

William Brown Farnsworth

August 22, 1950 ~ April 9, 2022

William B. (“Bill”) Farnsworth passed away on April 9, 2022 from complications related to kidney failure.

William Brown Farnsworth was born August 22, 1950 in Salt Lake City, Utah to Kenneth and Mildred Farnsworth. Known in his youth by his nickname ‘King’ and throughout his adult life as ‘Bill’, he was named after his grandfather, William Brown, a genuine Utah pioneer who came across the plains in the 1860s, and whom young Bill knew as a small boy. The youngest of four children, including his older siblings Patricia, Ken Jr. and Linda, Bill was raised in a police family, with a father, grandfather and uncles who were all police officers (and with a brother who also became a cop). Bill grew up in Salt Lake in the 1950s and 60s, living (by his own account) a Beaver Cleaver-type youth, graduating from South High School in 1968 on the night Bobby Kennedy was assassinated.

Bill was raised a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with parents who, although they did not attend church regularly, were adamant that their children did so. Although by his own admission he was never one to get into too much trouble (not with a cop in the house), like many young people then and now, Bill went through a rebellious phase in his teenage years which drew him away from activity in the Church as he finished high school. At this hinge point in his life, he was blessed to be surrounded by many good influences, including, most significantly, a bishop, Tom Vuyk, and a young men’s advisor, Warren Grimsrud, who patiently encouraged him, set examples for him and didn’t give up on him, bringing him back to the path he followed for the rest of his life. He said in later years that everything he valued most in life and the greatest joys he experienced came in no small part because of the impact that these men had on him at this crucial period in his development.

As a result of this transformation and encouraged by his parents, Bill prepared for and served as a missionary in the French East Mission between 1969-71, serving in the French Riviera, the French Alps and Geneva, Switzerland, a profound experience that he treasured for the rest of his life. Upon returning home, he immediately enrolled at BYU and within two months had met, begun dating and (a week after their first date) became engaged to Katy Fellows, whom he married in August 1972 in the Oakland California Temple. Despite having little money or financial security, they did have faith, and between 1974 and 1980 had five children, Charles, Andy, Ed, Beth and Dan.

Although his initial plans were to graduate from BYU and study law, the need to provide for his growing family forced Bill to put his education on hold to work full time. He was employed for 25 years with Sinclair Oil, working his way up from a gas station assistant manager to management in the company’s headquarters. His employment took him and his family from Provo, to Helena, Montana, then back to the Salt Lake valley, where they settled in West Jordan. Bill ended his career working for his good friend, Ted Barley, managing The UPS Store in Bountiful.

His family and his service in the church usually absorbed what little free time Bill had in his adult life. Bill served faithfully in various bishoprics, presidencies and other callings in the Church, often returning from a long and tiring business trip to drop off his suitcases and head straight over to the chapel for a presidency meeting, quorum social event or temple trip— sometimes also squeezing in a child's school concert or basketball game in the middle somewhere.

Bill suffered one of the great tragedies in his life when his beloved wife Katy was diagnosed with cancer in 1993 after 21 years of marriage and lost her battle with it six months later, passing away in 1994 at the age of 44, leaving him with a son on a mission and four other children still in school. Doing his best to act as the rock anchoring the rest of his family through such a difficult time, Bill said that the experience brought him closer to the Lord than he had ever been. Indeed, as Bill often said, Heavenly Father is merciful to those who seek him, and a chance encounter with Tom Vuyk, the bishop from his youth, led to a reintroduction to Tom's daughter Lori, whom Bill had known growing up. Bill and Lori were sealed in the Bountiful Utah Temple in 1995, and remained devoted to each other ever since.

Bill never hesitated to point out that the two greatest things that ever happened in his life were the two amazing women that he was fortunate enough to marry, and often stated that finding even one person like that was a miracle, yet for some reason he had been blessed with TWO such opportunities. He was devoted to Katy throughout their marriage, particularly during her struggle with cancer at the end of her life.

Bill never stopped being grateful to the Lord for bringing Lori to him as he struggled with Katy's passing. She brought light into his life and the lives of his children, and immediately became the most popular member of the family. They enjoyed 27 years together, watching their children leave the nest and begin their own families. Lori cared for him as his health failed in the final years of his life, and he was never entirely comfortable or at peace if she was away from him, even for a short time. She was at his side when he passed away on April 9, 2022, and it's possible that his leaving at that time represented a final act of love, as he knew that she would have sacrificed her own health and life taking care of him without hesitation for as long as he needed it.

Nobody who spent any amount of time around Bill could characterize him as anything other than outgoing. He loved meeting people, and the joke around the family was that if you gave him long enough, he would manage to find some connection, however remote, with anybody he met. It was "Six Degrees of Bill Farnsworth"—although he had no problem going well beyond six degrees if that is what it took. Bill was a people person, and loved to talk. (In fact, one joke going around the family is that they feel a little sorry for all the people greeting Bill on the other side, as it is hard to imagine how long he will be able to talk now that he doesn't have to worry about getting tired.)

But these qualities are what allowed Bill to make the difference in the lives of the people he touched throughout his life. His genuine interest in others and ability to see them for who they are has been noted over and over by those who crossed paths with him. Many individuals have shared that in their interactions with him, he was quick to put them at ease and lift them with his kindness and attention, to make them feel "valued", that they mattered and that they were important to him. This ability, which he shared with the Savior, seemed to come so naturally to him, and lifted up many "hands which [hung] down".

By some standards, Bill's life may not have seemed particularly noteworthy. He never achieved much in the way that worldly success is traditionally measured. Like most of us, he was not famous, or recognized as an expert or as a great leader or thinker. He was not wealthy, and often worried about financial security. In later years, his health suffered and he was not able to do the things he would have liked, or perhaps to live the life that he had anticipated in his youth. But he sent his sons on missions and saw his children married in the temple. He saw his posterity following in the paths he showed them of faithfulness to the Lord in church service and rearing families in righteousness.

President Spencer W. Kimball once recalled speaking to a faithful man of humble means who had similarly been devoted to his family, telling him:

"That is the greatest success story I have heard. You might have accumulated millions in stocks and bonds, bank accounts, lands, industries, and still be quite a failure. You are fulfilling the purpose for which you were sent into this world by keeping your own lives righteous, bearing and rearing this great posterity, and training them in faith

and works. Why, you are eminently successful.”

Celebrating his life today are 9 children and their spouses, and his soon-to-be 32 grandchildren who can testify to Bill’s success. And this does not count the generations yet unborn who will be blessed by being raised in a family whose faith and devotion to service are a direct result of Bill’s faithfulness to his covenants. He was, is, and will remain a hero to them throughout eternity.

Bill is survived by his wife, Lori Vuyk-Farnsworth; his sisters Patricia Heller and Linda Stocking (Jerry); nine children and stepchildren, Charles (Joyce), Andrew (Lori), Jennifer Neeleman (Greg Leigh), Edward (Jenna), Emilee Morzelewski (Eric), Beth Reeves (Mark), Angela Neeleman (Steve Matthes), Daniel (Patrice) and Benjamin Neeleman (Kelsey); soon-to-be 32 grandchildren; and numerous other family members and friends who will miss him. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Katy Fellows Farnsworth, his parents, Kenneth and Mildred Farnsworth, and his older brother, Ken Farnsworth Jr.

The family wishes to thank Rocky Mountain Hospice for their love and care.

Funeral services will be held Friday, April 15th at 11:00 a.m. at the Centerville 7th Ward, 270 North 300 East, Centerville, UT, where viewings will be held Thursday evening from 6:00-8:00 p.m. and Friday 9:45-10:45 a.m. prior to the service. Services may be viewed on Zoom with the following link: https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0lcu-rqj0tHtATJtvb40QmQNBHkU6YVEwr