

Dr. Craig E. Westman
July 9, 1965 – March 22, 2026

Dr. Craig E. Westman died suddenly and unexpectedly in the early hours of Sunday, March 22, 2026. Our hearts are broken, and it is hard to imagine a future without him. We are deeply grateful to the many family members, friends, and colleagues who reached out to share stories about him, convey their grief, and express their love and support to us. As Madeleine observed, we are learning that everyone knew and loved Craig the way that we did.

Craig Ellery Westman was born on July 9, 1965, in Weymouth, Massachusetts to Virginia Westman Vickers and Franklin Vickers. He and his brother Erik spent their childhood in Georgia and Florida. Craig, Erik, and their mom suffered profoundly at the hands of an alcoholic father. But Craig worked his whole life to undo the damage, and he succeeded. After attending years of Al-Anon meetings for children of alcoholics, he became a resource and a comfort to many others whose families were marred by addiction and abuse. With Lee Ann and his 4 daughters, he focused wholeheartedly on being a loving and supportive husband and a devoted father.

When Craig was in high school, he had a long-term illness which caused him to miss much of his junior year. He spent many hours studying the books of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, and developed a lifelong love of the Bible. He shared this knowledge for 8 years as a seminary teacher in both Michigan and New Jersey for youth in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and with regular early-morning emails to his wife and children.

Craig met his wife Lee Ann when they were graduate students at Florida State University. They married in 1993, and began traditions that continued throughout their 33-year marriage including Saturday lunch, UNO for dollars, hide the spoon, the Christmas ball, and many more.

Craig completed a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Arts degree in British literature from Florida Atlantic University, and graduated from Florida State University with a Ph.D. in American literature. As a graduate student, he took a job in the registrar's office so his family would have health insurance. However, he found the work far more interesting than British or American literature and thus began his long tenure in university administration. He led the enrollment teams at Ferris State University in Big Rapids Michigan, The University of Texas at El Paso, and Rutgers University in Camden, New Jersey. Craig was a true servant leader, and prioritized the growth and empowerment of his colleagues over his own self-interest. Craig was quick to boost others with his signature compliment "You Rock!!" which he meant every time he said

it or wrote it. He was collaborative and innovative in his efforts to support student success from admission to graduation, and focused on creating opportunities for low-income and first-generation college students. It is very appropriate to say that he saw himself in their experiences, and often mentioned his own experience as a first-generation college student of a single mother.

Craig was often heard before being seen due to his loud and contagious laugh. It resonated across the house, throughout a movie theatre, or on the other side of a restaurant, and was an easy way to find him in a crowd. He had a terrific sense of humor and loved all creatures great and small, domestic and wild. His family often described him as a middle-aged Snow White. Craig greeted every dog he met with “HI big sweetie!” and the dogs seemed to know they were meeting their biggest fan. His bird feeding complex on the side of the house was beloved by cardinals, woodpeckers, NJ goldfinches, neighborhood squirrels, turkeys, chipmunks, and deer, and they will likely feel his loss keenly.

Finally, Craig must be remembered for his legendary generosity. Living with Craig was like living with a genie, except wishes were unlimited. Sharing his time, energy, and resources was his love language, and he loved fully.

Craig is survived by his brother Erik, his wife, Lee Ann, his four daughters Madeleine (Josh), Erica (Jon), Jillian (Michael), and Paige (Ethan), and his six grandchildren Blair, Margot, Henry, Leon, George, and Penelope. He relished when his grandkids resorted to calling him “Cranky” because they could not pronounce Grampie. He is also survived by his beloved dogs, Ocho and Wendy, who were the 8th and 9th dogs he owned and loved during his lifetime.

Please join us to celebrate Craig’s life on Saturday, March 28, 2026, at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on 252 E Evesham Rd, Cherry Hill Township, New Jersey. Visiting hours with the family will be at 10 am and the funeral service will begin at 11 am. The family welcomes donations to an endowed scholarship in Craig’s name for Rutgers-Camden students: rutgersfoundation.org/westman