

Keith Lorne McKeown

January 30, 1975 ~ April 19, 2022

Keith Lorne McKeown, 47, died peacefully and unexpectedly of natural causes on April 19, 2022. His enormous heart and kind soul contained boundless love, curiosity, and creativity, radiating appreciation for life wherever he was.

He was born January 30, 1975 and was raised with his sister Lynn by their adoring parents, Bruce and Florence McKeown in Victoria, BC, Canada. They lived in a vibrant neighborhood full of friends and surrounded by forest with beaches nearby. He rode his big wheel down the street at terrifying speeds, played soccer in the mud and rain, biked on the trails behind his house, and engaged in plenty of adolescent mischievousness with a group of amazing lifelong friends. He loved the ocean and a good adventure. He and a childhood friend joined the Sail and Life Training Society (SALTS) and boarded the tall ship Robertson II in Victoria during the summer of 1990 for a ten-day excursion. There he developed incredible bonds with friends he held close his entire life; including two adventurous girls from Utah; one of whom, Heather Newell, he eventually married.

A variation of this group of friends sailed for two more summers on ten-day trips to Desolation Sound. A smaller crew of them participated in the SALTS offshore program in 1995, sailing aboard the Pacific Swift for three months throughout the South Pacific, covering more than 7,000 nautical miles. Heather and Keith were fast friends at first, which turned into a deep bond, and eventually true love. They were married in a grove of blazing yellow Aspens near Zion National Park on October 9, 1999. They married young, played hard, and settled into a home on an idyllic street in Salt Lake City before having their two children, Drake Read (fourteen) and Lydia Grace (ten).

The McNewells, as they are affectionally called, became the hub of their neighborhood, hosting parties, Easter egg hunts, gutter day gatherings, and backyard fires with friends. It was Keith’s absolute privilege to be a full-time dad, after leaving a brief career as a landscape architect. He created unforgettable Halloween costumes for his children, and his innate curiosity directed their attention to the extraordinary beauty in the ordinary--from a colony of ants piling on the sidewalk, to long shadows from the top of a sand dune, to unexpected quirks and patterns in both urban and natural settings. He loved tinkering in the yard, camper, and home with endless creative projects reflecting thoughtfulness, beauty and attention to detail.

Always an instigator of memorable activities, Keith planned group camping trips year-round, organized expeditions with family and friends to the tops of peaks and in the depths of red rock canyons. His family loved exploring the West in their tiny camper, traveling to beautiful places and floating down the Salmon River. He returned often to visit his parents in Victoria, where he would also gather old friends to walk the breakwater, get a beer in the pub, or collect rocks and sea glass on the beaches of Vancouver Island. Long before drones and digital cameras, Keith engineered a mechanical kitchen timer and a disposable camera, then attached the contraption to a large kite to capture aerial photographs. Kite aerial photography was one of his many passions. It brought him great joy to see

the world from different perspectives and to share the things he found unique, intriguing, and humorous.
Above all, Keith was a passionate husband and father, fiercely devoted to Heather, Drake, and Lydia. He supported Heather's career in education and was the creative backbone that held Backman Elementary together for eight years. There, he was the definition of community, from teaching classes to making stickers, designing shirts, and leading parades. He made a lasting impression with his gentle, genuine presence. Keith cared deeply for his extended family and expressed his love through photo post cards, a simple text, a delicious meal, and enveloping hugs. He exuded gratitude, saying "Thank you" for the everyday deeds more frequently than anyone we know. And now, as we look back on his too-short life, we are filled with gratitude that he lived and enriched our lives so deeply. From the bottom of our hearts, Keith McKeown, thank you.
Keith is survived by his wife Heather Newell, his children, Drake and Lydia, his parents, Bruce and Florence McKeown in Victoria, British Columbia, by his sister Lynn McKeown (Pat Joyce)
and his nephew Markus in Calgary, Alberta. Stateside, he is survived by Heather's parents Jackson and Linda Newell, sisters-in-law, Christine Newell (Bob Hoffa), Jennifer Newell (Steven Anjewierden), and brother-in-law Eric Newell (Emma Mecham), and each of their children who adored their Uncle Keith.
An open-house celebration of his life will be held at Tracy Aviary, [589 East 1300 South, in Salt Lake City, Utah] on Wednesday evening, April 27, from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. There will be an open mic for those who wish to share a few words. A Zoom link will be available for those unable to attend in person. There will be a gathering in honor of Keith in Victoria in July.
In Keith's memory, please take a walk, fly a kite, go on a bike ride, or spend time outside in a place that brings you joy. Look for beauty in the cracks of the sidewalk and be kind to each other. In lieu of flowers, donations in memory of Keith McKeown can be made to SALTS (at www.salts.ca). Funds will go toward a summer sailing scholarship for young people from diverse backgrounds or children who have lost a parent.