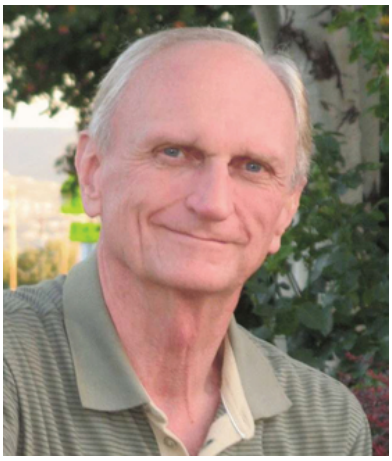


James William Harr

November 25, 1945 ~ July 16, 2022

James William Harr passed away July 16, 2022 from the effects of COVID-19 and age-related health complications.

The first child of Leffel James and Jeanne Sorensen Harr, Jim was born on November 25, 1945 in Salt Lake City, and was, according to his surprised mom, a very bouncing baby boy who bounced his stroller to pieces. There was never a dull moment or a missed opportunity for mischief, she mused in later years.

After an early childhood exploring the basement apartment and rock garden of his grandparents' home in Sandy, Utah, the family moved to Murray in 1951 where he grew from boy to man, learning values that would sustain him all his life.

Jim attended Arlington Elementary, Hillcrest Junior High and graduated from Murray High School in 1964 where he was active in track and field, the Key Club, and theater. He also won two back-to-back short story contests, displaying a talent for writing that eventually would become the core of his professional life.

Jim's first paid job, however, was as a dandelion digger-upper, earning a penny for each weed he excavated from his Dad's manicured lawn. He was soon promoted to lawn mowing man at 50 cents per job and by age 13 to family car-washer and detailer. Like his Depression-era parents, he learned the value of work, something he instilled in his own children.

But all work and no play was not Jim's teenaged ethos. Each summer afternoon, following a lengthy checked-off list of chores, he would head to Murray Park's swimming pool where he gained some seriously accomplished swimming skills. He set a record at a University of Utah swim meet while still in junior high school.

When he wasn't toasting in the summer sun, he was hanging out with his friends and cousins, exploring Murray at a time when free-range children were the norm. He spent many hours with them, tubing down Little Cottonwood Creek, building swimming holes, forts and exploring wildlife.

Following high school graduation, Jim attended Brigham Young University for a year before departing on a 2 ½ year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Finland. He returned to BYU in the fall of 1967 and began "RM life," bribing his sister to type his last minute term papers, honing his ballroom dancing skills, splurging on a stereo set for his apartment, "dating the ladies" and finally finding his perfect eternal companion in Glenda Lynne McMullin, a lovely Canadian brunette whom he married in the Salt Lake Temple on August 25, 1970.

After graduating with a degree in communications in 1971, Jim, Glenda and their baby boy, Joshua, moved to Seattle to begin their life in earnest. Over the next 16 years, the family added seven more children to the boisterous mix, learning along the way how to make more of less when economic downturns upended life. Jim repaired the family's cars and appliances, Glenda found creative ways to stretch a recipe, and the whole family became backyard gardeners and blackberry pickers, a fruit that grew wild and abundantly near their home.

In 1987, the family moved to Centerville, Utah when Jim became communications specialist for Utah Retirement Systems where he earned awards for his skills as a writer and editor, including a first place award for a brochure from the National Association of Government Communicators' Blue Pencil Competition. His coworkers described him as “always happy, always helpful, always positive . . .the model of dignity and professionalism.” Jim retired from URS in 2011.

In 1997, his beloved Glenda passed away, leaving Jim with a new role as single father with a couple of teenagers and one special needs child to care for. Mustering perseverance reserves he sowed throughout life, Jim learned new life skills to help his family. He also relied on his deep faith for strength during years when adversity rained continuously.

According to his son, Cameron, “His dedication to the Gospel of Christ was a defining characteristic for him and he lived his life trying his best to adhere to his high standards.” Jim served in various LDS Church callings, including two bishoprics, high priest group, ward clerk and what he considered his most important church calling – that of a home teacher.

As serious-minded as he frequently was, the man was equally serious about puns. Jim loved them. He loved the eye rolls and groans when he gleefully tested a new one on his kids.

He liked books, especially books about trees. Jim carried an “Audubon Field Guide Book to North American Trees” with him and longed one day to have enough land to plant a grove of his favorite leafy giants.

Jim also loved history, camping, animals and family time. And there wasn’t a classic car on the road he couldn’t easily identify, even the most obscure make, model and year.

But oh, then there was ice cream. Jim loved ice cream! Actually, he may have been addicted to the stuff. Most certainly, it was a craving he inherited from his father and his father’s father. It didn’t help that Jim’s mother once worked for Hi-Land Dairy, which provided an endless supply of the frozen goodness that hogged the family’s freezer space for years. Fortunately (or not), the ice cream addiction genes were passed along to some of Jim’s children.

Jim also enjoyed the calming influence of classical music but admitted a fondness for the 60s pop singer Matt Monro, whose “Golden Voice” harkened back to a different generation, an era he sometimes said he identified with more than the Baby Boomers.

Jim spent years being an affectionate, dedicated and valiant companion to his much-loved special needs son. As the years caught up with him and he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease, he transitioned in 2018 to a new life at Riverway Assisted Living and Memory Care in South Jordan.

Jim is survived by his eight children, Joshua (Consuela) - Arlington, MA; Bronwyn Seal - Denton, TX; Dane (Aleshia) - Vancouver, WA; Cameron (Alice) - Livermore, CA; Megan (Dave) King - Campbell, CA; Natalie Harr - Ashville, NC; Graham (Megan) - Riverton, UT and Ian - Riverton, UT; 16 grandchildren; a sister, Kathy Forgie - San Luis Obispo, CA; and a large extended family. He was preceded in death by his wife, Glenda, and his parents.

Funeral services will be held July 30, 2022 at the Centerville LDS Chapel, 950 North Main St. at 10 a.m. with a viewing one hour prior. Interment services will follow at the Midvale City Cemetery. For those unable to attend, services will be streamed via Zoom, please click on the "Watch Services" link above.