

Jeffrey Dennis Gooch

September 30, 1967 ~ November 29, 2023

Jeff was born on September 30th, 1967 in Provo, Utah. He was a vibrant and active member of Provo Boy Scout Troop 51. He graduated from Mountain View High School in 1986, followed by BYU with a Bachelor of Arts in 1994 and a Juris Doctor in 1997.

In 1996, Jeff married Heather Skeen in the Manti Temple. Throughout life, he was passionate about their eternal marriage, and they celebrated their “double” anniversary of 27 years on April 27th of this year. Heather’s hardworking, loyal, caring, and playful demeanor made her a perfect partner and soulmate for Jeff.

He led an esteemed career as a trial lawyer and had a genuine connection and love for his clients and colleagues. Jeff worked for Spence, Moriarity, and Schuster out of Jackson Hole, Wyoming for the first 10 years of his law career. He formed a partnership to create the law firm of Moriarity, Gooch, Badaruddin, and Booke. Later, he went out on his own and created The Gooch Firm. However, Jeff enjoyed the camaraderie and mentorship that a larger firm could bring and so he moved on to Jones Waldo and then briefly Flickinger, Boulton, Gooch, Robson. He enjoyed helping people and his career was a perfect avenue for this skill and characteristic of Jeff’s. Being a catastrophic injury attorney, he was able to comfort those during their worst and darkest times.

He is survived by his wife, Heather, children, Barton and Brooke, and his siblings, Bruce Gooch (Amy), Holly Ray (Dave), and Amy Tanner (Darren). Jeff was very close with his mother-in-law, Joyce Bunderson, whom he adopted as his mother.

He is preceded in death by his most beloved grandmother, Georgette Zubeck whom he lived with the majority of his life including her living with Jeff, Heather, and their two children for the last 15 years of her life.

Jeff lived a happy and healthy life; however, over the past year, he fought a mental health disease that ultimately took his life.

The viewing will be Friday, December 8th at Larkin Mortuary 5-8 p.m., 1950 East 10600 South, Sandy Utah. Another viewing will be held from 9:30-10:45 right before the funeral which will begin at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, December 9, 2023, at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 11196 South Wasatch Blvd. A brief graveside service will follow at Larkin Cemetery, address above.

Since Jeff had many loved friends and colleagues, we would appreciate you sharing your photos of him with us for a family memory album. Please send your photos to JeffGoochPhotos@gmail.com.

A Zoom link will be available for those unable to attend and a recording of the funeral will be made available after the services.

Jeff’s Eulogy

Jeff lived the majority of his life with his grandmother, Georgette Zubeck. He was raised by a single mother and lived with Grandma along with his brother Bruce throughout his childhood. Grandma was hugely supportive of anything Jeff wanted. She made him feel like all things were possible, giving him the nerve to pursue his career in law. Between 18 and 28 years of age, Jeff lived in grandma's basement. As the years progressed, Grandma moved to live with Jeff, Heather, and little 1-month old Barton.

Jeff adopted people. He had honorary aunts, father-figure mentors, and friends who had become brothers and sisters. He was the fun uncle to those of no family relation. Jeff had the special gift of making friends feel exclusive. You were especially lucky if Jeff created a nickname for you, though some of his nicknames were not super positive and occasionally included profanity. If Jeff teased you, he loved you. He applied his wisdom to guide and give advice in a way that was comforting and if Jeff suggested it, you believed it could happen.

Jeff was large. He was large in body. While only 6 foot 6 inches tall, he used his broad shoulders to hold the burden of others. It was always easy to spot him because he was a full head above the rest. He was large in heart. He had a unique ability to deeply and genuinely care for others. He was large in brain. His memory was incredible. He could recall names, places, and experiences amazing those who lived the story with him. Reminiscing with Jeff was full of color, detail, and emotion, leaving you looking forward to the next opportunity.

Jeff was generous. Money was not the main goal in his work or personal life. Being a trial lawyer naturally funneled his compassion for others. He loved fighting for those who could not fight for themselves. If someone needed a financial loan, he would do it with no questions asked. If a need was identified, Jeff created a solution. He was able to see and appreciate the best qualities in people. He was a unifier, often bringing people together who would not have likely met otherwise.

One day in 1994, while driving home from BYU, Jeff noticed what he thought was a homeless person walking on the street. As he slowed down, he was surprised to discover that it was a girl whom he had gone on a few dates with - Heather. He pulled up and said “Get in”- which she did. Heather was a broke college student whose appearance was not her first priority. At the time, she was wearing shoes with holes where the big toe sock could be seen. Her watch band was half brown and half black. Because it had broken, she cannibalized from another watch to replace the broken side. Her pants were too long and rolled up. Her patchwork coat was warm but aggressively ugly. He immediately drove her to the University Mall and bought her a belt, pants, and a shirt so she had an outfit that both fit properly and was publically presentable.

Jeff loved tools. He was a regular at Speeds on 2100 South in Salt Lake. He had several chainsaws, snow blowers, backpack air blowers, weed-wackers, etc. There was a running joke at the store that when they saw Jeff come in they would call Heather for approval. He always said to “take care of your equipment and it will take care of you” and to “use the right tool for the right job.”

Jeff loved van Gogh, particularly his painting, Starry Night. While on a trip to Amsterdam with his family at Christmas 2016, he toured the Van Gogh Museum and saw the original in New York City on a 2018 trip with Heather.

Jeff had a good sense of style, though this was not necessarily evident in the clothing he wore. He loved the long-sleeved, button-down collared jean shirt look. One day, while living in Sugarhouse between 2000 - 2007, a neighbor came over. While in the downstairs storage room which also doubled as the hanging space for Jeff’s laundered shirts, the neighbor exclaimed, “I thought Jeff wore the same shirt over and over again” as she saw 15 seemingly identical shirts. Every now and then, Jeff would purchase 10 identical items of clothing from J.C. Penney’s big and tall collection. No variety needed.

Jeff did not do things halfway. He lived full force with a “no cheaping out” attitude. He wanted to do things right the first time. If one burger was wanted, three would be purchased. If someone wanted a drink, an extra large would appear. If there was an option between small, medium, and large - the large would always be the default.

Jeff was a lifelong learner, taking every opportunity to learn something new. He actively sought out mentorship throughout his life. Bill Barton became his father figure during his undergraduate years and thankfully he was able to connect with Bill many times throughout his life. As recently as last September, he and Heather stayed in his home in Newport, Oregon for a wonderful 4 days. Jeff loved working for Gerry Spence and enjoyed the mentorship

of those who had “been there and done that.” While there are countless examples of Jeff learning from others, one that stands out is during Brooke’s birth. Brooke presented posterior during delivery and Heather was experiencing intense labor pains. While the epidural was being administered, Jeff had already made friends with the anesthesiologist on duty and had asked him to explain the process, why he was applying it at the specific location, and other details of the procedure. This new friend returned to enjoy pizza in the delivery room after his shift was over.

Jeff loved the Sundance Resort. As a young boy, he learned to ski and later took Heather to the tree room for dinner on their first date. He frequently wore Sundance shirts and hats. During the first three years of marriage, Jeff would successfully tempt Heather to miss church with a delicious Sunday brunch at his favorite place. He loved the mountains and knew their terrain well, hiking to Stewart Falls countless times.

Jeff liked to party. He hosted parties at the Pepperwood home where over 300 people would gather to listen to live music provided by Joy & Eric, eat pulled pork sandwiches made by cooking the whole pig in an enormous rotisserie, and socializing with old and new friends.

Jeff was fiercely protective of his wife and children. He was a proud provider to his family. When Heather started working part-time at Jordan High School, Jeff delivered Barton and Brooke with acoustic music on the radio with a calm and reassuring manner. He wanted their day to start out nice. Heather worked every other day at that time, so on the days she did not work, Jeff would insist on coming along in the car for school drop-off as it was his “favorite part of the day.” If Heather started a stressful conversation, like events of the day or things for the kids to remember, Jeff would kindly correct her and reset the tone for the morning. Instead of taking turns getting a chore done, Jeff was able to look at these times as an opportunity to experience life together.

Jeff loved music and going to concerts. His music taste ranged from John Denver, James Taylor, and other folk singers/songwriters, to KISS, Def Leppard, and all things 80’s. When he got into an artist that is all he listened to for a while. This was annoying to his family as the monotony was challenging to withstand. In 2018 - 2019 he had his “Postie” era (Post Malone) which was accompanied by “Tay Tay” (Taylor Swift). This trait was noticed early on and during the brief Ska Boom in 1999 and too much of the Mighty-Mighty Bosstones.

Jeff was the most amazing husband and father. He supported his family in their pursuits and desires. Jeff “held down the fort” when Heather wanted to complete a full-length Ironman triathlon and during her Master’s degree. While Heather was busy getting her Master’s degree and teaching a graduate-level Urban Stream course at the University of Utah, Jeff took the opportunity to make it fun and created “Wing Wednesdays” by taking Barton and Brooke to the Wing Coop in Olympus Cove for dinner. When Barton wanted to learn the guitar, Jeff hired Ted Sablay (guitarist for the Killers) to teach. He actively attended Brooke’s club volleyball games, swim meets, and educational achievement ceremonies. Jeff wanted his children to know they are perfect just the way they were. This concept permeated into some interesting places including his adamance that they were not to use the temporary tattoos. He didn’t want them changed, even if it lasted only a day or two.

In loving Jeff, we have had the opportunity to embrace a dynamic person. We are honored that he was able to be a part of each of our lives.