



Lester Raymond Gardiner, Jr.

Aug. 20, 1931 ~ Sept. 27, 2022

Lester Raymond Gardiner, Jr., known by friends as Ray, died on September 27, 2022 at age 91 due to causes incident to age.

Ray was born in Salt Lake City on August 20, 1931 to Sarah Lucille Kener and Lester Raymond Gardiner. He was raised on 8th Avenue and he attended Ensign and Lowell Elementary Schools, Bryant Jr. High and East High School where he was President of the Debate Club.

From 1950-1952, Ray served in the British Mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, primarily in Manchester, England. Throughout his life, association with many people who joined the Church at that time and with former missionary companions, was a source of great joy. Ray also served in many other callings in the Church, including Bishop of the Federal Heights Ward.

In 1954, Ray graduated from the University of Utah with honors in business management and where he affiliated with the Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity. Ray also served in the Air Force ROTC (cadet Lt Colonel) and the US Air Force (Second Lieutenant) with two years active duty at Geiger Air Force Base in Spokane, Washington.

In 1955, Ray married Janet Ruth Thatcher in the Salt Lake Temple and they are the parents of 10 children: Allison (Sean Bigelow), John Alfred (Rebecca Soelberg), Annette (Matthew Weed), Leslie (John Crandall), Robert Thatcher (Susanne Barth), Lisa (Will West), James Raymond, Elizabeth (Everett Smith), David William (Morgan Jones), and Sarah Janet (Thomas Boyden); 39 grandchildren and 19 great grandchildren (2 more on the way).

Following military service, he attended the University of Michigan Law School. After graduation in 1959, he served as a law clerk for U.S. district judge A. Sherman Christensen for one year. Thereafter, he practiced with notable Salt Lake City and national firms as well as started smaller independent practices. His law practice primarily consisted of trial law with an emphasis on anti-trust and complex litigation in federal courts. He represented many large national corporations, served as legal counsel for many local organizations, and also helped smaller companies and individuals with serious legal problems. He appeared in state and federal courts in Utah, Nevada,

Idaho, Colorado and California.

In 1993, the owner of Snowbird Corporation (one of his clients), asked Ray to become President and CEO of Snowbird. During his 5 years at Snowbird, he reorganized management and operations and successfully restructured the resort's large debt resulting in stabilization of the then precarious financial situation. Upon seeing one of Ray's sons skiing at Snowbird one day, the colorful resort owner (Dick Bass) took him aside and said, "Your daddy saved this place". Under his management, for the first time ever, Snowbird was ranked in the top five resorts in North America by readers of SKI. Though few realize it, access to the powder in mineral basin that many enjoy today started under Ray's tenure.

Ray sought peace and refuge in the mountains of Utah and Wyoming as often as his demanding law practice and life responsibilities allowed. He hiked through the Uintah and Wind River mountains many times with the Boy Scouts but greatly treasured anytime in the mountains with his own sons and daughters—a tradition that continues to this day with many of his children and grandchildren regularly visiting his same favorite spots.

Ray loved to tend his garden of roses and his greenhouse full of tropical plants at the family home at 93 Laurel St. He loved being with family, whether at home, Bear Lake, Capistrano Beach or the annual Christmas Eve seafood feast. He worked hard at whatever he did and his family benefited from this diligence.

Ray was preceded in death by his wife, Janet and sisters, Helen Eldredge and Gloria Gurr. He is survived by all of his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Friends may call at Larkin Mortuary, 260 East South Temple, the evening of Friday October 7 from six to eight p.m. On Saturday, a private family graveside service will be held. Interment will be in the family plot in the Salt Lake City Cemetery.