

Peter Vroman Mason, March 3, 1928 -- May 30, 2021

Peter V. Mason of Pasadena, California, died on May 30th, 2021, after a brief illness. He was a great man whose warmth, humor, integrity and intellect will be missed by all who knew and loved him. Peter, son of William V. Mason and Mary-Scott Ryder Mason is survived by his wife Doreen (nee Kroeger); sister Ann (John); children Cathy, Mark (Laura), Maggie (Jeff), Judy (Kent) and Liz (Art); grandchildren Jennifer (Ari), Sarah (Shain), Lauren, Nathan, Rachel, and Jessica; great-grandchildren Jada, Michael and Isabella, stepsons Ken (KC) and Jeff (Diane), and numerous nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his wife Bernadette (nee Seibert), brothers Donald and Benjamin, and sister Joan.

Peter grew up in Waterbury, Vermont, where he began a lifelong love of skiing and backpacking. As a high-schooler, he was a member of the Junior Civil Air Patrol when a military plane crashed on Camel's Hump. Ignoring the mistaken coordinates insisted upon by officials, Peter led a group of fellow cadets to the crash site, literally saving the life of the lone survivor of the crash. He was honored for his heroism and bravery at the Vermont State House in 2014, where he commented, "We just did our job."

Modesty was characteristic of this intellectual giant, who went on to become an accomplished physicist at Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Peter moved to California in 1947 to study at Caltech, where he ultimately received his PhD in Electrical Engineering and Physics in 1962. He taught physics for many years at Caltech before joining JPL as a research scientist in low-temperature physics. Highlights of his career included volunteering for a two-year stint in Kanpur, India at the Indian Institute of Technology; designing the cooling system for the Infra-Red Astronomy Satellite (IRAS); and mentoring younger scientists for project Boomerang to study the properties of the Cosmic Microwave Background radiation in Antarctica.

Peter settled in the Altadena/Pasadena area, where he raised five children with his beloved wife Bernadette, who predeceased him in 1991. They shared a love of nature and conservation, living a life entwined in the natural world and teaching the values of social responsibility, equity, and respect for the planet. In the early 90's, Peter met, fell in love with, and married Doreen, with whom he lived fully and richly for 25 years, traveling the globe, attending the symphony, socializing at the Caltech Athenaeum, and hosting family gatherings for their combined extended families.

Husband, Dad, Grandad, Great-Grandad, Stepdad, Brother, Uncle, Cousin, Friend: We love you so much, and will miss your quirky humor, deep and abiding love of family, piercing intellect, fierce defender of justice, and sweet generosity. You were a beautiful soul who lived rightly, and your legacy will live on in those who treasured, lived with, and learned from you. Farewell, Peter.