



Merrill Max Williams

September 17, 1927 - October 3, 2025

Merrill “Max” Williams, 98, passed away peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Born September 17, 1927, in the small coal mining town of Sunnyside, Utah, to Merrill Q. Williams and Ellen La Von Peay. Max grew up in Provo, Utah during the Great Depression. From a young age, he learned the value of hard work, helping his father and local farmers while living off what the family grew.

At 17, Max interrupted High School to enlist in the United States Navy during World War II. He was assigned to the USS San Saba and sent to the South Pacific. He trained for Underwater Demolition in preparation for the invasion of Japan and was stationed on Corregidor in the Philippines when the war ended.

Following his military service, Max attended Brigham Young University and later served a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in New England. After returning to BYU, he met Rachel Cranney of Oakley, Idaho. One blind date and he knew he wanted to marry her. They wed on June 15, 1951, in the Logan Utah Temple.

Max and Rachel began their married life in Prineville, Oregon, before settling in Bend. He loved Oregon – particularly Central Oregon. He worked for Med-O-land Creamery for 16 years, driving commercial delivery routes that covered Highway 97 south from La Pine to Crescent Lake. Later, he established a successful insurance practice working with Metropolitan Life and North American Life and Casualty.

Max and Rachel raised three children: Susan Danison (Prineville), J. Renee Gardener (Medford), and M. Max Williams II (Beaverton). They were blessed with 9 grandchildren. After 37 years of marriage, Rachel passed away in 1989 following a prolonged illness. Max remarried longtime friend Joyce Kofford, with whom he shared 32 years until her passing in 2024. Together they have 22 grandchildren and a host of great-grandchildren.

Max was deeply committed to his community and faith. He was an active member of the Bend Rotary Club and served on the Board of the Arnold Irrigation District. He also served in many callings in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, including District President, Bishop, and Patriarch of the Bend, Oregon Stake. He played a key role in helping build two church buildings in Bend. Together with Joyce, he later served a mission for the Church in Port Lavaca, Texas — an experience they both treasured.

Those who knew Max remember his remarkable way with people. He had an extraordinary memory for names, places, and stories—right up to the end. He was known for his positive outlook on life and his great sense of humor.

Above all, Max loved his family, friends, and his Savior, Jesus Christ. As a disciple of Jesus many people found shelter in his home and were blessed by his kindness. His optimism, resilience, and faith touched thousands of lives and created a legacy of service that will continue long after his passing.

He was preceded in death by his wives, Rachel and Joyce; his daughter, Renee; his parents and siblings; and many beloved friends and in-laws. He leaves behind his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, extended family, and countless friends who will carry forward his memory. The family wishes to thank the staff of Prestige High Desert Living for their friendship, care and compassion.

All are welcome to attend funeral services for Max to be held at 11:00 AM on October 13, 2025, at the LDS Chapel located at 1260 NE Thompson Road, Bend, Oregon. There will be a viewing at 10:00 AM. Those wishing to view the funeral service via zoom go to <https://zoom.us/j/97775985074>

Funeral arrangements are provided by Niswonger-Reynolds. Remembrances

can be made online at www.niswonger-reynolds.com.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT 13. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (PT)

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
1260 NE Thompson Drive
Bend, OR 97701

Funeral Service

OCT 13. 11:00 AM.

Lds Chapel

Tribute Wall

BB

“ In my twenties, I visited Bend a few times. Every Sacrament Meeting, Max would give either the opening or closing prayer, and every time he asked for rain, for an end to the drought. After I married and moved there, I noticed he still did it from time to time. I think it was very appropriate and a sign of blessing that there were showers on the day of his funeral.

Barbara Brutsch - October 18, 2025 at 05:29 PM

RM

“ The first time I met granpa Bozo he was working in the barn he came out with suspenders on covered in dust. The fort thing he said was if you lived here you would be home by now. I cherish that day He also taught me how to mexican train.

Ricky Murrietta - October 12, 2025 at 10:31 PM

MH

“ Max and Joyce served our little Branch in Port Lavaca, Texas on their mission. They became friends and family to us. What an honor to have known them and loved them.

Marsha Hoffman - October 11, 2025 at 07:52 PM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



October 10, 2025 at 11:39 AM

EF

“ Elizabeth McGuigan and family planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Merrill Max Williams.

Elizabeth McGuigan and family - October 10, 2025 at 11:39 AM



“ Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



October 10, 2025 at 11:01 AM



“ Serenity Wreath was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



October 10, 2025 at 10:51 AM

TC

“ The Glen & Carol Ward Children purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



The Glen & Carol Ward Children - October 09, 2025 at 02:49 PM

RH

“ Rodd Hansen purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



Rodd Hansen - October 09, 2025 at 01:08 PM

RH

“ Rodd Hansen planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Merrill Max Williams.

Rodd Hansen - October 09, 2025 at 01:08 PM



“ Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



October 08, 2025 at 03:52 PM



“ Joyful Memory was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.



October 08, 2025 at 03:41 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.*



October 07, 2025 at 03:46 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Merrill Max Williams.*



October 06, 2025 at 08:26 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Merrill Max Williams.*

October 06, 2025 at 08:26 PM