

Steven H. Rich Sr.

April 21, 1950 ~ January 11, 2026

Steven H. Rich Sr. passed away on Sunday, January 11, 2026 surrounded by songs and loved ones at St. Mark's Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah. Born on April 21, 1950 to John Perry Rich Sr and Effie Dean Bowman Rich. Steve loved his siblings, parents, grandparents, and cousins. He had what he called "dual citizenship": a regimented and rules based school year in Salt Lake City and wild summers cowboying on the Paria Plateau, adventuring through the Kaibab Forest, and working at Jacob Lake Inn with his siblings and cousins near the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. His artistic talents started early and he learned to draw in great detail. Steve loved the outdoors and sports, and learned at age 12, after his heart stopped while running in gym class, that "nothing normal ever happens to me." Steve attended East High School where he was a State Champion wrestler and lettered in the shot put and football. He also drew cartoons for the Leopard, and was student body Vice President his senior year with Rick Evans. He made many lifelong friends (too many to list) in school and formed a gospel study group his junior year that has continued to this day. Steve met his dear wife, Melinda, when they were in high school and their courtship was full of laughter and fun.

Steve served an LDS mission in the London England East Mission. He had a sincere love for those he taught and his conviction in the truth of the Gospel brought positive change to their lives. He left England with a deep desire to do what's right and set a good example for others. After his mission, he and Melinda began dating again, and they were married on January 17, 1973 in the Salt Lake Temple. Steve took business and art classes at the University of Utah before joining the family business at Jacob Lake Inn. Steve helped to build the Inn's reputation for delicious food with classic recipes like Kaibab Jagersnitzel and the Grand Bull among others. He loved working with his siblings to teach employees great life skills and felt "if you are not having fun, you're not doing it right." He also continued his love of art by making bronze sculptures with his brother in law, Walt, and sketching wildlife. While working at Jacob Lake, he also deepened his love for ranching. This led to many treasured memories with his kids and nieces and nephews branding cattle, hunting rabbits, fixing fences, and doing the round-up.

Steve was a beloved father, and he created many adventures with his children. Each night he would imagine stories to tell with characters like Zippity Zoomer, Snakey, the Old Prospector, Snabs, Bucko the Dragon, and Bubby Magic. He also shared many of these stories with his nieces and nephews. Family trips were full of fishing at Panguitch Lake, Asee Creek, pizza and rootbeer at the Downstream Deli in Kanab, or spring breaks exploring the beautiful Vermillion Cliffs with those he loved. Steve loved stories and introduced his children to classics with audiobooks like Treasure Island, The Hobbit, The Lord Of the Rings or playing Dungeons & Dragons in the car with him as the Dungeon Master as he drove between Jacob Lake to Salt Lake CIty. He supported his children at games, concerts, cooked "minner," and took the time to help them learn and grow individually. He felt great pride in their accomplishments, intelligence, and kindness.

Steve's love of ranching and creating landscapes that were alive led him into the sphere of Holistic Resource Management. He loved how managing animals to produce healthy, biodiverse landscapes brought healing to the land and the communities that surrounded it. This confirmed gospel principles and he used these land insights to inform his faith. When asked why he stopped pursuing art and moved into ranch consulting, he said it left like he was still creating, just working on a much larger and more meaningful level. Steve and his ragtag group of grass loving mavericks spread principles across the West that have gone mainstream and are known as Regenerative Agriculture. Many lives were indelibly marked by being in relationship with Steve and his friends and he took immense pride in seeing their work finally recognized. Millions of acres of land were improved, streams restored, watersheds stabilized, and grasslands brought back to thriving. His heart condition progressed at this time and he had to step away from his beloved Jacob Lake Inn. As his consulting practice grew, he took his Lincoln Town Car to places it was never intended to go. His growing reputation led to many opportunities to write heavily researched scientific articles in Range magazine designed to rebut prevailing theories on range management. He worked with senators and congressmen and testified before government committees to push for legislative changes and influence policy toward regenerative principles in Washington D.C. He was always proud that the LDS church ranching system adopted regenerative principles. Because he saw no divide between Holistic management, art, and religion, he hosted a yearly seminar at the Deseret Ranch with his friend, Adrian Pulfer and the BYU graphic design program about connections between the three.

As his heart failure progressed physical health declined, he invested mental energy into the connectedness of all things. Holistic Management taught him to see connections between the plants, animals, earth, water, soil, and the human community around them. He took that skill and found deep insightful connections between gospel principles, range management, interpersonal interactions, art, science, and the universe at large. Once he had discovered something, it was impossible to stop him from sharing it with you. This carried over into his church service. He was known as an excellent teacher of gospel doctrine, he led insightful discussions as High Priest Group Leader, and even got 16 year olds to pay attention and engage in his lessons. He always approached teaching with creativity and humor.

He loved his grandchildren. He took joy in drawing pictures for them, and was happily at every football and basketball game, soccer tournament, or a tennis match cheering them on. He went to gymnastics practice, piano recitals, dance performances and other types of events. He "Grandpa Bragged" on every one of his grandchildren on social media. He loved doing Jedi exercises, telling stories about Scary Larry and his mean sister Edna, Zippity Zoomer, Star Wars adventures, and others. He went to every baptism and meaningful moment that he could attend. Being a Grandpa was one of the great joys of his life.

Over the years, Steve was moved to write poetry that was much inspired by Pam Ayres, Shel Silverstein and the like. He wrote a christmas poem with his sister Mary Lynne and many other poems for his children's missions and nieces and nephews over the years. Especially of note is the poem that he wrote about the Savior called "His Beautiful Son" that he passed out to many people with his pancake batter and Mom's mint brownies at Christmas time. An accompaniment was written for the poem and now it is a song.

Steve experienced much medical drama which he would term adversity due to his progressive heart failure and the falls and trauma from the stroke which occurred in 2008. The stroke caused him immense hardship as he was forced to relearn math which he desperately needed to continue his consulting jobs and write the scientific articles for Range magazine. He had a fall in May of 2020 which dramatically changed his life causing semi-paralysis and taking away his ability to walk. Steve rallied and through the efforts of the nurses and therapists at Rocky Mountain Care Center and Melinda's love and care he was able to become mobile and experience his great joys again: family, friends, food, and car trips with Melinda. She dedicated the past five and a half years of her life to making sure Steve was active, seen, present and involved in the lives of his family and friends. Nobody in his care center got broken out of "hospital jail" more than he did. We are so grateful for those special care givers who lovingly helped to give us those extra years.

On December 30, 2025, Steve and Melinda were in a car accident where Steve sustained many major injuries. Ultimately, he made the decision to go on hospice. His life ended peacefully surrounded by the songs of a grateful family filled with love and peace for his life and the choices that he made. He showed what it is to love and create

life and persevere to the end.

Steve is preceded in death by his parents John P. Rich Sr and Effie Dean Bowman Rich and brother, John P Rich Jr. He is survived by his loving wife of 53 years, Melinda Snow Rich; his children Steven H. Rich Jr. (Melissa), Burke M. Rich (Liz), Benjamin J. Rich (Susan), Melinda R. Marshall (Mikel) and Robert L. Rich (Natalya); his grandchildren, Kate, Jacob, Luke, Claire, John, Daniel, MaryJane, Ellen, Sarah Kate, Parker, Gwyneth and Ella Rose; his siblings Bonnie Howard, Kristi Rich, Nina (Grant) Taylor, Christopher (Mary Frances) Rich, Mary Lynne (Bryan) Jensen and Matt (Shayne) Rich. He is also survived by wonderful in-laws as well as beloved nieces and nephews, and many dear friends and ward members.

There will be a viewing in Salt Lake on Friday, January 16, evening from 6-8pm at Larkin Sunset Lawn (2350 E 1300 S in Salt Lake City, UT). The funeral will be at his ward in Stansbury Park (5369 N Stallion Way) on Saturday, January 17, at 11:00am. There will be a viewing from 9:30am-10:30am. Interment will be at Larkin Sunset Lawn at 3pm.