

Michael Jay Syme

October 21, 1961 ~ October 3, 2024

On October 3, 2024, Michael Jay Syme had the opportunity to pass peacefully in his bed after being lovingly tucked in by his two daughters. Instead, he rose for a brief, final hurrah before passing suddenly—an ending that felt exactly right. The rare and perplexing illness that caused his death—a mystery to specialists worldwide—was the kind of illness only a man as undefinable and unique as Mike Syme could have had. Why do anything the normal way when it could be done the Mike way?

Born the second son to Richard and Elizabeth Joye Syme on October 21, 1961, Mike spent his youth as a painter, an athlete, and a general class clown (literally voted class clown!) while attending Weber High School in North Ogden, Utah. He met most of his closest friends in grade school and could recount vividly the day he met each of them, even as early as kindergarten. He served an LDS mission to Sapporo, Japan, where he deepened his faith in the gospel, discovered his gift for speaking, and developed a love for connecting with people.

In his twenties, Mike tried everything and was never attracted to the conventional path. He graduated from Weber State University with a bachelor’s degree in business, tried door-to-door sales in California, published a book of comic strips, wrote a novel, opened a trading card shop, and began collecting comic books. He met the woman he would be married to for nine years and the mother of his daughters, Jenivee Misrasi.

In his thirties he became a father to two girls, Rylee and Shaylee. He started traveling the country as a seminar speaker, eventually starting his own business where he educated people on opportunities that he genuinely believed had the power to change lives. He believed in the power of individuals to forge their own path and live their best life. He loved stories of underdogs and unsung heroes and believed in everyone’s potential. He taught his children to pursue their dreams without hesitation or skepticism. He truly believed anything was possible.

For a man known more for his personality than his looks, Mike somehow only dated babes (he would love this joke, he was actually handsome!) At 47, when Mike’s daughters were nearly old enough to leave the house, he had a tiny red-headed baby boy named Stryder with Jessica Hoaglin. After years of painting nails and curling hair for his two girls, Mike was thrilled to finally have a boy. Stryder was his pride and joy. Many will remember one of the Stryder-themed Christmas cards sent over the last 16 years. He spoiled Stryder in a way that only the youngest child is spoiled, capturing every father-son adventure on what became lovingly known as the "Stryder wall"—literally an entire wall filled with canvas photos of their time together.

Mike was funny, loud, and opinionated. He loved stories and art in all forms and found ways to be inspired by everything. He loved music, talk radio, Hallmark movies, every sport (ESPN was on at all times), but especially football, cigars, cargo shorts, anything to do with Led Zeppelin, and pizza. He had a brain like no one else and was known for having a radio on in one end of the house, a TV on in the other, and pacing between the two while on the

phone. He overcame dyslexia, which plagued him throughout school, and he took great pride in that. He was a voracious reader, especially of fantasy novels, where he immersed himself in the worlds and characters. His imagination had no bounds. He frequently had a vision that no one could understand until it was brought to life. He was a collector and connoisseur of things he loved; a true appreciator of every craft.

More than anything, our dad loved people. He spent his whole life looking up to his big brother, Richie, and adored his nephews. He loved going to their games, celebrating their successes, and most of all, pranking them at all costs. He was so proud of them. It's hard to imagine a man with more friends. In a conversation once about how adults struggle to make new friends, he incredulously said, "Not me!" Most of his closest friends have been with him for over 50 years, standing by his side the whole time. Throughout his life, he never struggled to make lifelong friends wherever he went. His home was never empty, his front door was never locked, and all were welcome.

Mike had a big heart. He cried during Disney movies and while retelling stories of any good deed. He wore his heart on his sleeve. He laughed constantly and made jokes about everything. There wasn't a time or place where he didn't feel like he could boogie, and he was always the loudest in the room (the exception being perhaps his daughters). He would frequently turn songs up loud in the car so that every passenger could spare a moment for appreciation. He traveled the world, achieving four million-miler status (nearly five million!), but he always said his favorite place in the world was North Ogden, where he lived in three houses on the same street throughout most of his life.

"Generous" is a word often used to describe Mike, but his generosity was all-encompassing. He was generous with time, generous in spirit, generous in thought, generous with things and money. He believed the most valuable things in his home were the people inside it. He sincerely believed in the best in everyone. He learned this from his dad, Richard, who he loved and admired profoundly. Richard helped raise Mike's girls, and there wasn't a day that went by without them talking. Mike knew loss at an early age with the death of his mother, Joye, and allowed that loss to deepen his love and appreciation for others. Mike checked on his people daily, sending them videos he thought they would enjoy. He managed to hold everyone in his heart and mind and somehow had room for more; his love was big.

In 2018, Mike rang in the new year with a sudden infection so severe it should have killed him. From that moment on, he viewed each day as extra time and was grateful for the years he got, even as they became more challenging. In 2019, he became legally blind, forcing the man who couldn't stay in one place for more than two days at a time to be confined to his home. And yet, he kept himself busy. He loved projects, collecting things others saw as trash and turning them into something special. During his last seven years, he frequently visited Peru to spend time with his partner, Astrid, who loved and cared for him as his illness progressed, with few answers from doctors. His constant companion was his dog, Page (named after Jimmy Page, of course), who rarely left his side. In December 2023, Mike lost the use of one of his vocal cords. For us, this marked the true decline—Mike's voice was his gift. He was the best storyteller and suffered by not being able to express himself fully. He loved talking on the phone and making people laugh. Even when speaking became a challenge, he kept his humor, making jokes until the very end.

In the end, Mike wanted everyone to know he had the best life, and he meant it. He would say he lived multiple lifetimes in his nearly 63 years. He seized every opportunity to show his kids the world—from volcanoes to icebergs, from swimming with dolphins in Hawaii to deep-sea fishing in Alaska—he wanted them to experience everything. He himself tried to experience everything, hear all music, read all books—he cherished it all. Ultimately, his favorite moments were the simple ones: phone calls with friends and hanging out in his living room with loved ones. He was deeply loved and surrounded by it in abundance until his final moments. He will be missed beyond measure, and yet we are grateful he got to go out exactly how he wanted. The details of his life and how he lived will continue to inspire and live on in those he has left behind.

Mike is survived by his three children, Rylee, Shaylee, and Stryder; Rylee's partner Shaun Frazier; his brother Richie; Richie's wife Karen Syme; his four nephews, Shane, Brandon, Chase, and Kyle; his partner of seven years, Astrid Carrasco; his best friends, Dana Monson, Curtis Breitweiser, Danny Shupe, Pat Jamison, and too many others to include but who were all loved.

A viewing will be held at Larkin Mortuary, 260 E S Temple St, Salt Lake City, UT 84111, on Sunday, October 13, from 6pm–8pm.

An additional viewing will be held in North Ogden on Monday, October 14th at 9:30am, followed by a funeral service at 11am; 575 E 3100 N, North Ogden, UT 84414. He will be buried at Ben Lomond Cemetery.

In Lieu of flowers, water your houseplants (he loved his) hug your loved ones, and listen to this playlist we made of some of Mike’s favorite songs.

Spotify music link:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/6LCWz7bfRuFwGTBhjHSPst?si=1f7oyZkeQAON879edOmqdw

Apple music link:

https://music.apple.com/us/playlist/songs-for-dad/pl.u-e98l3gpuPArXxZ

For those unable to attend, services will be streamed via Zoom. Please click on the "Watch Services" link above.