

Kyle J Westover Sr

March 20, 1942 ~ November 16, 2021

Kyle J. Westover Sr., beloved son, husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather passed away on Tuesday, November 16, after a long and valiant battle with cancer. Dad was born on March 20, 1942, to Leon and Maurine Westover in Richfield, Utah.

Dad's early years were spent in southern Utah and included time living in the Japanese Internment Camp in Topaz, where his parents served as teachers. Dad had a legendary memory and was able to recall and tell stories from very early in his life. There are many stories from his childhood years in southern Utah that would rival any Mark Twain novel. From dropping large rocks down the outhouse while ladies were walking by and enjoying the large splash, to inviting the entire town of Enterprise to his birthday party without telling his Mom, to hopping on his bike with a friend to head out to Zion, Dad showed early he was a big thinker who took large strides. His numerous adventures with friends and cousins were so legendary that when we took Dad to the 50th reunion of the school in Enterprise those in the class remembered him clearly and added even more stories and adventures to his epic childhood.

Following the war and during the post-war migration of returning troops, Dad and his family moved to Concord, California. It was there that Dad continued his early education. He attended Mount Diablo High School and participated in choir and journalism. He was a card-carrying member of the Pat Boone Fan Club where he proudly served as their president (and only member). He was a rabid consumer of 1950's pop culture, enjoying the entertainment of radio and television.

These interests impacted the rest of his life and led to him meeting the love of his life, Cathi Begich Caldwell, our mother. Their senior year included a trip to Lake Tahoe for the 1960 Winter Olympics where they served as student journalists for the Oakland Tribune. Mom and Dad married in August of 1960 and immediately started their life together in Provo, Utah, and attended BYU.

It was during this first year together that Dad began a number of traditions that continued for the rest of his life, and are now carried on by his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. One special tradition was making sure Christmas was a joyous celebration full of music, decorations, and presents. Mom was an only child and not used to such big celebrations. Dad was intent on showing her the way because he wanted that special season of the year to be meaningful for the family they together hoped to raise.

Mom and Dad's first Christmas together, despite being struggling college students and having very meager funds, caused Dad to go all out to make it unforgettable. With a budget of about $15—which was a huge sum of money to them in those days—he plotted a Christmas surprise. On Christmas Eve night he went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. He somehow managed to shimmy through the skinny bathroom window and snuck out of the apartment on a snowy night to retrieve the treasures from Santa's sleigh. He thought Mom was sound asleep, but

she was not. Later she gleefully retold the story many times of this first Christmas watching Dad running back and forth barefoot in the snow to bring in the treasures. Her amateur Santa had to toss the wrapped presents one by one through the skinny window, over the stream of still running water, and then get himself back inside without getting caught. When he emerged from the bathroom, breathing heavily yet shivering from being out in the cold in just a tee-shirt, she had to stifle her giggles into the pillow while still pretending to be asleep.

It was a glorious sight that Christmas morning—the little trimmed tree with many presents to open was festive and foreshadowed the epic Christmases to come in the years ahead. Of course, being limited in funds as poor college students, Dad had to make it look abundant by wrapping each shoe in its own box. He wrapped bobby pins, boxed food, and other much-needed items individually. As Mom retold this story year after year you could see how special this was for her. That humble and festive little first Christmas together became the ideal we all tried to replicate in the years ahead.

Dad's first job in Provo seemed at first to be a dream come true. He had heard that a small local radio station needed a night-time weekend anchor. He applied and got a phone call from the owner of the station, who hired him based upon Dad's resonant voice alone over the phone. Dad showed up to work, was shown where all the records were, and told when to air and read the commercials. He was left alone to choose the music, spin the discs, and provide the dialogue. Everything went well for his first weekend until he read a sponsor's script and mispronounced the name of a local business. The owner was listening and became enraged. Just as he was hired over the phone, he was fired over the phone. Dad was never paid for that exhaustive weekend of DJ work and never could forget the quick lessons that resulted. He vowed that if he ever owned an enterprise or led a work team, he would never treat people the way he was treated. It was a defining experience that influenced many years of later leadership.

As their life together continued, Dad and Mom moved back to California. They moved in with Mom's parents for a brief time before buying their first home in Concord, California with the help of both families. Our family continued to grow with Debbie, Jeff, and David arriving during these years in Concord. It was a simple time when Dad completed his education, graduating from the University of California in Berkeley during the height of the Vietnam War and the turbulent protests of the time, getting a degree as a political science major.

During these years he worked at US Steel and as a custodian at his old high school. At night and on weekends Dad would take us with Mom to work with him at the school, beginning another tradition that would endure. His janitorial training was carefully taught to us as we helped him complete his "night job" and those same skills have now been passed down to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren as we all now know the proper way to use a dustpan and vacuum.

Upon graduating in 1968 Dad started his career with Longs Drug Stores at a store located not far from the little family home on Crawford Street. As what seemed to have become his way, Dad was nearly fired almost as quickly as he was hired. He rapidly took to the business and felt he could help improve things by submitting a paper suggesting changes in the operation of the store.

The move did not exactly endear him to store management and he was only rescued by a company executive who liked what Dad had to say. Another valuable lesson in communication and management was learned when given a chance to discuss his ideas. Little did he know that this was the start of a 30-year career that saw him go from store clerk to Vice President of Training and Communication, and being known as the "voice of Longs Drugs."

Dad relied on all his past educational experience to build a training department and a culture that valued customers and employees. His influence, mentoring, and drive to make sure every employee knew the "Long's Way" led to life-long friendships and training methods that are now thought of as pioneering and forward-thinking. Many of Dad's former staff continued to reach out for mentoring and advice until the day he passed away.

During this time at Longs, both Mom and Dad worked together to develop the training department and culture within the organization. This collaboration between Mom and Dad that started in high school continued on in many different kinds of projects during their 55 years together.

Their work together was magic. Their combined creative processes often produced impactful results for Longs, for church assignments, and for family goals. Watching them work together was a huge influence in the lives of their children and grandchildren. They were partners, soul mates, teammates, and influencers who, when they got together to drive a project or deliver on a deadline, made unbeatable contributions. They could complete each

other's sentences, build on each other's ideas, and lift each other to ever higher standards. Dad and Mom were made for each other in so many ways that leaned on their creative talents.

In 1969 Dad was promoted and we moved to Lodi, California, where Kris arrived to the family and gave Dad and Mom the second daughter they both greatly wanted. While in Lodi, Dad's career took off. Given greater responsibility and the backdrop of a great little market in Lodi to grow a new customer base, Dad and Mom put their combined energies into building a team and a business for Longs in Lodi that was unique and productive. They designed their own ads, made their own promotions, reached out to the local community, and built team relationships by holding training meetings in our own home on weekend nights.

Even as children we were involved in these events. Many a Saturday night we would head to the store with sleeping bags and pillows to bed down in the buyer's office while Mom and Dad set the sales floor for the new Sunday ad. It was during these years that Jay learned to set an end cap, Debbie learned to make signs and Jeff learned to fill and face product. We all prepped food and cleaned up the house for meetings that always left a buzz of energy in the home from work associates equally committed to the store that Dad helped to lead. Dad was simply ahead of his time in these efforts, and he got noticed. He was again promoted and asked to expand his efforts to other stores. As he developed his department and worked from home commuting at times from Lodi to Longs' general office in Walnut Creek, Mom continued to be his devoted partner. The dynamic of their creative talents and ambitious energy led to new outlets.

Dad was called to serve in leadership roles at church. All of the endeavors and project work that Dad and Mom were engaged in were embedded in our family culture. We worked and played together as a family, learning all along the way. Family Home Evenings at Lodi Lake, dinner at Pizza Garden, sandwiches at Howard's Deli, surprise trips to Disneyland, and amazing family vacations to Fish Lake, Zion, Bryce Canyon, and Dead Horse Point were the stuff of these years. Each trip was filled with stories of Dad's childhood, his family, and heritage. He would use big words from his extensive vocabulary, and when we would ask what it meant he would say 'look it up" so, yes, a dictionary and thesaurus became part of necessary items to take on vacation. Dad's love for music, especially classical music and movie soundtracks, was also part of our travel routine. He would test us on who wrote what piece of music or what movie soundtrack the music came from.

This tradition became so special that it continued as he and Mom would take their grandchildren on trips. Their grandchildren continued this tradition and now the great-grandchildren can now name the composer and movie soundtrack for hundreds of pieces.

If you are starting to see a commonality to Dad's priorities and values, it's because there is. Dad can best be summed up in these words: family, faith, tradition, teaching, and history. From monthly father/child discussions on goals and striving to live up to your potential, to Father's blessings, gospel discussions, the importance of not only knowing history but understanding what it represents, to identifying significant emotional events and their role in your eternal journey, Dad made sure we knew who we were, where we came from, and the deep heritage we inherited from our ancestors and our obligation to honor the past, to embrace the principles of liberty, hard work, fidelity and life with eternity in mind—and to hold tight to the iron rod of gospel truth.

Dad's job eventually led the family back to Concord in 1978, where a home was lovingly built by Uncle Darrell and his sons. It formed a small neighborhood of Westover homes. As always, the loving influence of family, aunts, uncles, and cousins helped shape the lives of myself and my siblings. As some of us left home, went on to missions, college, and marriage Dad continued the traditions of teaching, the father/child discussions, Father's blessings, temple attendance, and church service. All along he documented the history of our growing family, now added upon through grandchildren, via photo, video, and the written word.

His influence became generational and his teaching even more wide-ranging. As new personalities entered the family picture, Dad adjusted to his new roles with them with great pleasure. Grandchildren marveled at his pancake-making skills and his ability to tackle any shape or character they asked him for. He never missed an opportunity to teach. Photography, history, music, journalism, and humor were all taught and passed down to his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. To accurately measure the impact Dad has had in his 79 years on earth look to the many tributes and memories being shared on social media and the family website at westoverfamilyhistory.org.

Mom passed away in 2015 and Dad spent the last years of his life focused on family history, capturing and documenting his family. One of Dad's many pursuits in creating a lasting family record was the work he did to learn the history of Mom's family that she never got a chance to learn growing up. He came to love the great clan of Begich family members. Dad was consistent, steadfast, and diligent in teaching us to remember who we are and where we came from. As an educator, Dad was a master storyteller who emphasized that the heart of family history lies in the legends, the experiences, and the contributions of the past.

Sadly, shortly after Mom's passing Dad was diagnosed with a rare, slow-moving cancer. As he had done during Mom's health trials, he learned everything he could about the disease. He kept tedious records. He worked over his notes and came prepared to discuss how treatment was going. His doctors, much like his work associates during his career, became friends and productive contributors. Dad was adored by his caregivers. They loved his attitude and his spirit of cooperation and goodwill. He remained fiercely loyal to all those working so hard on his behalf, and they responded by "going the extra mile" for him in his fight.

Last year Dad fought off Covid while in his second year of chemo. Jeff moved in and became Dad's primary caretaker. Together they worked for 14 months to extend his life and continue the many projects he was continually pursuing.

Debbie and Matthew, Kris and Michaela, his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, Dad's siblings, and cousins all made time to help in his care to provide both temporal and spiritual support and to help Dad fight the good fight. Dad cherished all these family relationships, working more in his final days to connect and spread love.

He was humbled by their enduring love for him and generous efforts on his behalf. The family forces he tried so hard during our growing up years to teach to us all came home to bear for him during his illness and final days. He was smothered in love and caring from family coast to coast. Dad's final day on earth was similar to thousands of days during his life. He was looking forward—planning for the upcoming holidays, future family history trips with family, and in taking joy in his posterity. He made sure those who contacted him on Monday, knew that they were loved, that he was proud of them and, as always, to remember who we are and those who came before us.

Dad always taught that "history is not what it is, it's what it represents." Family, faith, tradition, teaching, and heritage. These are what he was all about. Thanks, Dad, for a life well led and an eternity of memories, lessons, and mentoring. We could not have had a better father, a more loving mentor, or a more trusted friend. We love you.