



Larry Jay Friesen (September 7, 1946 – July 28, 2024)

Larry Friesen was born on September 7, 1946, to Eric and Dorothy Friesen. He was the oldest of their four children. His formative years were all spent in Kansas — Wilson (until age 8), LeRoy (age 8-11), and Clay Center (through high school as an honor roll student), and then college at the University of Kansas.

As the Space Age emerged in the late 50s and early 60s, Larry became fascinated with outer space. That interest led him to be a leader in the Clay Center Community High School science club, where he and other members spent time building and launching small rockets. He was gifted in science and math, obtaining his B.S. in Physics from University of Kansas, where he graduated in three years and was the recipient of a prestigious Summerfield Scholarship which paid for his undergraduate tuition. He was awarded scholarships to Rice University in Houston, Texas, where he received his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Astrophysics.

In college, one of his fellow scholarship hall residents recalled that he “read encyclopedias for entertainment.” He loved history and was interested in the origins of the world wars and would philosophize about such things with anyone who would listen.

It was his dream to be the first man on the moon. Although he did not achieve that goal, much of his professional career as an aerospace engineer was spent working for NASA contractors at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. He worked on space shuttle glide patterns and how space junk collisions could cause damage to spacecraft.

Larry's nephews and nieces remembered Larry's deep love of space and often playing SolarQuest with him during the Christmas holidays. Growing up, they always thought of him as their “space uncle with multiple degrees doing something for NASA.” They remember Larry helping them identify constellations. They recalled his giving them “cool science toys and a complete engineering manual for the Space Shuttle.”

He loved to have philosophical conversations with family members. Topics ranged from reasons why space junk is hard to clear and a critique of things he saw in popular science fiction shows — “well, if you really had to design a warp drive....”

In addition to space science, he also had a love of science fiction. Those early years reading *Flash Gordon* in the Sunday comics and listening to the radio show *Space Patrol* led him to write his first book, *Betrayal/Battle/Storm*. The book, a work of science fiction, is a collection of three novellas, published by Firefall Media in 2013. In addition to his work with NASA, he also taught physics at local community colleges in the Clear Lake, Texas area.

Larry was strongly patriotic and served in the United States Army for two years (1969-1971) as a Nuclear Weapons Specialist.

He was a member of the United Methodist Church in Clear Lake, Texas, where in 1995 he married Martha Tesh Friesen. Larry and Martha shared a love and interest in science. Martha turned Larry into a lover of dogs, and throughout their 29-year marriage they had several loyal dogs, including most recently, Woola.

Martha is from North Carolina and has a Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology and is on the faculty of the Texas Chiropractic College in Pasadena, Texas. Larry and Martha met through Science Connection in 1994 (which would be “online” today) when she was teaching in Minnesota. She and Larry enjoyed going to the Natural Science and Fine Arts museums in Houston, went to every science fiction movie, and would attend the yearly area gem and mineral shows.

Larry maintained his contact with his NASA buddies through a biweekly lunch meeting at a local restaurant.

He was preceded in death by his parents Eric J. Friesen (1993) and Dorothy Friesen (Bauer) (2021). He is survived by his wife, Martha Tesh Friesen; his three sisters Linda Mailen (Gary) of Olathe, Kansas; Laura Rothstein (Mark) of San Diego, and Leslie Friesen (Steven Spalding) of Louisville; and many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews; and sister-in-law Jane Tesh of Mt. Airy NC and brother and sister-in-law Joe and Mary Nelson Tesh of Summerfield NC.

Larry died on July 28, 2024, after succumbing to cancer. His remains will be interred at Greenwood Cemetery in Clay Center, Kansas.

Charitable contributions can be made in his memory to the Eric and Dorothy Friesen Scholarship Fund (online at claycentercif.org or mailed to Clay Center Community Improvement Foundation, memo: Eric and Dorothy Friesen Scholarship Fund, 432 Court Street, Clay Center, KS 67432

Memories can be shared on the Neptune Society website:

<https://neptunesociety.com/obituaries/league-city-tx/larry-friesen-11915997>

Notes of Condolence can be sent to

Martha Friesen
302 Windward Drive
League City, Texas 77573