna by his side on December 27th, 2021 in Riverton, Utah. He was born to James Farrell McConnell, Sr. and Mary Elizabeth McCormick on October 27th 1939 in Tulsa, OK.

Jim was an only child and lost both his parents before he was 18 years old. Because of this, a family became the goal he wanted most in life. He relished the titles of father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and substitute-father to many others in the community. In his eyes, his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren could do no wrong. He loved to tell anyone who would listen about their successes and achievements, and beamed with pride as he watched their soccer games, dance recitals, school plays, graduations, missionary farewells, and weddings. He was friendly and welcoming to everyone. Family was everything to him, and he made everyone his family.

Dad attended Oklahoma Military Academy and graduated from Cascia Hall Preparatory School in Tulsa, OK, in 1958.

Shortly after graduating high school, Dad joined the Navy. He was honored to be a “planker,” a member of the first crew, on the USS Kitty Hawk when it was commissioned in April, 1961. On the Kitty Hawk, he began his life’s profession as a dental laboratory technician. He was mentored there by a talented dentist, Dr. Paul Ziegler, who became a father figure for him throughout his adult life. Dad was honorably discharged after six years of service and for the rest of his life was proud to be a veteran.

Dad had an acute memory for even the smallest details. He was artistic - he had beautiful handwriting and often shared his talent for calligraphy. He was athletic - he was a yo-yo champion as a child, he loved golf, baseball, basketball, football, and cheered for his Sooners every chance he got. He was an avid animal lover who cared for many pets throughout his life. He was a friendly, boisterous extrovert at the highest level. With his generous use of sincere compliments, he was able to connect with anyone over the space of a few short minutes and make them laugh with his commentary on politics, unpleasant truths about society, and his unapologetic politically incorrect sense of humor.

Working part-time as a mailman, he met Mom (Donna Lee Blankenship) while delivering mail to the brokerage where she worked. Their first date was based on a dare, and a year and a half later they were married at St. Joseph’s Catholic Church in San Francisco, CA, on June 27, 1964. They were married for 58 years.

Dad was a deeply spiritual man who felt that religion was missing from his and his family’s lives. After considering many other churches, the McConnell family joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in May of 1976. They were sealed for time and all eternity in the Oakland, California Temple in June of 1977.

Dad created a home that was a haven for his family and for many others in the community. He invited his childrens' friends to live there and offered them support and mentorship in times of transition and difficulty.

Dad and Mom moved several times between Northern California and Oklahoma. Through good and bad times, they lovingly brought their family of four strong-willed children together, teaching the values of faith, togetherness, hard work, and perseverance.

In 1989, the McConnell Family moved to Utah, where Dad continued his work as a dental technician until his retirement.

After retirement, he volunteered at local elementary schools where he was known as “Grandpa Jim.” He loved to work with kids who were struggling with reading, and enjoyed seeing their confidence improve both inside and outside the classroom.

Jim is survived by his wife Donna Lee McConnell and his children; James Farrell McConnell III (Barbara), Jonniece Francine Busath (Bradford), Jason Frederick McConnell (Michelle), Jennifer Faye Andreason (Robert), 13 grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Jim’s family would like to thank Hector and Chantelle of Summit Home Health for providing excellent care for him over the past year. Their assistance has been a tremendous blessing though a very difficult time. The family would also like to thank the doctors, nurses, and staff at the IHC Riverton Hospital. When Dad was admitted, they were some of our greatest angels, showing so much grace, love and respect to him and his family.

Funeral services will be held at 2:00pm on Friday, January 7th at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 East Dimple Dell Road (10600 South) in Sandy, Utah. For more information, or to leave condolences for the McConnell family, please visit larkincares.com.

Because of his deep respect for veterans and love for children, the family asks that in lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Salt Lake City Fisher House (https://connect.fisherhouse.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=donate.event&eventID=598) or Primary’s Children Hospital (https://secure3.convio.net/ihchs/site/Donation2?df_id=1566&mfc_pref=T&1566.donation=form1) in Jim’s name.

To Watch completed services click "Watch Services" button or follow the following link:https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/TXSZQ6xTCELExga6kKXIS3jAVVfffjwiEn6rzW3OfUfZKBlN_dHwKZP3v5MlDPUr.