



Bruce Henrie Nielson

September 14, 1959 - May 17, 2020

In the early morning hours of Sunday, May 17, 2020, at his home in Vienna, Virginia, Bruce Henrie Nielson completed his mortal journey after a courageous battle with colon cancer. Born on September 14, 1959, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Bruce was the third of four sons born to Merrill Gene Nielson and Mary Kae Henrie Nielson. He is survived by his beloved wife of 39 years, Linda Alison Dougherty Nielson, by his brothers, Dean, Paul and Mark, and by his seven children, Jessica, Nathan (Stephanie), Jeffrey (Krista), Thomas (Leslie), Laura (Jordan Wade), Michael, and Mary Katherine (Mitchell Merrell). Bruce also leaves behind his ten grandchildren—Dean, Luke, Sierra, Aubrey, Maggie, Grant, Ezra, Eleanor, Ross and Maeve—as well as countless friends who loved him for his unfailing kindness and integrity.

As his father pursued a career in the United States Air Force, Bruce moved often in his childhood, spending time in the Philippines, Maryland, Thailand, Germany, Michigan and Ohio. Bruce returned to Germany between 1978 and 1980 to serve as a full-time missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Munich. Shortly before completing his mission, his parents moved to Northern Virginia. It was there that Bruce met Linda, whom he married in June 1981 in the Washington D.C. Temple.

Bruce studied finance at Brigham Young University, earning his bachelor's degree in 1984. He went on to Harvard Law School, graduating in 1987. Then it was back to Northern Virginia, where he worked as an attorney for 29 years in the Washington office of the law firm K&L Gates LLP. In 2016, he left private practice and followed his friend and longtime colleague Mike Missal to the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Bruce loved his country and took great pride in the military heritage in his family. He was grateful for the opportunity to work as a public servant in support of American veterans.

Life for an attorney at a large law firm is demanding, but Bruce's legendary work ethic was up to the task. In November 1996, Bruce appeared before the United States Supreme Court, a high-water mark in the career of any attorney. But his most enduring achievement in the workplace was the influence he had on others. He showed genuine respect and kindness to everyone, from the lowest-paid worker in the mailroom to the highest-profile attorney in the firm. When his colleagues think of Bruce, they will feel a sudden craving for his famous chili, which regularly won first place at chili cook-offs. Then they will remember him as a brilliant lawyer and trusted friend who put his family and faith above all else.

Faith in Jesus Christ was the driving influence in Bruce's life. While he was not afraid to share his faith with his words, he did so more frequently—and effectively—with his actions. He worked tirelessly and often anonymously to serve his community. Throughout his life, he faithfully filled church assignments that brought him in contact with youth. He loved the youth of the Vienna Ward and Oakton Stake. He was the force behind an annual mulch sale to raise funds in support of youth programs, and he loved planning and participating in high adventures with his scouting crew. In three separate summers, Bruce and Linda worked together to organize and lead a multi-day activity for hundreds of youth simulating the cross-country pioneer trek of early converts to the church.

When he played in a youth football league in Germany, Bruce's team was the Cowboys. This kindled a lifelong love for the Dallas Cowboys, which he enjoyed flaunting among his friends deep in Redskins country. Bruce was also a passionate fan of BYU football and basketball and of the Washington Nationals baseball team. His favorite sporting events to watch were the ones his own children participated in.

Bruce was a man of simple tastes and long-settled routines. When he wasn't helping someone move or camping with the scouts, he enjoyed doing puzzles, devising ways to keep squirrels off his bird feeder, and relaxing at the community pool at Vienna Woods. Throughout his career, he walked, rain or shine, to the Vienna Metro station as part of his weekday commute. On weekends he was easily recognized around town in his beloved green GMC Suburban, from which he often distributed to friends and neighbors the tomatoes and cucumbers that he grew in his garden. Bruce also read voraciously and widely, taking special interest in books about exploration and the sea. He argued throughout his life that the 1970s was the best era for popular music, and he loved to sing along with his kids to his large library of classic rock songs. In recent years, he traveled regularly with Linda to visit their children and grandchildren across the country and to unwind at their favorite beaches on the East Coast and in the Caribbean.

Bruce was fascinated by the digital world. An early enthusiast for e-commerce, he saw the world-changing potential of Amazon and e-Bay, from which he bought several suits and even a car. When he found a snack or gadget on Amazon that he liked, he sent one to each of his kids. Beginning in the late 1990s and continuing until he became sick in the mid-2010s, Bruce was inseparable from his digital camera. He was widely known as the unofficial photographer of church, neighborhood and family events. He leaves a massive collection of photographs capturing happy moments atop Old Rag (his favorite mountain to hike), deep in the Atlantic Ocean (he used a waterproof camera for scuba trips), and everywhere in between.

As a role model, Bruce was in a class of his own—a true North Star. All who knew him cherished his friendship, his ready smile and his charming sense of humor. Even in his suffering during the final years of his life, he never complained but maintained his optimism and graciousness. “It’s all good” was his mantra. Bruce loved people unconditionally and valued their strengths instead of dwelling on their flaws. In his heart, he had a special place for his sweet grandchildren, with whom he established loving bonds that will never be broken. They are his legacy and the fruit of a life honorably lived.

A viewing will be held at Nickle Mortuary, 190 S. Center Street, Delta, Utah, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, May 23, 2020. A graveside service will immediately follow at the cemetery in Lynndyl, Utah. All who attend should observe government-issued public health recommendations. The family plans to hold a memorial service for Bruce in Virginia when circumstances permit.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the Humanitarian Aid Fund of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

For those wishing to send flowers, please send them to Nickel Mortuary in Delta, Utah.

Comments



“ Dear Linda,

We were your neighbors at Brigham Young University. Our daughter's births were about a year apart, and you watched our daughter, Erin, until cute little Jessica was born.

I remember Bruce was a thoughtful student. He helped us figure out a tax problem and later advised me when I was pondering joining the military. Somehow the Air Force worked out very well for our family and our children grew up much like Bruce in places like Germany. In our last assignment at the Pentagon, you checked out a rental house on the east side of Vienna that worked out just fine for us. Even decades after our student days at the Y, we have fond memories of you.

I pray that God's love will surround you at this difficult time.

Steve Starks

Steve Starks - February 10 at 06:21 PM



“ Hi Linda and family,

I just learned of Bruce's passing when our copy of the BYU magazine arrived and I had to reach out to you and let you know what a wonderful man I think he is and was and share a memory you might enjoy. Like Bruce, I was an Air Force brat and we lived just a block or two from each other on Westfallen Strasse in Wiesbaden, Germany for a couple of years in the early 70's. When we were about thirteen, our scout troop went to camp Kandersteg, in the Swiss alps, for our annual summer camp. Bruce and I wandered into town one afternoon to grab a snack at a local cafe and saw that they had a juke box with mostly American hit music. Bruce was very excited when noticed a song by an artist who I had never heard of and insisted that we listen to it. For the first time, I heard Neil Diamond, sing 'I Am I Said.' I was blown away and to this day it is one my all time favorites. We played it over and over so many times that the owner finally kicked us out. After Germany my dad was transferred to D.C. and we ended up in the same ward Nielson's had lived in a few years earlier. When you're LDS and in the military it is a very small world. After our missions I occasionally ran into Bruce at the 'Y' and we often shared the memory of our Neil Diamond moment and laughed about that cranky cafe owner giving us the boot. Although it has been several decades since I've rubbed shoulders with Bruce I will always remember his wit and smile and Christlike attitude. May our Heavenly Father's richest blessings attend you and you family always.

Warmest regards,

Stan Jones
Alpine, Utah

Stan Jones - February 07 at 12:05 AM



“ I met Bruce in 1990 when I started as a young lawyer at Kirkpatrick & Lockhart. We remained friends ever since. Bruce was a kind, caring and intelligent man. He was always positive and inspiring. He loved God, his family and his country. I will always treasure our discussions on politics (we almost always agreed) and football (we often disagreed as he was a Cowboys fan and I am a Steelers fan). I pray for Linda and his family. He lived his life well and I am better for having known him. My prayers are with him and his family. Sincerely, Greg Conway.

Greg Conway - May 22, 2020 at 06:26 PM



“ This is Larry Lanpher, who knew Bruce as a colleague at K&L Gates from the 1980s onward. I could share personal memories but colleague Marcia Dozier of K&L Gates has already shared a vivid memory, which I join in completely. Bruce was the BEST and will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

Larry Lanpher - May 22, 2020 at 08:48 AM



“ Bruce was/is a warm, loving person whose smile and laid-back, relaxed approach to life amazed/amazes me. I loved working with him in church capacities. He showed a dedication to the principles of Jesus Christ that were clear and guiding principles for his life. Bruce's smile and personal comportment showed that he was welcoming to all. The world is far worse off without him. However, he leaves a legacy through his family that will fill the void he leaves and will serve as a fitting memorial to his life.

Adrian Morgan - May 21, 2020 at 05:10 PM



“ Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Bruce Henrie Nielson.



May 21, 2020 at 04:07 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Bruce Henrie Nielson.



May 21, 2020 at 11:37 AM



“ Thoughts and prayers to the entire Nielson family. Bruce's influence was felt by all who were lucky enough to know him. Our kids and family benefited greatly from the countless hours he and Linda spent on mulch, Trek, youth activities, dances, etc. His smile will be missed.

Woodhouse family - May 20, 2020 at 09:32 PM



“ Bruce, was a God sent angel walking among us all. His faith in God, and true love for others was amazing. I will truly miss our talks, and the big hugs he used to give. I'm a better person because of him being in my life. I pray for peace and understanding for his family during this time of grieving. I rejoice in knowing my friend and brother is next to Our Lord and Savior. Enjoy the promise my friend, because you have earned it.

Marvin - May 20, 2020 at 03:19 PM



“ I'm so sorry to hear of this good man's passing. What a great man. He and Linda raised a wonderful family. He lived a great life and has shown those around him an awesome example. We appreciate the things he and his family did for our family. Linda and the family will be in our prayers. Sending our love.
Beth Johnson Terry

Beth - May 19, 2020 at 11:47 PM



“ We love you Nielsen family. Our hearts are with you; such a beautiful tribute to a well deserving, good to the core man. We were all so blessed to have had such a great example of how to do life right. Heaven got a good one

Kim Olsen - May 19, 2020 at 10:27 PM



“ We LOVED our times together on treks and other youth conferences. Bruce was one of the great ones. Our love to Linda and their kids.

Kyle and Mary Latimer

Kyle Latimer - May 19, 2020 at 08:25 PM



“ He was a rock. Faithful, Dependable. Always there to serve. At our side when Steve was so ill to support and bring a smile. Sharing photos of our kids all the time. Raising leaders just as dependable and good as they were with his wife Linda. Positive and capable and confident no matter the task. What a great man.

Becky Lowe - May 19, 2020 at 06:25 PM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Bruce Henrie Nielson.



May 19, 2020 at 05:03 PM



“ I was Bruce Nielson's secretary at K&L Gates LLP for 7 years. He was an absolute JOY to work with. I'm a Washington Redskins fan and he was a Dallas Cowboys fan and we would have conversations about how far our teams would make it for that year. Before becoming his secretary, Bruce and I were on the Diversity Committee together. Being on this committee with him was AWESOME. He would always look forward to the Annual Cook-offs so he could showcase his "WORLD FAMOUS CHILLI"..... When he left the firm to join Mike Missal I was sad but we would always meet for lunch (when the time permitted) at the Capitol City Brewing Company. Bruce would always get the meatloaf for lunch. I will miss him dearly. My deepest condolences to his family.



Marcia Dozier - May 19, 2020 at 04:43 PM



“ Marcia--this is Bruce's son Jeff. Thank you for the nice tribute and great pictures. The meatloaf reference made me smile. Dad really loved the staff he worked with at K&L Gates.

Jeff Nielson - May 19, 2020 at 05:25 PM



“ This makes me want to go to the capitol city brewing company with you, Marcia, next time we are in Virginia! Thank you so much for loving our dad and sharing this sweet message.

Laura Wade - May 19, 2020 at 06:47 PM



“ The photos you shared show how much fun you all had together and it makes me so happy.

Laura Wade - May 19, 2020 at 06:48 PM



“ I met Bruce first, I believe, in London's Hyde Park Ward, where he was attending services during the season of Laura's participation at the BYU London Centre. Little could I know then how much more closely our lives would intertwine. What a loving man. I knew it then in an instant. And what a void he leaves for us survivors to try to fill.

Our hearts are full of sympathy for Linda, for Laura and the siblings, for Tom and Leslie, and for Maggie and Eleanor. I will magnify my part to try and fill that empty space that Bruce has defined and occupied so wonderfully well.

Roger Macfarlane - May 19, 2020 at 03:44 PM



“ Roger, this made my eyes sting with tears. I'm so glad you got to know and love my dad and I'm grateful you are someone so wonderful to fill some big shoes as THE grandpa to Tom and Leslie's children for the next little while!

Laura Wade - May 19, 2020 at 06:41 PM