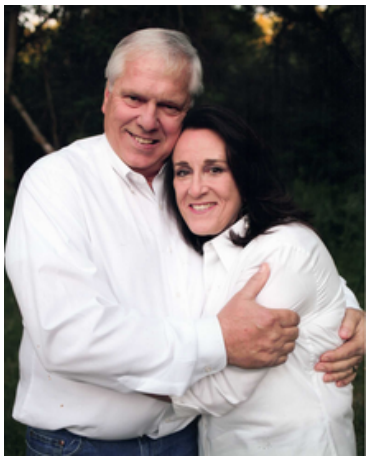

Steve DeVroom

July 6, 1950 ~ May 28, 2020

Steve DeVroom was a defier of death. That is of course, until he died last week. Indeed, his shocking and untimely departure from this life is made all the more dramatic against the backdrop of his former narrow escapes.

Gravity, a cruel mistress, tried to seal his fate one stormy afternoon in 1998. An ill-timed slippery step sent Steve tumbling two stories down off his own roof all the while thinking “This is gonna hurt.” Steve then attempted to drive himself to the hospital, broken pelvis, elbow, wrist, ribs, shattered femur, and all.

While his enormous heart threatened to betray him more than once, it was his greatest asset as it was the holding ground for his most tender gifts: unparalleled generosity, unyielding patience, wit and humor enough to enjoy this obituary, and a devotion to his family that spans generations both past and present.

Steve wove his proud heritage of his Dutch ancestors into family gatherings large and larger, including his infamous Sunday dinners and Christmas visits from Sinterklaus (who always left a chocolate letter bearing the name of each family member). Growing up immersed in the Dutch culture, he had studied Dutch for two years, including weekly lessons with his cousin, to prepare for a trip there this coming October. Amsterdam is all the poorer for his absence.

But it was the Sunday dinners tradition, perhaps, that superseded them all. A simple house rule of Steve DeVroom: Smakelijk eten!”, or translated, “Eat Heartily”.

Nothing delighted Steve more than feeding the friends and family who entered into his home. His dinners, held every Sunday for the last 40 years included an standing invitation extended to friends and family alike and sometimes boasted a guestlist of more than 40. In fact, shortly before he died, Steve extended his already massive dining room table to a staggering 20 feet long. He found it intolerable to seat his wife, 8 children, 18 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren at separate tables. Everyone needed to be together for dinner.

Steve DeVroom was a safe place for the masses. All were welcome in his home and heart. Steve had a way of making everyone feel special; to him they were. All 560 contacts in his phone were saved under “favorites.”

But back to death.

King’s Peak thrice tried to best the man. Hiking to King’s Peak with Steve DeVroom became a trial by fire for the nearly 100 scouts of the hundreds he served in his 30 years in the scouting program. And tending to a broken and

battered King’s Peak-scaling Steve DeVroom became a rite of passage for the nurses in the Intermountain Health Care network.

The quadrennial 50-mile trek across King’s Peak – one that Steve forged himself – became one of his greatest opportunities for scout enlightenment. Once against the backdrop of a lightning storm, he taught selflessness as he led a group of young scouts out of harm's way, giving one the literal shirt off his own back and replacing it with an injured scout whom he carried for miles.

Once on the back side of the mountain, a misplaced foot taught another group of young men an intense lesson in miracles and powerful prayer. Steve stepped on a boulder, the boulder lurched beneath him, he fell and was trapped under the boulder with a broken back and a punctured lung. Boulders can be so dramatic. Steve managed to earn himself a ride on LifeFlight off the mountain top. His troop, however, was forced to hike out, and to this day remain bitter.

Yes, Steve DeVroom was a defier of death. Until last Thursday when on a kayaking trip with his son and three granddaughters. Just before his raft overturned, he told his granddaughter, “I love my family so much”, his last words. He was flung out of the kayak and his foot became trapped between two rocks.

Even in death, Steve once again did what he did best: Gather those of us left behind. He’d much prefer to be the one grilling at the barbeque surrounded by his loved ones with his famous ribs, hamburgers and towering assortment of chilled beverages – indeed, Costco’s profit margins may never recover from this great loss. But because he loved them well, his family will carry on his legacy each time they gather.

Steve DeVroom was a builder. He built his home in Sandy, Utah with his two hands. He built a company that employed dozens of family and friends who became family. He built the faith and fire of testimony of the young men to whom he ministered for decades. He built a family that will withstand this storm and all those that follow because of the foundation he gave them.

And those who were loved best by him will continue to walk through the white door of the grey house – without knocking, obviously (and pass the dogs) – where the Dutch flag flies high to remember the man whose rousing cry still rings in their hearts and echoes in his home: “Come, and eat heartily.”

There will be a Celebration of Steve’s life at his home, Saturday, June 6, from 6-8pm. Those concerned about Covid-19 exposure should contribute their memories of Steve on the Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/groups/271101550742430/ in lieu of attending. If you are attending, all COVID rules apply. We’d ask that those whose names begin with A through L attend from 6 to 7 and those whose names begin with M-Z attend from 7 to 8 to keep attendance under 50. Whatever your choice, we’d appreciate your contribution of your memories of Steve at the Facebook link above.