

Thomas Jonathan Kearl

January 11, 1962 ~ February 9, 2026

Thomas Jonathan Kearl, 64, of Salt Lake City, Utah, passed away on February 9, 2026, at the end of his long, courageous battle with COVID-19. Over the last five years, Thom endured a double lung transplant, countless other procedures, and endless complications because he was “all in” to stay with his family for as long as possible. Through it all, Thom was often called the “Miracle Man,” but he always insisted Jesus Christ was the miracle and he was "just Thom Kearl." “Tommy” was born January 11, 1962, in Salt Lake City to Clayton James and Betty Loraine Ford Kearl, the youngest of seven children. He was his dad's "forever pal," and his mom's “little buddy." He was spoiled and adored by his older brothers and sisters, and he adored them in return. The influence of his older siblings was felt throughout his life; he was in a rush to grow up and catch up to them, and yet he remained a child at heart through the end. And when he became an uncle at age 6, Thom also became a favorite of his nieces and nephews. Thom grew up learning the values that would define his life: integrity, hard work, and compassion. He was proud to have been raised in Salt Lake’s Liberty Wells neighborhood and the Belvedere 2nd Ward, always remembering that special time and place. And he cherished memories of his childhood at the family cabin in Silver Fork, Lake Powell trips, skiing with cousins, Bear Lake adventures, and going on family road trips. Thom often talked about his "Golden Years" as a South High Cub. A jack-of-all-trades even then, he was good at pretty much anything he tried: He was a natural athlete and played basketball and football and ran track. He sang in Bel Canto. He served in the Key Club and Rotary Club. And outside of school, Thom excelled in his many jobs. Thom had his close-knit group of childhood friends–they did everything together. But Thom was also a friend to all. He often showed his love (and showed off his biceps) by inviting people to sit down for a friendly arm wrestle, a practice he maintained throughout his life. He graduated from South High School in 1980, spending his senior year as a Rotary International Exchange Student attending the University of the Philippines Manila. Foreshadowing his lifelong love of missionary work, Thom was ordained an Elder before leaving for the Philippines. After he returned home, he served a faithful mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the Massachusetts Boston Mission. Thom met his eternal companion, Nanette Riddle, while they were attending the University of Utah. Thom almost instantly became a member of the Riddle family and loved them as his own. Thom and Nanette were sealed for time and all eternity in the Salt Lake Temple on Flag Day, June 14, 1984. President Thomas S. Monson performed the sealing and admonished Thom and Nanette to pray together every day. They did. Even if he had to make a phone call from

halfway around the world, Thom made sure he ended each day in prayer with his sweetheart. To those who knew him best, Thom was the "ultimate optimist" and a "dreamer." Thom was a hardworking man with a vision, and this was reflected in his diverse career. He made his mark in many industries including wholesale items, video games, textiles, motors, furniture, and land development. Thom took great pride in his work, not for the accolades, but because he wanted to give his family everything he could. And in whatever field he was working, Thom's favorite part of his work was always meeting new people and helping them how he could. He possessed a fun, playful side that made him instantly approachable. Thom's largeness of spirit was also manifest in his love of music. Music was a constant in Thom's life. His amazing voice carried him from age three to the very end—whether he was singing, narrating, or conversing on radio and TV. Early on, Thom's parents and siblings instilled in him an "oldies" taste in music. But he loved it all. He especially loved sacred music. Thom was never not touched by his favorite hymns, and he was always an enthusiastic participant in his ward's annual production of Handel's Messiah. He loved singing around the piano or playing the guitar or ukulele with family, YSA groups, or whoever was visiting his home. He was the guy who said, "I'll sing at your wedding." And he usually did. Whatever he was doing, Thom's life was rooted in faith and shaped by love. From an early age, he possessed a deep testimony of Jesus Christ—not just as a belief, but as a way of living. He trusted the Savior through good and bad, finding peace in prayer, scripture study, and worship. A lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Thom served in many capacities, including Young Single Adult Ward Bishoprics and in the Primary. And those he served will remember him as a man who believed in grace, forgiveness, and the eternal nature of families. Thom was unfailingly generous and was always looking for ways to lift others. He taught by example that the greatest measure of a life is love, service, and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. Even in the hardest moments, he chose hope. He often spoke of the Savior's power to heal, strengthen, and redeem—and he wanted those he loved to remember that death is not the end, but a passage made meaningful through Jesus Christ. Above all, Thom was devoted to his sweetheart Nanette and cherished his role as a husband and as the father of their four children. He loved his family with all his heart and showed that love in consistent, everyday ways—coaching teams, attending events, going on early morning drives, helping with homework, and being there for late-night talks. Thom was a constant support in his wife's and children's pursuits. And you could always depend on Thom to brag about their latest accomplishments. Thom was also the architect of fun for his family. He made the everyday entertaining with his morning carpool challenge ("Give me any word, and I'll make you a rhyme."), his annual Riddle Christmas Gift contest, his "Rate it 1-10" game, and his inexhaustible supply of Dad Jokes. He was a "World Traveler and Planner Extraordinaire," ready to drop everything to go on a new adventure with his family. Thom kept all of this up with his beloved grandchildren. For them, he was the Papa who made sure there was a stop for gummy bears at Circle K and a good Thanksgiving or Christmas movie on the TV. He was a loving and vibrant part of their lives. Even after he became sick, he constantly looked for ways to love them, whether with a trip to Disney World or a ride with him in his electric wheelchair. Thom is survived by his beloved wife, Nanette Riddle Kearl; his four children and their spouses (whom he loved as his own): Ashley (Jeremy) Poore, Clayton (Maria Arocha Reyes) Kearl, Rachel (Tanner) Hafen, and Christopher (Senah Park) Kearl; and his cherished grandchildren: Donny, Tommy, Magnolia Poore, and Isla Hafen. He is also survived by his siblings: Susan Sorensen, Clayton F. Kearl, Aland (Janis) Kearl, Marianne (Wayne) Samuelson, Bonnie (Robert) Tingey, and Barbara (Douglas) Brown, along with many other family members and friends who love him. He was preceded in death by his parents, Clayton James and Betty Loraine Kearl; his father-in-law, Gary Blaine Riddle; his brother-in-law, Robert Sorensen; his sister-in-law, Nita Kearl; his nephews, Trent and Toby Kearl; his nieces, Brandalee Kearl and

Makaela Hilton. Funeral Services: A viewing will be held on Saturday, February 28th, at 9:30 AM at the Yalecrest Ward Building, 1035 South 1800 East, Salt Lake City, followed by the funeral services at 11:00 AM. Interment will follow at Larkin Sunset Lawn. You may watch the service online through Zoom by clicking the "Watch Service" button above. An Open House will be held on Sunday, March 1st, from 5 PM to 7 PM at the Yalecrest Ward Building, 1035 South 1800 East, Salt Lake City. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests an act of service in his honor, carrying forward his devotion to Jesus Christ.
