Neil Daniel Thompson

February 21, 1935 ~ May 19, 2024

Neil Daniel Thompson was born 21 February 1935 at Calexico (near Imperial), California, and died 19 May 2024 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Neil was son of his beloved mother Leah Harriet Howell (who passed in 1982) and her first husband Francis Marion Thompson. Neil was also close to his stepfather Lehi Lorenzo Hambleton (who passed in 1972). Neil's mother was a close companion and support throughout his life, working jobs that helped Neil through school and providing a caring emotional support until her death, having moved with him to New York City when he attended Columbia and Harvard.

Neil obtained his A.B. at U.C.L.A. in 1957 and received his Ph.D. from Columbia University and his LL.B. from Harvard Law School in 1963, after which he practiced law in New York, living much of the time on Riverside Drive. After the death of his mother and retiring from law, Neil relocated to Salt Lake City and focused his attention on genealogy and family history, founding the Association for the Promotion of Scholarship in Genealogy, through which he was editor and publisher of The Genealogist, a journal that established a high bar of scholarship for genealogical publications.

Neil was elected the 100th Fellow of the American Society of Genealogists (elected 1974, President 1992-5), a former President of the Board of Certification of Genealogists (1983-6), and a Fellow of the Utah Genealogical Association and the Society of Genealogists (London). He was genealogist for a number of societies, including the Descendants of the Illegitimate Sons and Daughters of the Kings of Britain (affectionately known as the Royal Bastards, serving as their Herald-Genealogist 1987–2012).

Neil's personal interests were eclectic. While in New York City, he regularly attended the Metropolitan Opera (even attending great performances multiple times in standing room when necessary to experience the once in a lifetime confluence of great stars), but after retirement was equally a fan of professional wrestling. He had an interest in recordings of early classical music, and other things, but his greatest love and companion was his library and book collection (which he sadly had to part with when he began experiencing dementia). Every wall in Neil's house that could fit a bookcase did. He often related that he would wander around as a child with his nose in a book, oblivious to the world around him.

Neil had no immediate surviving family, but his recent family had been those he loved in genealogy, such as the other Fellows of the ASG, and the group of ardent professionals who used to sit near him on the second floor at the Family History Library. Neil had a brief marriage in 1968 with a wonderful, educated and refined person named Dana Lou Sams (now of Kansas), but the fit wasn't quite right and the couple parted ways amicably after annulling the marriage (Neil fondly remembered her as a wonderful cook and first-class homemaker). But Neil's closest person in his life was his beloved mother, who truly earned his affection.

Neil was wonderfully cared for in his last years by the nurses and staff at St. Joseph's Villa (the OCD that made him such a good researcher in life was a tricky thing once his memory was gone, but a staff member invented a genealogy game where he could use his mind to figure out family members and their relationships). He was happy and it was a pleasant place for him. Neil was meek and friendly in his last years in dementia, perhaps a peek into his life as a child. Neil is laid to rest next to his mother and step-father in the Murray City Cemetery in the Salt Lake Valley, Utah.