



## Laird S. Campbell

March 16, 1924 - August 16, 2012

Laird Campbell died peacefully and with a characteristic lack of fuss or delay at home on August 16, after a long, rich, and rewarding life. He spent his first four years in Pullman, Washington, where his father, Robert, taught English at what was then the State College of Washington. He was born in a hospital in Spokane. When Robert died, Laird and his mother, Hortense, moved back to Wichita, Kansas, where both their families had long been rooted. During the next several years, Laird was watched over by his grandmother, while Hortense worked at the Wichita library, gradually earned a graduate library degree at Columbia when Laird stayed with his Aunt Peggy and her husband Laird Archer in Scarsdale, and took the first of her many solo trips, this one to countries around the Mediterranean, where she saw King Tutankhamun's grave goods when they were first displayed in Cairo. Laird and his mother took several trips together by train—one long trip up the West Coast, and others to visit relatives in Colorado and New Mexico. These years saw the beginning of Laird's lifelong love of travel, his fascination with trains, and his global outlook and interest in world affairs. In 1937, his life changed considerably when Hortense married her old friend John Gibson, the owner of a saddle and harness shop later bought by Mr. Shepler as the first of his many stores, and to everyone's satisfaction, Laird acquired a new father. He started spending Saturdays and holidays working at John's store and sometimes went with him on trading, buying, and selling expeditions, including some to the Four Corners area, where John traded tack for Navajo saddle blankets and

other goods for the store. John passed on to Laird his passion for cars and roads and taught Laird to navigate and drive, interests that again he kept throughout his life. While John and Hortense took their wedding trip, Laird spent the first of many summers at camp in Colorado, at Trail's End, the rustic branch of Cheley Camps near Estes Park. Focusing first on horseback riding, then adding hiking, he progressed from camper to counselor over the next few years. These summers near Estes Park when Lake Estes did not yet exist, there was only one paved road, and there were very few cars were defining times for him. He credited Trail's End and its director Mel Dorsett with teaching him to think independently, to take responsibility, and to cooperate with others, all in a landscape he loved. In 1942, Laird enlisted in the army, and in 1943 he left the University of Kansas where he had joined Delta Upsilon and lived in the fraternity house and reported to Fort Leavenworth, the first of many places he would be sent before he returned to college early in 1946. Assigned to the army air force, he taught illiterate soldiers to read in Nebraska, attended cryptographic school in Illinois, worked the night shift as a cryptographer in Oakland, joined the 348th Air Service Squadron, and finally shipped to Iwo Jima, three months after the Marines had captured the island, where he enciphered and deciphered messages having to do with equipment and planes crossing the Pacific and among the Pacific islands. After the war, he served as a lawyer in the Air Force Reserve for many years. He rarely talked about the war years and did not think of them as an important part of his life, though they added to his later impatience with bureaucracy and meaningless distinctions of rank and class. Home from the war, he went back to KU to finish college and enter law school. During the next several summers, he worked at the camp Mel Dorsett was then running, La Foret, in the Black Forest east of Colorado Springs. It was there he met a fellow counselor, Nancy Ann Campbell of Denver, whose family roots were in Colorado. He and Nancy married in Denver in December of 1948, at First Plymouth Congregational Church at 14th and Lafayette, and she transferred from Grinnell College to KU. They spent their first married summer working at Mel

Dorsett's third and final camp near Crested Butte, Skyland, the camp to which they sent their four children until it closed in the late 1970s. When Laird's grandchildren grew old enough, he saw to it that all eleven of them attended summer camp in the Colorado Rockies as well, both at Trail's End and at Colvig Silver Camps near Durango. In his later years, he made regular donations to the John Austin Cheley Foundation, to help children attend camp when their families do not have the means. When he finished law school in 1950, he and Nancy moved to Denver, where they lived until May of 2012, when they moved to Fort Collins to be closer to their daughter. He practiced law from 1950 until he retired in 1994, a profession he relished in part for its varied intellectual challenges. He began with the firm Robinson and Robinson, then in 1964 joined Wormwood, O'Dell, and Wolvington, where he stayed; when he retired, the firm's name had evolved to become Anderson, Campbell and Laugesen. Much of his practice had to do with insurance law, but he also handled many wills, trusts, and estates, and these became the two subjects he taught at the University of Denver Law School from 1981 and 1994, another job he loved. He took particular pleasure in creating exercises for his students that would help them translate book law into the complexities of real cases and clients, and both as a teacher and as a partner in his firm he took seriously the task of helping young lawyers become comfortable in their practice. He was proud of his and his firm's top rating and worked very hard at being a good lawyer for his clients. During his working years, Laird also took part in numerous civic activities. He especially enjoyed his four-year term on the State Personnel Board 71-75, but he was also chairman of the Church Council at First Plymouth, a Cub Scout leader, president of a neighborhood association, and a member of the Colorado State Officials Compensation Committee 75-80. Throughout his life, Laird was a champion reader and patron of the Denver Public Library, absorbing thick books about history, biography, and world affairs almost as quickly as most people could turn the pages. He read at least two newspapers a day and subscribed to a rotating

dozen or so magazines. He also watched at least two newscasts every day and liked the Friday evening news shows on PBS, as well as programs about travel and his other interests, including trains. He loved Mozart and other classical composers, he listened to classical radio every day, and he enjoyed anything Nancy played on the piano. He had a retentive memory and liked sending to his family and friends interesting nuggets of fact and pithy commentaries about items in the news. He traveled widely around the US, England, Scotland, and elsewhere, often by car but sometimes on the small ships run by Clipper Cruises. He appreciated the travels of his children, too, three of whom have lived overseas, two of them for many years starting with stints in the Peace Corps, and the increasing global diversity of his family, with daughters-in-law from Zambia and Peru and grandchildren born and living in numerous countries. Closer to home, he liked to take evening drives around Denver and weekend drives to the mountains, often for picnics with the family and later just with Nancy. His favorite destination was probably Rocky Mountain National Park, and as he lost energy in his last months, he sat for many hours each day facing a painting by Alfred Wands of that landscape. Laird had high standards and valued generosity, efficiency, clear thought and expression, hard work, common sense, kindness, family, and attention to the commonweal. He could be impatient and had no use for dishonesty, ineptitude, shoddy work, greed, or self-centeredness. He delighted in writing sharp, concise letters of criticism and praise. Perhaps most of all, he took great pleasure and satisfaction in the friendship and love of his family, for whom he was never too busy. He is survived and beloved by his wife of nearly 64 years, Nancy Ann Cornforth Campbell; his children Sue Ellen John Calderazzo of Bellvue, CO, David Nzali of Cortez, CO, Douglas Viviana of Guatemala City and Lima, Peru, and Bruce and his former wife Helen of Rolling Hills, IL; his grandchildren Lea whom he helped raise, Carey, Joy, Alexandra, Elizabeth, Clayton, Elaine, Ian, Teresa, Lucia, and Amy; and his great-grandchildren Matias, Mariel, and Mariano. A memorial service will be held Wednesday August 29, at 4 pm, at First Plymouth Congregational

Church, 3501 So. Colorado Blvd. Donations may be made in Laird's name to:  
The John Austin Cheley Foundation, Buffie Berger, Treasurer  
c/o FirstBank PO Box 151663  
Lakewood CO 90215

# Tribute Wall

BL

“ Dear Lea, We are so sorry for your loss and send you our love at this difficult time. You, Shawn and your family are in our thoughts and prayers. Love, Aunt Brenda and Uncle Ron

Brenda and Ron Lana - August 29, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MD

“ Laird was one of the nicest and most interesting people I've ever met. I didn't get to know him as well as I wanted to after he moved to Fort Collins, but I feel lucky to have had the very brief time with him. Thank you for sharing his story.

Mary Lea Dodd - August 26, 2012 at 12:00 AM

MK

“ Laird represented me in a very stressful family lawsuit late in the 70's and early 80's. He was brilliant, unflappable, and a very caring individual. At this time, I came to know Nancy who was a lovely person. She and Laird were a wonderful couple. I never forgot Laird and Nancy for their kindnesses to me. They were like this with everyone. Fondly, Mary Kobey

Mary E. Kobey - August 26, 2012 at 12:00 AM

GC

“ They say that life is nasty, brutal and short...that is why we have access to cheesecake. But it sounds like your father put the lie to that. Go well, Dave...and all family. Your Internet friend, Metaxa

Glenn Countryman - August 26, 2012 at 12:00 AM