

William Denton Black

March 5, 1936 ~ February 24, 2021

The Key to Happiness? Roller Skating Backward.

William Denton Black: 1936-2021

In 1958, William “Bill” Black crawled through a make-shift igloo at a winter-themed sorority party. Getting through the door was a tight squeeze for Bill – he stood 6 feet 3 inches tall – but the pain would be worth it.

It was there he first caught eyes with fellow University of Utah student Jo Ann Louise Jackstien. Jo Ann, a dance teacher, was enjoying refreshments just as the shin dig was moving to the local roller rink. Upon arrival, Jo Ann laced up her skates, flipped around, and skated backward.

People noticed. Especially Bill. He mustered up the courage to ask her to skate with him.

She said yes.

Soon after, Jo Ann invited Bill to a family function. While setting up chairs, one of Jo Ann’s relatives said “we’re gonna have a farting good time, aren’t we?” That flatulence-laced comment didn’t scare Bill away. Quite the opposite. The two continued dating until Bill popped the question in a romantic spot in the Wasatch mountains.

She said yes.

On February 24, 2021, just after Bill and Jo Ann’s 62nd wedding anniversary , Bill left this world peacefully in the home they shared since 1963. It was just nine days before Bill’s 85th birthday.

Bill is survived by his wife Jo Ann, their four children and spouses, 13 grandchildren, and 10 great-grandchildren. Bill was preceded in death by his parents Mildred Black and Denton Black, as well as his sister Suzanne Whitelock.

Hard Work, Education, and…Chicken?

Bill was born in Salt Lake City, Utah on March 5th, 1936. The eldest of an electrician and schoolteacher, Bill learned the importance of education and hard work at an early age. He and younger sister Suzanne watched their mom earn a college degree back when earning degrees wasn’t too common for women.

In addition to working as an electrician, Bill’s dad found additional ways to provide for the family, including moving to a working chicken farm (Note: Bill would not eat chicken again for 40+ years).

In 1959, Bill and Jo Ann married at the Latter Day Saint (LDS) temple in Salt Lake City, UT and later gave birth to their first son Michael Dean Black. After earning a degree in Electrical Engineering, Bill accepted a job with IBM in bourgeoning Silicon Valley.

Once settled, they welcomed son Steven Denton Black and bought a home in Willow Glen, a suburb of San Jose, CA where they would raise a family and create 58 more years of memories.

In 1967, they gave birth to daughter Michelle Marie Black and in 1971 they welcomed son David William Black.

Bill continued his education, earning an MBA from Santa Clara University. After IBM, Bill worked with Memorex before joining a consulting company that help launch DHL, the world's first overnight shipping company.

Bill worked closely with the founders of DHL to build a communications network that would become the backbone of the business. During this time, Bill traveled the world – Hong Kong, Bahrain, Australia and more – often with Jo Ann by his side.

Faith, Family, and Folding Newspapers

While Bill enjoyed career and travel, nothing was more important to him than faith and family. He was a devoted member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and served numerous roles in the church, including Bishop.

At home, Bill was all about helping loved ones. He helped Jo Ann run her dance company for decades, acting as set designer, audio/video technician, accountant, financial planner, therapist, coach, and even floor sweeper.

But a demanding job and a family business couldn't keep Bill from his kids. Every Sunday at the crack of dawn, he'd help his sons fold, load up and deliver newspapers from the back of the station wagon. Then they'd go get donuts. Really, really good donuts.

In the summer, he'd take family and friends boating on the Sacramento Delta, giving each water skier his signature "whoo whoo" as they popped out of the water. This yell was so loud it likely caused permanent hearing loss to nearby animals or humans. Bill had an amazing set of lungs.

The Dad Joke Gene

Bill's hard work, optimism and unlimited patience could only be matched by his sense of humor. The man loved to laugh, sometimes with a snort attached. He was Ground Zero for bad dad jokes. The dad joke gene, or DJG, was so strong it will continue to be passed on for generations. Sorry future dads.

Bill was also a news junkie. He scanned the daily paper and clipped articles and illustrations for his family. While living at home, his kids would find clips hanging from the top of their doorways by a curiously long piece of tape. Growing up and leaving the house provided no escape either. He'd save up clips for everyone in manilla folders. He was always thinking about the people he loved.

When he wasn't laughing, he was playing or singing music. Bill was an amazing piano player and an incredible bass singer. He loved to contribute his talents at every opportunity. Anyone that spent time with Bill can probably hear him singing a bass line right about now.

Farewell Gentle Giant

There's no way to include all of Bill's contributions here. He's impacted too many people in too many ways. But if there's one word to describe what he gave us all, it would be "peace." Bill was a gentle giant in every way. A larger-than-life man with a soft and patient voice whose actions spoke louder than words.

If you were mad, he made you feel calm. If you were scared, he made you feel safe. And if you were down, he brought you back up.

Farewell husband, father, grandfather, great grandfather and friend. Thank you for holding us all up for so long.

Until we meet again.

Service and Flowers

A small gathering for family and close friends will be held on Tuesday, March 9th at 2:00pm MT at Larkin Sunset Gardens, 1950 E. Dimple Dell Rd (10600 South), Sandy, UT, 84092. Friends are welcome to greet the family at a viewing from 1:00 to 2:00 PM. A private burial service for family will take place following the service at Larkin Sunset Gardens. For those who would like to virtually view services through zoom please visit https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/309s2RDN1CIo4mps3BircwDQ_hl5MWMbcpyVLQSl14iSPLgYNLGByZapwQmbOKvh

In lieu of flowers, charitable donations in Bill's name can be made to the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) or the organization of your choice through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Philanthropies.