

Ralph Lester Wadsworth

November 4, 1934 ~ December 25, 2025

Ralph Lester Wadsworth, patriarch and head of the Wadsworth family passed away in the Draper home he had built with his own hands on Christmas Day, 2025 surrounded by his children and loved ones. Ralph was preceded in death by his wife of 71 years, Peggy Wadsworth, who passed away on July 1 of this year. He is survived by his seven sons--Guy, Cal, Con, Tod, Kip, Ty and Nic; their spouses, as well as 21 grandchildren and 27 great grandchildren.

Ralph was born in the tiny town of Taylor, Idaho on November 4, 1934 to Lawrence and Hilda Wadsworth. The youngest of five children, Ralph was an unexpected surprise to his aging parents and a test to their patience in their old age. He grew up in a farming community founded by his Mormon pioneer ancestors and learned the value of hard work at an early age. He attended Idaho Falls High School where he met his sweetheart and wife of 71 years, Peggy Kahler.

After graduating high school Ralph attended the University of Idaho in Moscow on a boxing scholarship. He was the first in his family to attend college. On the day he left for school his father, Lawrence, drove him to the bus station and kissed him full on the lips, telling him how proud he was, and how much he loved him--for the first and only time in Ralph’s life.

Ralph worked throughout college to provide for his lodging and food--his scholarship only covering tuition. He made a home in a small room in an abandoned Army barracks, blacking out the windows to avoid being caught. To survive he performed odd jobs and shoveled coal from railroad cars, earning just enough to get by. When he left the barracks to return home for the summer the night watchman informed him that he had known Ralph was there all along but had chosen to look the other way because he figured Ralph needed a little help.

During the summer break Ralph reunited with his high school sweetheart, Peggy, and they married on December 19, 1953. At the time Ralph had exactly $50 dollars to his name given to him by his older brother Golden as a wedding present. Ralph then returned to school in Moscow while Peggy and her newborn son Guy stayed with his mom and dad in Taylor, Idaho. Times were hard and more than once Ralph had to pawn his .300 Savage deer rifle to make ends meet during this difficult period of his life, but he always got it back and it remains a cherished family heirloom.

College proved difficult for Ralph and he seldom did better than a “C” average, but a wise professor who had observed Ralph’s work ethic and drive told him that the world was run by “C” students and that he believed Ralph would be very successful. After graduating with a degree in Structural Engineering, Ralph worked for several engineering firms until he started his own company--Ralph L. Wadsworth Structural Engineering in 1962. Ralph designed many of the high-rise office buildings in Salt Lake as well as several temples for the LDS church including

the Washington, D.C. Temple.

Later Ralph ventured into construction with the help of his older brother, Golden, and formed Ralph L. Wadsworth Construction in 1975. Over the decades Ralph Wadsworth Construction became a premier highway contractor in the Intermountain West specializing in highway and bridge construction and building projects throughout Utah, Idaho, Arizona and Montana. Ralph L. Wadsworth was one of the successful I-15 CORE joint venture contractors who reconstructed I-15 from Lehi to Spanish Fork in the fastest $1 billion contract ever performed in the U.S.. Ralph was proud to include his sons in the family business but also employed dozens of local “boys” who grew up along with his own sons in the business, many of whom still work there today and have taken on management roles.

Ralph was widely recognized for his achievements in the construction industry and the Associated General Contractors (AGC) honored him in 2021 with the Eric. W. Ryberg Award for lifetime achievement. Ralph also recently received the ENR Mountain States & Southwest Legacy Award given to individuals who have achieved a lifetime of service in design and construction.

In his later years Ralph started a real estate development company in partnership with some of his sons. Known as the Wadsworth Development Group, the company has played a major role in developing some of the largest projects in Utah including “Lake Park” offices, the “Inland Port” and “The Point” at the site of the old state prison, as well as many other developments throughout the Western states.

Aside from his professional accomplishments, Ralph was also a gifted athlete and an avid horseman. During his high school and college years Ralph won 2 Golden Glove awards as a welterweight boxer. In later years after most men have hung up their sneakers , Ralph competed in the Park City Ride & Tie races as well as the national championship--the Levi Ride & Tie. He also competed in many long distance endurance races such as the Tevis Cup on his beloved Arabian horses. He enjoyed boating and, along with his sons, flew kites, parasailed and waterskied at Lake Powell and Bear Lake. He eventually purchased 28 acres above Kamas where he built an A-frame cabin over several years with his young sons and in later years took his grandchildren to ride horses, shoot guns and tell scary stories around the campfire.

Ralph loved Draper city and even ran for mayor once. He left his mark in ways that extended beyond construction and development. A quiet philanthropist, Ralph donated and constructed the Round House in Draper as well as the Andy Ballard Equestrian Center, named after his dear friend. Ralph also engineered and constructed the Bear Canyon suspension bridge on the Bonneville Shoreline Trail which he donated to the city of Draper. Ralph was recognized for his efforts by Draper City when he and his wife Peggy were named Grand Marshals of the 2020 Draper Days Parade.

Although Ralph did not attend church regularly, he was a man of faith. As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints he faithfully paid his tithing throughout his life and believed it contributed to his success. He also had a deep love for the United States of America and encouraged his sons and grandchildren to be grateful for the opportunities this great country affords us. When President Trump was re-elected in 2024 Ralph struggled up the stairs to his bedroom and knelt down to pray, tearfully thanking His Heavenly Father.

Ralph believed deeply in the value of hard work. He set the example by always working hard and never asking anyone to do something he wasn’t willing to do himself. He expected his sons to follow his example and took pride in seeing them follow his lead. However, Ralph’s greatest accomplishment was courting and marrying his beautiful wife, Peggy, with whom he raised seven sons who have all become hard working, successful men in their own right.

The family finds great comfort in knowing that Ralph and Peggy are reunited again. As Ralph wrote in his autobiography:

“*I know I could have been a better husband, a better father and a better Christian. Having a loving wife, raising seven boys and having our boys and their families close to us is about as much blessing as I could ask for.”*

Although one could question Ralph’s methodology, patience and temperament, it’s hard to argue with the results of his parenting, even if he doesn’t get a lot of style points. The dedication his children and grandchildren have shown in caring for their parents is witness to their love. His sons, their wives and many of the grandchildren have worked hand-in-hand for over two years to keep Ralph and Peggy comfortable in their own home in their later years.

Special thanks go out to Tod Wadsworth who worked tirelessly to ensure his parents could die in the comfort of their own home surrounded by family.

Services for Ralph Wadsworth will be held at Larkin Sunset Gardens at 1950 Dimple Dell Road, Sandy, UT 84092. A viewing will be held Thursday, January 8 from 5:00 - 8:00 pm as well as Friday, January 9 from 10:00 - 10:45 am. Services will follow the viewing at 11:00 am.