

Rex Eugene Pickett

June 14, 1958 ~ October 1, 2024

Rex Eugene Pickett, 66, was welcomed into the arms of his Heavenly Father on the afternoon of Tuesday, October 1, 2024, at his home in Draper, Utah.

Born on Flag Day, June 14, 1958, at St. Luke's Hospital in Boise, Idaho, to Dr. Hal Eugene and Patricia Anne Pickett, Rex was the eldest of five siblings. Together, they grew up enjoying the beauty of Idaho and the great outdoors. As soon as he was able, Rex spent his summers working on the Pickett Sheep and Cattle Ranch in Oakley, Idaho, which his family had settled in 1882. There, he learned the ranching values of hard work, dedication, and the joy of good food, while embracing the wide-open plains and his family's small-town roots.

In middle school, Rex discovered a passion for football, and by his senior year of high school, he had earned All-City Defensive Honors as a linebacker. His talent secured him a starting position on the All-Southern Idaho Conference 2nd Team champions. In addition to his football success, Rex was a state champion in the 400-meter dash and a proud member of the Boy Scouts of America, achieving the esteemed rank of Eagle Scout.

Rex graduated from Borah High School in 1977 and attended the College of Idaho on an academic and athletic scholarship. When the college canceled its football program after his first season, Rex transferred to Willamette University in Salem, Oregon, where he completed his education through a dual program with Stanford University. He continued playing football, served as Chapter President of Sigma Alpha Epsilon, and graduated in 1981 with a B.S. in Mathematics and Natural Sciences.

Much to Papa Pickett’s chagrin, Rex decided to take his “Natural Sciences” degree to new heights by pursuing one of his many passions: skiing. During a gap year, he worked at Bogus Basin Ski Resort, earning $4.50 an hour as a bus driver. He took great pride in navigating the 172 turns each way up and down the mountain, where he also worked as a lift operator. That season, Rex skied 156 days during a historically great snow year. He often recounted how, after each snowfall, he’d carve 80 fresh powder turns down the backside of the mountain to the lift shack where he worked. When the snow melted, his adventures continued as a tour guide for Princess Cruises in Alaska, a job made famous by *The Love Boat*. He quickly fell in love with the state and decided to move there, finding it to be the perfect playground for an outdoorsman like himself. While in Alaska, Rex became a private pilot, earned his floatplane certification, and pursued his passions for hiking, hunting, skiing, fishing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and glacier backpacking.

During his time in Alaska, Rex also completed a second B.S. degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Alaska. In 1986, he began his career with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, where he served as a project manager for multiple complex, multi-million-dollar projects in the unforgiving northern frontier, earning numerous awards for his work.

Yet, all of these adventures paled in comparison to the day Rex accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior on September 22, 1992. From that moment, he saw creation in a whole new way. The following morning, he always said the beauty of Alaska was magnified tenfold, and he viewed the world in an entirely different light.

While working as the Project Engineer on Shemya AFB, the most remote base in the world—an isolated 2x4-mile island in the middle of the Bering Sea—Rex met Dr. Heather Viesselman, affectionately known as “the last doc on the rock.” Both arriving late to a mutual friend’s going-away party, they naturally chose to sit in the back—right next to each other. Little did Rex know that this shared unpunctuality would lead him to meet the love of his life. When Heather was reassigned to Edwards Air Force Base, Rex left the state he adored to follow the woman he loved more, moving to a barren 10,000-square-mile desert base in California. He was assigned to Fort Irwin, the premier Army National Training Center, where he faced the challenges of civil engineering in a harsh desert environment—polar opposites of his experiences in Alaska!

The month before their wedding, Heather was deployed to Fort Irwin for a desert assignment. Always one to have fun, Rex convinced the hospital commander to let him pose as a wartime photographer so he could see Heather in the middle of the desert. He brought her and the troops treats as they endured the scorching 130°F heat!

Rex and Heather were married on September 20, 1997, while she was stationed at Edwards. He became her right hand as she worked with the USAF Test Pilot School and NASA as a flight surgeon, commuting 84 miles each way to see her on weekends. As a military spouse, Rex transferred with Heather to Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska, where she began her family medicine residency in 1998. Rex “crossed over to the dark side” and started working for the United States Air Force with the 55th Civil Engineering Squadron. During that time, he also served as a lieutenant with the North Omaha Civil Air Patrol squadron, encouraging underrepresented children to consider careers in aviation and the Air Force. Additionally, he led youth groups on skiing and mountaineering trips in Colorado. No wonder he was known as "Reximum"!

Just before 9/11, Rex and Heather were blessed to move to Ramstein AFB in Germany, where he worked with the 735th CE Squadron. Despite the challenges of the Iraqi War, which required Heather to deploy downrange, they enjoyed three fantastic years traveling throughout Europe—skiing the French, Italian, Swiss, German, and Austrian Alps with the Tannenbaum Ski Club, backpacking in the Swiss Alps, and, of course, getting some custom lederhosen!

While in Germany, Rex received numerous local, regional, and USAF awards, including the National Department of Energy Award and the Civilian of the Year Award for his work in energy engineering. He collaborated closely with Siemens International, who wanted to hire him to remain in Germany, but he selflessly followed Heather to Scott AFB, where she became a family medicine residency professor.

After seven years of prayer, the Lord blessed Rex and Heather with beautiful twins, Aiden and Brenna. He made the decision to retire after 20 years in the U.S. Civil Service, stepping away from his full-time engineering career to stay home and be the best dad he could be while Heather served in the Air Force. During the twins’ first year, Rex took them to see Heather every day—whether it was in labor and delivery, the ICU, or the clinic—so she could feed them. Everyone loved seeing Rex navigate the halls of the hospital or clinic with the twin stroller, looking for his lovely wife so they could have lunch together.

In 2008, they moved to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, where Rex once again supported Heather as she helped establish the Nellis Air Force Base Family Medicine Residency. During this time, he was right by her side, helping raise the kids and introducing them to all the joys of desert living. Heather would routinely call to check in, only to learn that Rex had taken the toddler twins out to explore Nevada’s beautiful desert. Whether climbing rock faces, wandering through the woods, or toughening their feet by walking barefoot on hot rocks, Rex believed children should get outside and have adventures early on, and he cherished the freedom to facilitate that.

Drawing on his Eagle Scout experience, Rex became a Cub and Boy Scoutmaster, leading numerous camping trips across the West. He gained a reputation in the troop and at church for his delicious mountain man breakfasts and thrilling firebombs. Most notorious for the latter, he would pour the oil leftover from cooking over the campfire using a 15-foot pole, watching as flames shot up 20 feet into the air. This and many other stunts earned him the title of “Cool” Cub Scout leader in the group. He also served as a deacon at Citywide Redeemer Church and fulfilled

one of his dreams by becoming a ski patroller at the Las Vegas Ski and Snowboard Resort.

Heather retired from the Air Force in 2013 with Rex by her side. They remained in Las Vegas for five more years while he devoted himself to raising their children during their most formative years. When Heather received a job offer in Utah, he faithfully followed her once again in 2018. They joked that she let him pick the house since he had supported her throughout her career. God blessed them with a true outdoorsman's home, complete with eight garages for multiple campers, trailers, toys, tools, and all things adventurous!

Taking full advantage of the Utah mountains and the "greatest snow on Earth," Rex became a Snowbasin Ski Patroller, where he worked for the last six years, serving the community and helping set up a new clinic on site. He also rekindled his passion for backcountry skiing with his son, Aiden, teaching him how to stay safe in the mountains.

Rex was heavily involved with his children, their friends, and many extracurricular activities at Intermountain Christian School (ICS). He was the ultimate volleyball and baseball dad, recording every play his kids participated in so they could review them later. He made significant contributions to Brenna’s theater productions; before each play, he could often be found engineering sets in his garage, much to his wife's dismay. His impact on the ICS theater department is still felt today, particularly in the theater shed. He was a wonderful “American Papa” to Kayla Tran, their international Vietnamese student for 18 months, introducing her to the joys of the state they loved.

During their marriage, Rex and Heather participated in numerous Christian medical missions to Mexico (3), Haiti (6), Honduran prisons, Costa Rica, Ecuador, and the Dominican Republic. Rex was consistently the MVP of every mission, thanks to his engineering skills, spiritual leadership, and medical expertise. He felt a special connection to Haiti, having traveled there frequently to help establish water systems and engineering projects aimed at preventing flooding in orphanages. This dedication stemmed from his selfless, servant-oriented lifestyle—a trait he demonstrated throughout his life. Rex served as a deacon at both City-Wide Redeemer Church in Las Vegas, Nevada and Corner Canyon Church in Draper, Utah. At the time of his death, he was an elder at Corner Canyon Church, overseeing a troop of Boy Scouts who were helping the church install a new floor - an actual Eagle Scout project!

He further pursued his passion for amateur radio, amassing a large collection of radios and consistently using them during field days. As an aviation enthusiast, he served as a pit crew member for the Reno Air Races for three years, deepening his love for aviation. He honed his mountain biking skills with a real bike—not his 80s Alaskan Pegasus with no suspension. On his 61st birthday, Rex hiked 14 miles round trip, alone, up the Trail of the Eagle behind his house on a whim. In July 2024, the entire Pickett family became certified as advanced open water divers, and Rex was already planning a trip to the Red Sea. A true renaissance man, he fell in love with Utah, even though it wasn't Alaska, and enjoyed the outdoor playground it offered with his family.

Rex and Heather celebrated 27 years of marriage last month, and he was so proud to see Aiden and Brenna graduate from Intermountain Christian School in 2024 and begin their college journeys at the University of Utah and Pepperdine University, respectively. Never one to be idle, Rex had plans to start working as a project manager for a Christian construction ministry in Utah County. A consummate patriot, he held great respect for his country and its flag. Just last month, he participated in Pepperdine’s annual 9/11 Memorial 'Waves of Flags' event, raising 2,977 flags in honor of each person lost on 9/11.

On Tuesday, October 1, 2024, Rex woke up early for a mountain bike ride to experience the creation he so dearly loved. Afterward, with Heather by his side, he took his final swing with a 220-yard 5-iron using his new custom golf clubs. He immediately called Aiden, who was incredibly proud! Rex was working on his truck, planning a hunting trip for himself and Aiden, and getting ready to see a play that night with his lovely wife. Yet, in God's perfect timing, Rex was ushered into his ultimate adventure—face-to-face with Jesus Christ. We believe he was greeted with Matthew 25:21: “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”

Rex is survived by his wife, Heather; his son, Aiden; and his daughter, Brenna. He is also survived by his mother, Patricia Saxon; his brothers, Eric Pickett and Clark Pickett (Jim); and his sisters, Lynda Lameh (Pier) and Sharon Pickett. Additionally, Rex is survived by his two faithful dogs, Penn and Carma. He was preceded in death by his

father, Hal Pickett.

Services celebrating the life of Rex Eugene Pickett are scheduled for Thursday, October 10, 2024, at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E. 10600 S., Sandy, UT. Family and friends are invited to gather for visitation starting at 10:00 a.m. Rex's brother-n-law, Scott Viesselman, will officiate the Memorial Service at 11:00 a.m. A graveside service will take place at noon with Pastor Phillip Glassmeyer. In honor of Rex's legacy, memorial contributions may be made to cfhaiti.org, the organization through which he ministered in Haiti.

A luncheon will be held following the service at The Chateau at Le Jardin, 1910 E 10600 S, Sandy from 1:00-3:00PM

Those wishing to view the COMPLETED service via Zoom can click "Watch Service" or follow the link: https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/RGeZymZyAid0p7ATbj1tDloe0FNPpHnCukwvFJb3eGyCPK-l0Atbhw4bB6I9aS2K.xMb