

Mervin Roland Reid

December 18, 1926 ~ May 3, 2023

Mervin Roland Reid passed peacefully away at home May 3, 2023, at the age of 96.

Mervin was born to Roland Jacobs Reid and Beatrice Elizabeth Gardner on December 18, 1926, in Salt Lake City. He was 8 years younger than his older sister Margaret Richards and 6 years older than his younger brother Richard (Dick).

He grew up in Magna, Utah, and always felt his childhood was idyllic. He loved playing “kick the can,” “run sheepy run,” and “hide-and-go-seek” with the neighbor children. His parents wished him to have experience with agriculture since they both grew up on farms. Mervin’s father helped him build a chicken coop and he learned to raise chickens. He loved caring for the chickens, only protesting when it was time to have one for dinner. Mervin became a member of the 4-H and learned to care for pigs and cows. He helped an uncle herd turkeys in the summer.

From their pioneer heritage, his parents encouraged Mervin to learn the value of hard work through various jobs. Mervin had jobs each summer from the time he was 10 years old until he went into the Army. He weeded and cultivated a 20-acre field of corn, was a door-to-door salesman, cut lawns, thinned beets, and more. He remembers delivering papers and yelling on D-Day “America invades France.” About three months after starting work at Kennecott Utah Copper Company as a sixteen-year-old, he got buried and almost killed in a reserve ore bin. He was miraculously saved.

Mervin loved sports (playing football in high school), participating in Sea Scouts (learning to sail on the Great Salt Lake), and marching with the Magna Drum and Bugle Corps (performing in multiple cities in Utah on the bass drum). He attended Cyprus High School, where he served as the president of the LDS seminary his senior year. It was in seminary where he got to know Ethna Robinson. Because they were both accomplished pianists, they would frequently perform together at wedding receptions.

Graduating in May of 1945, he was immediately inducted into the U.S. Army. After training, the troops from Magna were shipped overseas where they served as occupation forces in Italy, bringing order out of the chaotic ruins of the war. While stationed in Italy, Mervin was assigned to G-3 General Staff. Though he was part of the Occupation Army, there was still a constant awareness of the war. Guarding German prisoners of war and moving U.S. soldiers and equipment were just part of his job. While on leave, Mervin enjoyed exploring neighboring cities and countries, falling in love with fine art and opera. While in the military he received a letter from Ethna Robinson. The soldier bunking next to Mervin exclaimed, “That’s the girl you’re going to marry!” This began a friendly correspondence.

After returning home from Italy, Mervin dated Ethna while she lived in a U of U sorority house. Her sorority sisters were jealous of all the attention and gifts Mervin showered on her, including dozens and dozens of fresh daffodils delivered during a blinding snowstorm, with a poem by William Wordsworth which begins:

“I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils…”

Mervin and Ethna were married in the Salt Lake Temple on June 3, 1949. Two weeks after marrying, Mervin left to serve a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to the New England Mission (serving without purse or scrip during part of his mission under the direction of President S. Dilworth Young). Four months later, Ethna was called to serve a mission in the Northwestern States Mission. When Ethna completed her mission, she joined Mervin and they served a short-term mission to train missionaries how to teach.

Mervin pursued his education after his mission while rearing a family and working. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology and a Master of Science degree in Zoology. He also completed his academic work towards his Ph.D. in entomology, studying mosquitoes to determine resistance to insecticides. Mervin later received his Doctorate of Public Administration degree.

He served as administrator of environmental services in the Davis County Health Department and director of the Bureau of General Sanitation, Utah Department of Health. Mervin authored many of Utah's regulations and booklets pertaining to environmental health.

In 1978, Mervin realized his lifetime dream of owning a ranch when he and Ethna bought the property that became Reid Ranch in Duchesne County. They fell in love with the location, its beauty, and the abundant wildlife. They have welcomed thousands of adults and youth who have enjoyed their dream of a guest ranch resort.

After retirement from the Utah Department of Health, Mervin and Ethna established The Reid School. He served happily alongside Ethna for many years, providing students with an excellent education.

Mervin was proud of his pioneer ancestors and felt that the best way to honor their legacy was through hard work and Christ-like living. He was a faithful member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, serving in Bishoprics, Scouting, the Stake High Council, the Stake Sunday School Presidency, and as a faithful home teacher.

There never was a question that Dad didn’t know the answer to—from science, engineering, and math to home repair, history, art, and the gospel. He was a wonderful father to Kathleen Barlow (Stephen), Shauna Tateoka (Reid), and M. Gardner (Ruth). He and Ethna have 16 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren with one due in September. Each child felt that they were his favorite. He remembered details about our lives and was proud of our accomplishments be they in school, arts, sports, work, or as parents. Dad was a real gentleman. He honored women, particularly his mother, wife, daughters, granddaughters, and now great-granddaughters.

He was preceded in death by his parents, siblings, and wife. Mervin and Ethna celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary prior to Ethna’s death.

We are grateful for all the loving caregivers who have made his last remaining years comfortable. These include Aspen Ridge West Transitional Rehab Facility (with special thanks to his occupational and physical therapists) and loving home attendants: Maria Zamora, Railene Da Silva, Jaime Arredondo, and Ana Caballero. His neighbors and ward members have also been very caring and solicitous.

The viewing will be Friday, May 12th, from 6 to 8 p.m. and Saturday, May 13th, from 9 to 10 a.m. The funeral will follow on Saturday, May 13th, at 10:30 a.m. The viewings and funeral will be held at the Olympus Cove Ward, 4407 South Fortuna Way (3695 East), Salt Lake City, Utah 84124. Interment will follow at the Taylorsville City Cemetery, 4567 South Redwood Road, Taylorsville, Utah 84123. Funeral services are provided by Larkin Mortuary.

You may watch a recording of the service online through Zoom using the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ZdRBKr-dRE9ybEdQB2_VM0zj-eipOQlRWyVpCkKsmSesXCSHntgD1fGeZYFA2A58.