

Richard Ernest Cook

September 7, 1930 ~ May 1, 2024

Our beloved husband, father, grandfather and friend, Richard Ernest Cook, passed away at his home in Salt Lake City on Wednesday, May 1, 2024. Richard was born on September 7, 1930, to Ernest William Cook and Clara Blackhurst, at his maternal grandparents' home in Pleasant Grove, Utah, and spent the first 11 years of his life in rural Cedar Fort, Utah. He was the eldest of two sons. His younger brother, Gerald, joined the family eight years later.

Richard took great pride in the fact that he was raised in Cedar Fort, near many cousins and aunts and uncles. He said, "It was a wonderful place to live." His father taught him how to ride a horse, set traps and develop his life-long love of hunting. He also taught Richard how to work and to always be honest. His mother was a school teacher, and Richard often remarked that, "School began when I came home and was taught by my mother." He described her as "very loving and kind," and credited her for instilling in him a love for the gospel of Jesus Christ and learning.

Richard started his formal education in a two-room schoolhouse in Cedar Fort. There were three other classmates in his grade. He enjoyed listening to the lessons taught to the older children when he had finished his own work. Education became a priority for Richard, and he graduated from American Fork High School as the "Representative Boy," was valedictorian of his class at Brigham Young University, and top of his class in Naval Officer Candidate School.

During his junior year at Brigham Young University, on September 13, 1950, Richard married his high school sweetheart, Clea Searle, in the Salt Lake Temple. The Cooks soon became proud "Michiganders," eventually settling in Michigan after five years in California, and raising their four children, Susan, Janalee, Sharon and Richard in Livonia and Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Richard had a great love for the United States of America. After completing his Bachelor of Science degree in accounting at BYU in 1952, Richard served for three years in the Navy during the Korean Conflict as the Communications Officer on the destroyer USS Doyle. Following his honorable discharge from the Navy, he finished an MBA at Northwestern University in 1957, and began a 35-year career with Ford Motor Company. He retired from Ford in 1992 as the company's General Assistant Controller. He loved Ford, and often said, "There wasn't a day that I didn't enjoy going to work."

In 1984, Clea passed away following a two-year battle with cancer. Four years later, on July 16, 1988, Richard married Mary Nielsen in the Salt Lake Temple.

In 1994, Richard and Mary accepted a call from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to serve as humanitarian missionaries in Mongolia, where Richard worked with the Minister of Finance and Mary taught Special Education at The Teachers College. About a year into their mission, he was called as the first mission president of

the newly created Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission of the Church.

Richard served faithfully in many capacities in the Church, including stake presidency counselor, bishop, stake mission president, stake Young Men president, missionary, and teacher. In 1997, he was called to serve as a General Authority Seventy of the Church. He was a member of the Presidency of the Asia Area from 1997 to 2001. After his release as a Seventy in 2001, Richard and Elder John K. Carmack, Emeritus Seventy, were called by Church President Gordon B. Hinckley to help establish the Church's Perpetual Education Fund. Richard served as Chief Financial Officer of the Fund from 2001 to 2012.

On October 13, 2023, the President of Mongolia awarded him the Order of the Polar Star presented in a special ceremony by His Excellency Batbayar Ulziidelger, Ambassador to the United States from Mongolia. The Order of the Polar Star is Mongolia's highest honor given to a foreign citizen. The award was given to Richard for his service to the people of Mongolia, where he assisted in updating the country's accounting standards to meet international financial standards, and for his efforts to establish the Richard E. Cook Mongolian Educational Endowment at BYU-Hawaii, providing scholarships for hundreds of young adults from Mongolia to study at the university.

Throughout his life, Richard cared for and mentored many people. He expressed love freely, demanded and rewarded best efforts and hard work, and was generous with his time and resources, often privately and anonymously. He was a three-time cancer survivor, receiving excellent care from the physicians and staff at Huntsman Cancer Institute. He loved to ski, play golf, tennis and gin, and was physically active until the final days of his life. His favorite activity was spending time with his family.

Richard loved the gospel of Jesus Christ and often testified of its truth. In his words, "The gospel works! I have experienced how sweet and precious the gospel is and I couldn't live a day without it. I pray that my own children will always understand the importance of the gospel and that they will raise their children in the Light of Christ."

Richard is survived by his wife, Mary, his brother Gerald (Shirley) Cook, his four children, Susan Pinegar (Kevin), Janalee Leavitt (Kent), Sharon Williams (Richard) and Richard William Cook (Kelly), as well as 17 grandchildren, and 34 great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents and his first wife, Clea.

A public viewing will be held on Friday, May 10, 2024, from 6:00-8:00 pm, and Saturday, May 11, 2024, from 9:30 to 10:45 am. A funeral service will follow the viewing on May 11, 2024, beginning at 11:00 am. Both viewings and the funeral services will be held at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Monument Park Stake Center, 1320 South Wasatch Drive, Salt Lake City, Utah. Interment will be in the American Fork Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a contribution to Richard E. Cook Mongolian Educational Endowment of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at https://donate.churchofjesuschrist.org/contribute, account number 30287033.

You may watch a recording of the service by clicking the "Watch Services" button above.