

Richard Wayne Birrell

August 12, 1936 ~ November 2, 2025

Richard Wayne Birrell, 89, passed away peacefully in his home surrounded by family on Sunday, November 2, 2025, following a life of dedicated service to his community, country, and church and of love and commitment to his family. Richard was born on August 12, 1936, in Salt Lake City, Utah, the youngest child of Don Alexander Birrell and Merva Arlene Gallacher. Although he lived in various parts of Salt Lake as a child, he has always called Salt Lake home. After graduating from East High School, Richard attended the University of Utah for two years before accepting a call to serve in the Eastern States Mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and New York, and particularly enjoying time spent in Palmyra and his participation in the Hill Cumorah Pageant. Upon completing his mission, he continued his schooling at the University of Utah, where he served on the Student Senate, eventually becoming Senate President, and participated on the debate team, later becoming an assistant coach and traveling with the team for many years. He majored in history with a minor in philosophy, receiving his bachelor’s degree in 1960. He then went on to receive a law degree from the University of Utah, having been privileged to learn from gifted professors and mentors throughout his college career, including Neal A. Maxwell, Wallace Bennett, and Lowell Bennion. Richard was a member of the Beehive Honor Society at the University of Utah, and eventually served both on its board and as its president. During the summers after his first and second years of law school, Richard worked for an insurance company in Yellowstone National Park, living in the Mammoth Hotel and driving the park in a company car, visiting the various hotel facilities and eating in the different hotel dining rooms, a rewarding and memorable job and opportunity. A member of the Utah National Guard during his college and law school years, Richard spent nine months at Fort Hood in Texas prior to his third year of law school, thereby graduating a year later than planned. Although fearful that the break would affect his grades and performance on the bar exam, he could boast (although he rarely did) the highest score on that year’s exam. After passing the bar, Richard embarked on a career as a civil servant with the juvenile court, first as a parole officer, then a referee, and finally as a commissioner in the juvenile court system, hearing hundreds of thousands of cases in his 33 plus years serving in that capacity. Although much of his caseload revolved around routine offenses such as speeding, shoplifting, trespassing, and truancy, he was also entrusted with the child protective custody hearings for the court. His wisdom, compassion, and understanding were of paramount

importance in his role with both young children and teens in the various hearings over which he presided. Throughout his career, he worked to improve the juvenile court system, implementing time saving measures, creating a non-profit organization to raise and disburse funds for needed court programs, helping to establish a restitution work and truancy programs, working with the alcohol policy coalition, and serving on the Utah mediation board of directors. A respected member of the juvenile court community, Richard received numerous awards and made a lasting impact on not only the juvenile court itself but the lives of the thousands of people who appeared before him. A few years into his career with the court, Richard began dating his future wife, Dorothy Jean Foulger. Richard and Dorothy first met at a ward activity when they were in their early teens. Years later while they were serving together with their ward's Young Men and Young Women, they began dating and were eventually married in the Salt Lake Temple on November 17, 1967. Thereafter, their home became a gathering place for their extended families, with Richard always willing to open his home to family. Richard was a devoted and caring husband, sharing faith, fun, loss, challenge, and good times with his wonderful wife. He was a loving father to his three children and a generous grandfather, spending much of his time caring for and supporting his grandsons. Richard had a strong testimony of the gospel and loved to talk about the church. His service to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints reflected his commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ. During his life he faithfully served in a number of church callings, including ward Young Men's President, stake mission leader, high counselor, High Priest group leader, and Sunday school teacher. Out of all of his callings, teaching was always his favorite. Richard served as a docent at The Church History Museum for many years and cherished the opportunity to share deep love for Church history with visitors to the museum. Above all, however, Richard loved the temple. He served as a temple worker in the Salt Lake temple for many years and for the last several years of his life spent most of his time serving in the temple. Richard enjoyed a variety of interests and pursuits. He particularly liked opera, reading, bald eagles, Abraham Lincoln, taking walks with Dorothy, and spending time with family at Bryce Canyon, Yellowstone, Snowbird, and Midway. He loved a good road trip and took his family on many adventures all across the country. One of his favorite memories involved an experience shortly after graduating from law school in which he and a friend took a group of students from Japan on a study tour of the United States, covering some 6,000 miles in about 30 days. During his life, Richard faced health challenges, family struggles, and premature loss of friends and family members, in addition to seeing plenty of hardship and pain through his work at the court. Yet he remained cheerful and optimistic, seldom complaining, with a ready smile and friendly conversation, always seeing the good in people. He was consistent, kind, moderate, dependable, and true to himself and his beliefs. Generous to a fault, he loved to help people and never hesitated to respond to someone's need, quietly giving of his time, money, and resources, reaching out with love to family, friends, and strangers alike. Throughout his life, he volunteered with various organizations, generously donated to multiple charities, and tirelessly supported and sustained family members. His life truly touched so many. Richard is survived by his sons Kenneth Birrell (Melinda) and Douglas Birrell (Heather), grandsons Taylor Thorpe (Lexi) and Ashton Thorpe, granddaughters Eliza, Emily, Lillian and Savannah, and great-grandson son Maverik. He is preceded in death by his wife Dorothy, daughter Cynthia Thorpe, son-in-law Christopher Thorpe, grandson Corbin Crusan and sisters Barbara Webb and Marilyn Ohlsen. There will be a viewing on November 7, 2025 from 6-8 p.m at the LDS chapel located at 2245 East 3900 South. A private family graveside service will be held on November 8, 2025 prior to internment at Wasatch Lawn Memorial Park.