

Jesse Rees Jensen

May 15, 1937 ~ November 14, 2020

Jesse Rees Jensen, beloved husband, father, Papa, great-Papa, brother, brother-in-law, uncle, friend, and disciple of Christ, graduated from mortality on November 14, 2020. He is reunited with his beloved wife Virginia, whom he has missed dearly since she passed in March of this year. Shortly before his passing, his children were able to gather at his bedside and say goodbye for a season to the father they adore.

Rees was born May 15, 1937 to Maurine Conover and Joel Peter Jensen on his grandfather Jesse's cattle ranch in Ferron, Utah, where he later spent summers developing the strong work ethic he demonstrated through life. As a young boy, Rees rode a bicycle to deliver newspapers on a sprawling rural paper route in all weathers and seasons. His father famously taught him a life principle that he would pass on to his own children: "you can quit in the summer when it's easy, but you can't quit in the winter when it's hard."

As the son of lifelong learners and teachers, education was a priority and passion for Rees. He was a proud Jordan High Beetdigger, then earned his Bachelor's degree (Physics '59) from the University of Utah, where he played trumpet in the marching band. He received an MBA from Stanford University Graduate School of Business in 1961. While at Stanford, he resided in Manzanita Hall, and entertained his housemates with nightly recitals of Schumann's "The Happy Farmer," complete with his own humorous lyrics about dormitory life. These performances usually ended with objects lobbed at the piano and grumpy shouts of "Shut up, Jensen!".

Rees served in the Utah Army National Guard, and helped build the Guardsman's Pass mountain road. He began his business career at IBM, then spent decades as a partner in Hermes Associates, developers of The Family Centers in the western United States. Rees served his community in many organizations, including the Cottonwood Hospital Board of Directors, Granite Education Foundation, and Sons of Utah Pioneers.

In 1962, Rees's brother and best friend David met Virginia Urry at the University of Utah, and (as cherished family lore recalls) told Rees "I've met the girl you're going to marry." Rees married Virginia, his beloved "Blue Eyes," in the Logan, Utah LDS Temple on April 11, 1963. He was an exceedingly loving and devoted partner, and provided tender care for Virginia after her 2015 stroke until her recent passing.

Rees was a devout member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and a willing servant of the Lord in many callings, including Bishop, Stake President, and Patriarch. Some of his greatest joys in church service came when he was President of the Missouri Independence Mission (all of you former MIM missionaries: our parents loved you so!) and in giving patriarchal blessings to members of the Mount Olympus Stake. Rees's earnest, loving, and nonjudgmental approach defined his gospel service. "People before programs" was his motto, and he always viewed himself simply as an instrument in God's hands, striving to deliver the pure love of Christ to people he served. He shared his understanding of Christ's teachings through clear and simple three-word imperatives: "feed

my sheep," "come follow me," "love one another."

Above all, Rees loved his sweet Virginia, his family, and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and each received countless hours of his focused service, prayers, and love. His 1970's CB radio "handle" was "FAMILY MAN." Whatever our need, whenever it arose, he stood ready to help ("when people need help, is when they need help"). Just a few days before his passing, Rees observed that he was trying to find more ways to serve his family.

Rees is known for his gentle, gracious, gentlemanly manner, and extraordinary personal warmth and kindness. To borrow from F. Scott Fitzgerald, his smile "concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor." He was forever looking for ways to "make a memory," and always enthusiastically up for any adventure: gatherings at the home he and Virginia built in Midway, snowmobiling at Daniel's Summit, sandbagging in Salt Lake with his young adult ward members during the 1983 floods, family trips to Disneyland and Sun Valley, pre-dawn December drives to collect truckloads of Christmas apples, or a quick escape for dinner at "The Train" (Dairy Keen in Heber). The sight of Rees on his nightly walks around the neighborhood is already missed (his walks often included delivering neighbors' newspapers to their doors and bringing in their trash cans).

Rees's familiar teachings of positivity and encouragement buoyed and guided people throughout his life. He always assured us—and believed—that "the best is yet to come." Even during the trials of recent years, he would report that "many things are going well." And of course they were, because he has "always been lucky." We will miss his constant assurances that "all will be well." Somehow we always believe it when you tell us, Daddy. You showed us every day of your life that you love us "to the end of counting, and then just keep going."

During a particularly painful recent hospitalization, we asked what was on his mind. He replied "I'm just thinking that I have more blessings than anybody in the whole world." Even with severe health challenges, and while grieving Virginia's passing in isolation due to the pandemic, he always expressed warm gratitude to everyone who helped him. We join him in giving thanks to the army of angels who helped care for him and our Mom. We are grateful to the staff of Spring Gardens Holladay, from the Big Shot on down, including every member of the staff, and a few in particular (you know who you are). We wish we could list each of you by name, and we hope you feel our gratitude.

We are also grateful for the tender ministrations of our friends at Canyon Hospice, especially Lacey, Sallie and Streusel. Thank you for helping our parents and us through the last chapter of their mortal lives.

Words are inadequate to thank our precious friend and sister, Luisa Martinez, who brought so much light, comfort, and peace to our parents' lives and ours these past two years. Her calm, dignified strength and skill, her sunny outlook, constant encouragement, and intuitive awareness of our parents' needs have been priceless gifts. Thank you for walking Mom and Dad all the way home, Luisa.

Rees was preceded in death by his wife Virginia, his parents Joel and Maurine, and his brother Joel C. and sister-in-law Carol Jensen. He is survived by his four children, whom he called his "four stars": Michelle Davidson and husband Chris; Rees U. Jensen and wife Lyssa Jane Hansen; Suzanne Jensen; Kristin Hart and husband Gary; 11 grandchildren, 5 grandchildren-in-law, and three great grandchildren; his siblings David and Julie Jensen, Rosemary and Kent Evans, Maurine and Scot Proctor; Virginia's sisters, Grace Henderson and Jane Harris; numerous cherished nieces and nephews; and countless friends, including the "Forever Friends" group, who have met monthly for over fifty years; six grand-dogs (whom he loved despite a short stint as a USPS mail carrier) and two great-grand-kitties.

Due to the limitations of the pandemic, we will hold a private graveside service for immediate family only. We look forward to greeting friends and family at a joint celebration of our parents' lives when it is safe to gather again. Many thanks to all of you who have provided us with so much love and support. We are truly grateful.