

Richard J. Carling

December 6, 1937 ~ April 30, 2024

Richard Junius Carling, age 86, crossed his final finish line on April 30, 2024, passing away peacefully in Salt Lake City, Utah, surrounded by his beloved family.

Born on December 6, 1937, in Salt Lake City, Utah, to Jacob Junius Carling and Reba Olsen Carling, Richard was the eldest of three children. In his early life, he lived in several locations, including Fillmore, Provo, and Monroe, Utah; Rupert, Idaho; San Francisco, California; and Fryeburg, Maine. Eventually, his family settled in the St. Mary's Park area of Salt Lake City, where he graduated from East High School in 1956.

Two days after returning from a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Southern Australia, Richard met Diane Saxey during a skiing trip at Brighton Ski Resort. From that day forward, Richard and Diane met every day for lunch at the University of Utah library, attended events like the Gold and Green Ball, and went on countless adventures. One evening, Richard asked Diane if she would like to go for a drive with him to fill up his car. They drove around for several hours talking and laughing until the tank was close to empty. As promised, he filled up the tank and took her home. He always found creative ways to spend time with Diane. In the summer of 1961, Richard and Diane were married in the Salt Lake Temple, marking the beginning of a union that would span over 62 years.

His family was the central focus and most important part of his life. Every evening, he could be found sitting on the sofa with Diane enjoying his "small dish of ice cream." Although it was in a small dish, the ice cream was stacked at least 5 inches tall. He was known for his fondness for "Cola Berry," a self-described health drink (also known as Coke Zero).

He loved spending time with his kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids. Richard was so much fun! He actively participated in each of his kids' lives. He attended all school and extracurricular events, always first to offer congratulations on a job well done. He was their biggest cheerleader. He loved the outdoors, including camping with the family at Payson Lake, visiting Yellowstone, and fishing trips in the High Uintahs and Shoshone Lake.

The grandkids adored Grandpa Richard. He made sure each of them felt seen, heard, and loved. He supported them at school, in their artistic endeavors, and sporting events. He and Diane took each of the grandkids to nights filled with laughter at Desert Star Playhouse where pizza and ice cream were an honored tradition.

Every 24th of July, the grandkids would meet him during the last block of the Deseret News Marathon, holding his hands and running with him across the finish line. As they got older, several of the grandkids joined in and ran the 5K or 10K races that day as well. Diane would always be waiting at the finish line with a chair and liter of Coke Zero. Following the Deseret News Marathon on the 24th of July, Grandpa Richard was always ready (and still had energy) for water fights in the backyard. He loved his family and was happiest when they were all together and

having fun. Grandpa knew how to make everyone feel special.

As the family grew, Richard became an adoring great-grandfather to his five great-grandkids. He loved laughing with them and could always be counted on to have a bowl of candy just for them when they came for a visit.

As with everything in Richard’s life, his career was defined by a commitment to excellence and service. After completing his Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science in 1962, and his Juris Doctor from the University of Utah College of Law in 1965, he started his own law practice, where he worked until his retirement at the age of 82 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March of 2020.

In 1967, Richard began his political career, following recruitment from local Republican Party leaders. He won his first election at the age of 27, just one year out of law school. He served in the Utah State Legislature for 23 years (1967-1990), including 7 years in the House of Representatives and 16 years in the Senate. He had a special passion for shaping policies that significantly improved education, transportation, and public safety across Utah. Richard held several influential positions, including serving as the chairman of the Higher Education Appropriations Committee. In this role, he was pivotal in steering legislative reforms that directly benefited the educational landscape in Utah.

Richard held profound respect and deep affection for the Utah Highway Patrol, recognizing not only the important role they play in our community but also the courage and integrity of the individual Troopers. To him, the Highway Patrol and the Troopers were family. He often greeted them by name and loved talking with them wherever he encountered them. His concern for their safety was genuine and heartfelt. His admiration for them was unmistakable. During his time in the Senate, Richard worked tirelessly to support law enforcement initiatives and champion measures aimed at improving highway safety and enhancing the support for the Troopers. He was a steadfast advocate, always eager to hear their stories and ensure their well-being. He loved spending time with them and cherished his time serving on the Honorary Colonels.

Post-legislature, he chaired the Commission of Criminal and Juvenile Justice for eight years and served as vice chairman of the ethics committee for the 2002 Winter Olympics. His civic dedication extended to 25 years on the Primary Children’s Hospital Governing Board and advisory roles at the U of U College of Nursing. Richard was instrumental in founding the Honorary Colonels, supporting the Utah Highway Patrol for over 33 years. He also served the University of Utah Alumni Association and Emeritus Board with distinction.

At the age of 39, following a health scare on the floor of the Senate, Richard took up running, which soon turned into a passion for marathons. Over his lifetime, he completed more than 175 marathons, including 39 consecutive Boston Marathons and 45 entries in the St. George Marathon. His personal best marathon time of 2:32:21 in 1982 at the St. George Marathon remains a highlight of his athletic career.

Richard's presence in City Creek Canyon transcended running; he became a legendary figure whose spirit and dedication left an unforgettable mark on the local running community. His uplifting presence, friendly demeanor, and genuine kindness endeared him to all who ran alongside him. Whether it was offering words of encouragement to struggling beginners or sharing training tips with seasoned veterans, Richard's generosity of spirit touched the lives of countless runners and left a legacy that continues to inspire to this day. His unwavering commitment to his daily runs through the canyon during lunch, and long runs on Saturday mornings, earned him a legendary status among fellow runners. His determined stride and contagious enthusiasm inspired all those who crossed his path. He was an evangelist for running, successfully convincing many novice runners to register for and complete a marathon.

Richard was a dedicated member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. One of his favorite callings was serving as the chapter advisor for the Sigma Gamma Chi POGO Chapter at the University of Utah. For over 9 years, Richard seamlessly blended the roles of mentor and friend. He had a remarkable ability to connect with the members on a personal level, making them feel valued and understood. He was known for his enthusiasm, always ready to participate in the chapter's lively activities and traditions. Richard effortlessly integrated himself into the fraternity's dynamic as "one of the guys,” earning him the admiration, respect, and affection of its members.

Richard and Diane loved to travel and made friends wherever they went. Whatever the destination, Richard would find a race to run while he was there. They loved visiting new cities (and running new races), as well as some

annual pilgrimages including Boston every spring, St. George in the fall, and Hawaii every winter (aka - The Boston Marathon, St. George Marathon, and Honolulu Marathon). They loved spending time in Hawaii, especially Maui, where he could be found running “an easy seven up Kaanapali” in the early hours of the morning.

Richard and Diane were avid fans of the University of Utah, holding season tickets to football and basketball. Family outings and events were only scheduled after checking the game calendar. In their neighborhood, Richard and Diane formed lifelong friendships. Living in the same house for over five decades, Richard was a familiar and beloved figure. Known for his enthusiasm and charisma, he was often seen talking with neighbors while gardening with Diane in the evenings. He exemplified the spirit of community, readily turning neighbors into lifelong friends with his warm and engaging personality.

Richard is survived by his four children: Angie Meyers (Mike), Cindy Carling Cowley (Michael), Teresa Carling Jones, and Douglas Carling (Kellie); 11 grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; and his siblings, DeeAnn Robinson (Clark, deceased) and Mike Carling (Sallie Cheatham Cutler). He was preceded in death by his wife, Diane Saxey Carling, and his parents, Jacob Junius Carling and Reba Olsen Carling Aldous.

Funeral services for Richard will be held at the Crestview Ward, 2795 East Crestview Drive in Salt Lake City, on Saturday, May 11, at 12:00 p.m. Viewings will be held on Friday evening, May 10, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Larkin Sunset Lawn Mortuary, 2350 East 1300 South, Salt Lake City, and Saturday beginning at 10:30 a.m. at the Crestview Ward. The service will be livestreamed via Zoom and can be accessed by clicking the "Watch Services" button above.

Over 175 Marathons including:
Boston Marathon: Completed 39 times consecutively, Boston Marathon Quarter Century Club, Ranked 8th in the number of consecutive Bostons in 2017, only 21 people have run more Boston Marathons than Richard as of December 2023
St. George Marathon: 45 times, inducted into the St. George Marathon Road of Honor, Top 10 finisher 1982, Legend of the St. George Marathon 2011
Honolulu Marathon: 37 times
Deseret News Marathon: 40 times
Best Marathon Time: 2:32:21

Senate Committees
Chairman: Higher Education Appropriations
Chairman: Business and Labor Interim Committee
Member: Transportation and Public Safety Committee
Member: Business, Labor, and Economic Development Standing Committee
Member: Judiciary Committee
Member: State and Local Affairs Committee

Civic Memberships
Member and former Chairman Utah Highway Patrol Honorary Colonels Association
Member University of Utah Emeritus Alumni Association Board 2009 – 2012
Member Deseret Morning News Marathon Committee
Member Primary Children’s Medical Center Board of Trustees 1982 – 2009
Chairman Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice 1990 – 1999
Vice-Chairman Ethics Committee – Salt Lake Olympic Committee 1999 – 2002
Trustee American Heart Association – Utah Affiliate
Chairman Utah Heart Association Walk-A-Thon 1993
Member Sons of Utah Pioneers
Co-Chairman Utah Traffic Law Enforcement Task Force
Chairman Utah State Bar Collection Practices Task Force
Member University of Utah Alumni Association Board
Member University of Utah College of Health Development Board

Member University of Utah College of Nursing Advisory Board
Member, past president, Bonneville Knife and Fork Club
Chairman Utah Juvenile Justice Subcommittee
Boy Scouts of America – Former Explorer Advisor and Cub Master
2nd District Juvenile Court Advisory Council
Utah Non-Game Wildlife Advisory Board
Director Community Services Council
Director Travelers Aid Society
Director Community Action Program
Co-Chairman Alcohol Beverage Review Task Force
Selected as one of ten US Delegates to NATO Conference of American Council of Young Political Leaders held in Europe 1967
Participant Rutgers University Eagleton Institute on Improvement of State Legislatures 1969 (one of 50 from the United States that were invited to participate)
Member Douglas School Community Council; Member Indian Hills Community Council
Area Advisor Sigma Gamma Chi / Chapter Advisor 9+ years

Community Awards
Legislator of the Year Award
Honorary Peace Officer Award
Selected one of the ten outstanding legislators in the US
Outstanding Legislator of the Year – University of Utah – ASUU
National Grocers Association “Spirit of America” Award
Service to Nursing Award
Friend of Physical Therapy Award
Commissioners Award – Department of Public Safety
Utah Psychological Association Legislative Award
Support of Law Enforcement Award – Utah Chiefs of Police Association
Utah Therapeutic Recreation Association Award
Utah Association for Marriage and Family Therapy Award
Support of Law Enforcement Award – Utah Peace Officers Association
Utah Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation Certificate of Appreciation
Utah Highway Patrol – Honorary Colonel of Excellence Award
Selected University of Utah Emeritus Alumni Association Merit of Honor Award recipient – 2008
Utah Highway Patrol – Larry Orton Service Award to Utah Highway Patrol