

John Edward Kemme

April 15, 1948 ~ May 7, 2025

John Edward Kemme was born on April 15, 1948, in Denver, Colorado, to Joseph and Nylalee Kemme. His father was a physicist, and John's early years were spent moving from place to place as the family followed his father's work at different government laboratories. Of all the places they lived, Los Alamos, New Mexico, remained closest to his heart—he considered it his true home.

It was from there that one of John's fondest childhood memories began: the family's annual Christmas road trips to Dighton, Kansas, to visit his grandparents and cousins. He recalled hours of laughter playing in his grandfather's attic, discovering old bear skin rugs and scaring each other. One year, while taking turns punching an inflatable Popeye toy, his cousin Debbie wound up and missed entirely—hitting John square in the stomach instead. It knocked the wind right out of him, and once everyone knew he was okay, it became one of the family's favorite stories. Those visits became the foundation of lifelong family bonds and cherished traditions he carried with him always. That closeness with his cousins and his sister Kathy endured into adulthood, as they continued to make memories together traveling to places like Canada, Santa Fe, the Mediterranean, and the British Isles.

John left home to pursue a degree at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He arrived in style, driving his beloved Corvette—but eventually sold it to help pay for school, a decision that showed his commitment and willingness to sacrifice for his education. He graduated Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering in 1970. After four and a half brutal Michigan winters, John felt burned out on engineering and half-joked that he'd rather drive a semi-truck across the country than work another equation. Still, he explored job opportunities—initially just looking for a change of scenery—and unknowingly set in motion the start of a lifelong career.

He ultimately accepted an offer from Kennecott Utah Copper to work in their Maintenance Department at the Bingham Canyon Mine. That decision sparked a 30-year career in the mining industry. He worked primarily in procurement and warehousing and became known as a tough, no-nonsense negotiator. He especially loved purchasing the enormous equipment and tires used in mining operations and took great pride in seeing them arrive, knowing he helped make it happen.

John was first introduced to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints during a college internship in Livermore, California, when a supervisor arranged for missionaries to visit with him. Years later, while living in Salt Lake City and seeking deeper spiritual meaning in his life, he again met with missionaries. After several months of thoughtful study and reflection, he chose to be baptized on January 25, 1997. He had a strong and personal testimony of his Savior, Jesus Christ, and of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon. This faith gave him strength, purpose, and peace throughout his life.

On April 14, 1999, he was sealed to Jolene Hammond. That day marked the beginning of an extraordinary chapter in his life. With Jolene came a family—Anthony, Mike, and Erin—and John embraced them with love and enthusiasm, even if parenting through their younger years brought its fair share of challenges. He introduced them to the things he loved most: hiking, mountain biking, Jeep four-wheeling, and the breathtaking beauty of Southern Utah's red rock country. He gave them not just his time, but his passions—and in doing so, deepened their connection in unforgettable ways. In his later years, John enjoyed a good meal, long conversations around the table with his children and grandchildren, listening to the creek during spring runoff, reading a good book, and taking a walk outdoors with his grandkids.

Jolene brought not only her children into John's life, but also strength, compassion, and unwavering devotion. He admired her tireless dedication to family—caring for her parents, supporting her children, and later, lovingly caring for him. She was his partner in every sense: kind, resourceful, generous, and quietly heroic.

John also had a love for motorcycles and the open road. He and Jolene spent many years touring all over the U.S. and Canada, with Jolene on the back of the bike. Those rides gave them something meaningful to share and brought them camaraderie with like-minded people. Along the way, they made good friends and saw some of the most beautiful scenery the continent has to offer. The freedom of the ride, the hum of the engine, and the joy of discovering new places reflected the way John lived: steady, genuine, adventurous, and deeply connected to the people and places he loved.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Joseph and Nylalee, and his brother, Gary. He is survived by his sister Kathryn (spouse Craig), his beloved wife Jolene; and the family he chose and cherished:

Anthony (spouse Lindsey), Mike (spouse Brynn), and Erin (spouse Tony).

His grandchildren: Emerson, Maggie, Nixon, Holland, Rhys, Rylee, and Kaycee.

To know John was to know a man of few words but immeasurable substance. He lived with integrity, loyalty, and a deep sense of gratitude for the life he built and the people in it. He will be missed profoundly—but he will be remembered with great love, with laughter over old family stories, his sound advice and with reverence for the strength and steadiness he brought into all our lives.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's research, a cause close to John's journey in later years. Contributions can be made at https://give.michaeljfox.org.

The family would like to express heartfelt thanks to Dr. Stephen Wood as well as Ben and the hospice team at Intermountain Hospice for their compassionate care and support.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, May 17, at 11:00 am, with a visitation from 10:00 to 10:45 am at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints located at 2350 East Creek Road, Sandy, Utah. A separate evening visitation will take place on Friday, May 16, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at Larkin Sunset Gardens located at 1950 East Dimple Dell Road (10600 South), Sandy, Utah. To watch a recording of the service, please click on the blue tab above that says "Watch Services".