

John Robert Garff “Rob”

May 6, 1940 ~ April 14, 2021

John Robert Garff “Rob” passed away peacefully Wednesday, April 14, 2021, ending his 12 year battle with dementia.

He was born on May 6, 1940 to Rono DeValson and Mary Jean Hartmann Garff, in Salt Lake City, Utah, the fourth of 5 children. When only seven years old, he was called to his mother’s death bed where he promised her that he would be her ‘good little Robbie’. This promise was kept in everything he did throughout his entire life. The reunion with her at his passing must have been wonderful!

He grew up in multiple neighborhoods throughout Salt Lake City, making many friends everywhere he went. Prior to his graduation from Olympus High, he and his friends developed their musical talents and performed in various High School plays. With guitar in hand, he and his good friend Brian McBride enjoyed performing the greatest hits of the Everly Brothers and the Kingston Trio at high school assemblies and dances.

Following his two years of service in the North British Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Rob began his studies at the University of Utah in Social Work. While attending the U, he met and fell in love with his life-long sweetheart, Penelope Furner. He and Penny were sealed for time and all eternity in the Salt Lake Temple on March 16, 1964. Together they shared their love with their three children: Pyper, Matt, and Ben, and their families. Their home was a haven where everyone was welcome at any time. Everything they did was done together. The unity and love they shared is a great example to all.

After earning his Master’s of Social Work degree, Rob began a 40 year career with Intermountain Health Care in psychiatric and medical Social Work. Additionally, he was a founding member of the Trauma Team. During his time at LDS Hospital and Intermountain Medical Center (IMC), he helped countless individuals and families through difficult challenges in their lives. He loved people and loved helping them! Rob made life-long friends with his peers and co-workers. Title and position didn’t mean anything to him, everyone was important, special, and respected.

Service was of great importance in Rob’s life. He served in the Army National Guard. He served in numerous positions in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints including: Sunday School teacher, counselor in two bishoprics, Stake Sunday School President, Stake High Council, and as a veil worker at the Salt Lake Temple. He loved his Father in Heaven and served Him well.

Every December, Rob donned his red suit and brought delight to countless children who sat on his knee and shared their Christmas hopes and wishes. He loved this annual tradition and role.

The most important thing in Rob’s life was his family! He worked tirelessly so that Penny could stay home with their children. He taught his children to work hard by working right alongside them. Annual camping trips gave way when the family built a cabin in the beautiful mountains of the Upper Weber Canyon. The traditions shared there will

continue for generations. The memories made there will last forever!

Rob is preceded in death by his parents, step mother Blanche Degraffenreid, sister Valerie Cox, and brothers Ron and Frank.

Rob is survived by his wife of 57 years, Penny, daughter Pyper Shelton (Bob), son Robert Matthew ‘Matt’ (Cheryl), and son Benjiman Andrew ‘Ben’ (Tami), six grandchildren: Katee, Megan, Mattee, Brennon (Morgan), Thomas, and Makayla, and two great grandsons: Benjiman and Jameson. He is also survived by his sister, Annette Earl.

A viewing will be held at Larkin Sunset Lawn (2350 E 1300 S, Salt Lake City, UT) on Monday, April 19, 2021 from 6-8 pm. A graveside service will be held at Larkin Sunset Garden (1950 E 10600 S, Sandy, UT) on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 1 pm.