



James Donald Sowards

April 29, 1941 - September 13, 2022

“This is our mom. Ain’t she a HONEY” reads a plaque that hangs on a very large picture of my mother in our family home. It was made by my father a few years ago in homage to my mother and how much she meant to him. As a young adult it was, at best, cringy and often times we would snicker and joke about it. Now that I am older, it is a manifestation of who my father was and what my mother truly meant to him.

My father, a man of jovial disposition, James Donald Sowards (often called Jimmy) was born on April 29, 1941 to Shelton and Dorothy (Haynie) Sowards. The second of what would become 8 kids, he was raised in a humble home in Manassa, Colorado with his older brother Mack (Alice) Sowards and younger siblings Kathy (Ron) Ivie, Betty Jane (Sam) Mortensen, Sally (Greg) Stradling, John (Cindy) Sowards, Lorraine Banner, and his baby brother Anthony who died just before birth. He attended and graduated from Manassa Senior High in 1959, where he had met “One heck of a good-looking woman” Mary Ann Rogers. He briefly attended BYU for one semester before returning home lovesick to chase his future bride. They were married civilly on December 27, 1960 and later sealed for time and all eternity in December of 1963 in the Mesa Arizona Temple.

When they were first married, James worked first at Donald’s Service in Manassa, and later drove a truck for Tommy Rogers. Shortly after he started driving a truck, they welcomed the

first of their children, Annette (Bret) Durfee. Once they felt they could handle Annette, I assume my parents felt they could conquer the world and decided to start farming. They purchased a small farm with a farmhouse near Bountiful, Colorado where they lived for 15 years. The rest of his life consisted of faith, family, and farming. After Annette came James (Melanie) Sowards, Martin (Lorna) Sowards, Steven (Elizabeth) Sowards, Mandy (Doug) Mortensen, Perry (Danette) Sowards, Melissa (Rusty) Howsmon, Shane (Jenny) Sowards, and saving the best for last.....me, Clint (Alisha) Sowards. I will be forever grateful to my father and mother for providing me with a big family to enjoy, fight with, and learn from. My parents now have 51 grandkids and 57 (soon to be 59) great-grandkids. The farm/ranch life was something my father knew and loved. He worked hard. My cousins tell me they loved to visit him and he taught many of his nieces and nephews how to drive- either on a tractor, pickup, or the family car. Many of my cousins tell me that he was their favorite uncle. My dad was kind. He was not afraid to make new friends- mom tells stories of him picking up hitchhikers and bringing them home for lunch. He was able to overlook people's circumstances and appreciate them for who they were. This led to him blessing several lives and in turn receiving several blessings. He loved the Gospel of Jesus Christ and was able to strengthen other's testimonies while serving in several callings within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, including the first Stake Presidency of the Manassa Colorado Stake, Mesita Branch President, and several other positions. In the early 2000s, things began to change. All my brothers and sisters had moved out, and labor was no longer cheap, so my dad sold the Bountiful property. Depression set in, followed by diabetes that he refused to control. My older brother Steven was diagnosed and succumbed to Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS) and my sister Mandy silently gave birth to a little baby boy named Taggert. This is when we noticed my father's behavior began to change. As his health worsened, we noticed that he was no longer the Jimmy Sowards we had all known and loved.

He then lost his parents Shelton and Dorothy, followed by his good friend Bill Elam, and my son

Neeko. Things only worsened when we lost Perry a few years back and my dad did not seem to

handle well the pain of losing another son. Things were said, feelings were hurt, and relationships were damaged. For that, we as a family, are truly sorry. My dad's final days on

earth were not his best. He fell and broke his hip last year and never seemed to recover. He

passed away on September 13, 2022.

Although my father had not been himself for years, I take comfort in knowing that he is doing

much better today. We are able to look back at who he was and remember how he made us

feel, what he taught us, and the good example he set for us. He and my mother (his HONEY)

both have testimonies of the Atonement of Jesus Christ that they shared through examples of

loving others and forgiving those who need forgiveness. Because of this example, I am sure

that we can do the same.

My father will be laid to rest on Saturday, September 17th, 2022 beginning with a brief ceremony at

11:00 am at the Manassa Colorado LDS Church, followed by a burial at the Sowards Cemetery south of

Manassa. A viewing will be held on Friday, September 16th, 2022 from 6pm until 7:30pm at the same

location. All are welcome. Family and friends may leave online condolences by visiting romerofuneralhomes.com. The care of arrangements has been entrusted to Romero Funeral Home of Alamosa

Tribute Wall



“ *James Donald Sowards*

January 29, 2023 at 07:44 AM



“ *To the Sowards family, especially Shane and Jenney, may Heavenly Father bless you with strength and comfort in this season of sorrow.*

John Moore - September 16, 2022 at 04:14 PM