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MOAB AREA

# realestate

MAY-JUNE 2026

MAGAZINE



**Where outdoor adventure and education meet**  
Kids 'disconnect to connect' with Canyonlands Field Institute programs

*Also inside...* The area's most complete real estate listings | Remembering Joe Kingsley



**Stunning modern luxury living with rooftop deck**  
MLS#2147134 | \$1,389,000  
*Realtypath Moab (See page 12)*



**Sophisticated getaway with resort amenities**  
MLS#2109759 | \$1,995,000  
*Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices (See page 20)*



**Peaceful location with stunning views**  
MLS#2146925 | \$495,000  
*Moab Realty (See page 2)*

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**Top:** Longtime Moab business owner, real estate developer and supporter of many community initiatives, Joe Kingsley passed away in April at the age of 87. Pictured here in Castle Valley in 2016. [Photo by Murice D. Miller]

**Magazine front cover and this page bottom:** Since 1984, the nonprofit Canyonlands Field Institute has focused on connecting people to nature through educational rafting trips, field studies, and summer camps. [Photos courtesy of CFI]

# Remembering JOE KINGSLEY

Family, friends and community say goodbye to a man with a big heart who led a remarkable life

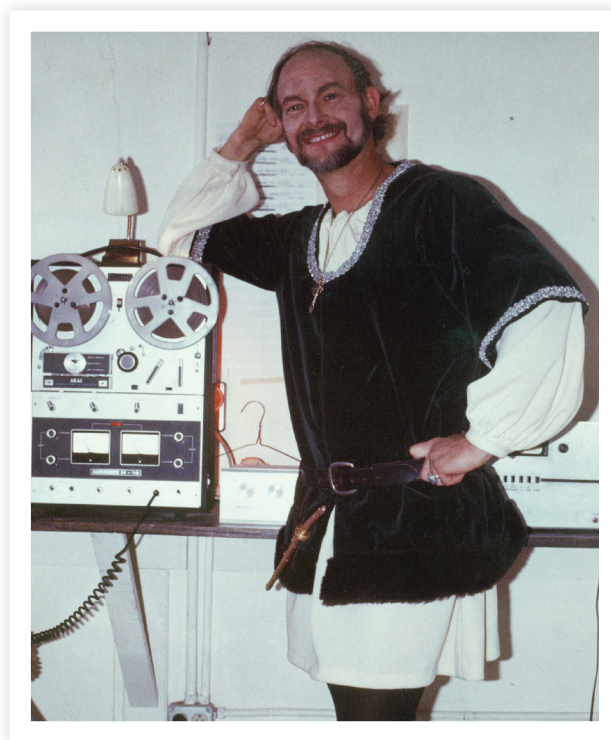
Written by Rachel Fixsen

Joe Kingsley moved to the Moab area in the 1970s and brought a sense of adventure and community spirit to the place that became his home for the next half-century. He passed away on April 9, 2026, at age 87, leaving behind legacies both big and small, famous and obscure.

“He used to say, ‘I’ve had, already, five lifetimes, this time around,’” says Britta Kingsley, Joe Kingsley’s widow, going on to list some of his careers and roles: rocket scientist, teacher, gold dealer, developer, real estate agent, broker for an airline. He was later an airline executive, and at various times ran a range of businesses, including owning and operating Moab-based businesses Sore-No-More and Glo Germ.

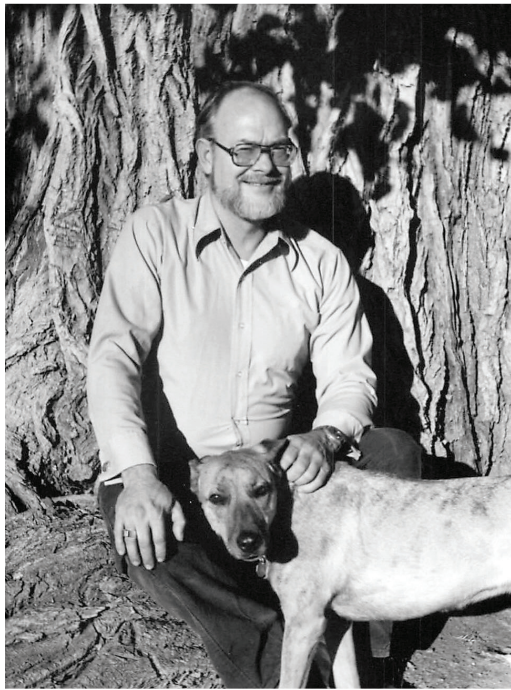
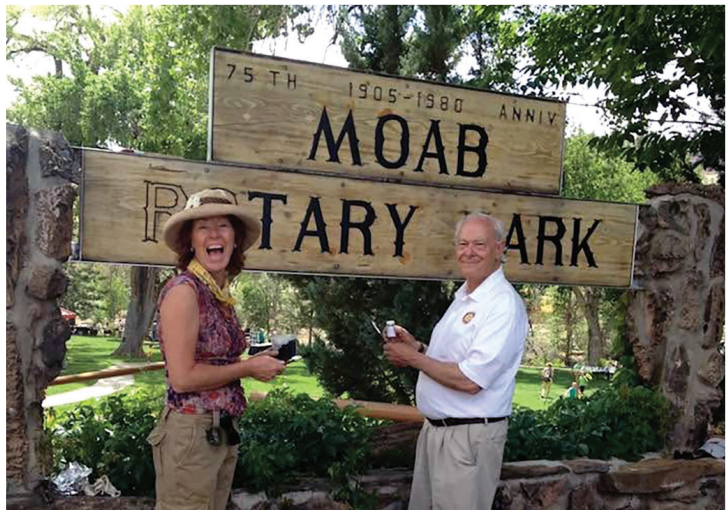
Friends describe him as intelligent, generous, funny, open-minded, willing to take risks, and above all, a great story teller with a seemingly endless trove of anecdotes, some of which stretch credibility, though his listeners generally conclude the tales are true.

“It’s hard to remember them all, because every Rotary meeting he would have a story,” says Dave Bierschied, who knew Kingsley for decades and was a fellow member and leader in both the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. “I have to assume they weren’t embellished because he told them the same every time.”



*This page:* Kingsley in 1977. [Courtesy of Kingsley family] *Opposite page:* In Castle Valley in 2016. [Photo by Murice D. Miller]







Some of those stories recount roles Kingsley played in the development of the area. In the 1970s when he was selling lots in Castle Valley and business was worryingly slow, he spent his last few dollars on a six-pack of beer and was sharing them with a friend in front of his real estate office when a buyer came and purchased several lots, keeping Kingsley afloat and allowing him to continue developing the valley. In the 1980s, he was the owner of the Poplar Place, a beloved bar and restaurant in the Main Street building that now houses the Trailhead restaurant. The bar hosted live music, including the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band and ZZTop, and was known nationwide. It burned down in 1989 and was rebuilt and reopened under a different name. In the early 1990s, Kingsley was involved in the “America’s most scenic dump” contest that helped spark the tourism boom that pulled Moab out of its post-uranium industry slump.

Kingsley also financed Castle Creek Winery, which became the first licensed commercial winery in the state after, as the story goes, he and a friend persuaded the governor at the time, Norm Bangerter, to see what he could do to change state law to allow such a license. Late Moab local Joel Nystrom was the wine master and produced a unique wine made

from grapes special to the Moab area, called Utah Black.

That wine featured in another Kingsley story that he shared in a 2023 article in the *Times Independent*. In 1985, Castle Valley was incorporated and Kingsley, as head of the HOA, was serving as interim mayor until an election could be held. A few weeks later, Kingsley received a call from a representative from the U.S. State Department. At first he thought it was a prank, but it turned out that a Chinese deputy minister of cultural development named Yan Fujan wanted to visit Castle Valley. Fujan was coming to the US to meet with President Ronald Reagan, and living in one of the oldest towns in China himself, had decided he wanted to visit the youngest town in the US.

Kingsley hosted Fujan for dinner at his home. He served a glass of Utah Black, which the minister raved about.



**Opposite page clockwise:** Kingsley with Mrs. Utah 1986 Kris Perkins. Kingsley being interviewed by journalist Charles Kuralt for CBS Sunday Morning for a story on “America’s Most Scenic Dump.” Joe and Britta Kingsley painting the Moab Rotary Park sign. Meeting Utah Governor Jon Huntsman, Jr. at a community event in Moab. Photo used in the “Go Joe” County Commission campaign. [Photos courtesy of Kingsley family] **This page, top:** Kingsley speaking at a celebration marking his retirement from real estate in 2016. [Photo by Murice D. Miller] **Right:** Discussing Moab real estate with then Utah Governor Gary Herbert. [Courtesy of Kingsley family]



“Fujan offered me a presidential gift in exchange for an unopened bottle of Utah Black Wine,” Kingsley wrote. “Of course, I accepted the offer. What I received was a scroll with good luck blessings from all the high-ranking monks in China shown by the red ring impressions.”

Kingsley was an advocate for many community improvements: promoting tourism, getting a full Utah State University campus in town, improving transit, and making housing more available. He worked to persuade the Moab City Council to approve a skate park at Swanny City Park, and helped with improvements to Rotary Park. Recently he helped facilitate a new, permanent location for local nonprofit thrift store Wabi Sabi. He was also a proud father of two and step-father of two, and had over 30 grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Kingsley’s step-son Austin Avery grew up in Castle Valley and recalls his stepdad teaching him how to build fences, lay irrigation pipes, and operate a tractor. Kingsley grew up in rural New Mexico and while he went on to study nuclear physics, travel all over the country, and specialize in business and real estate, he retained his rural grit and know-how.

Avery credits him with planting the ideas that got him interested in fabrication and off-road racing.

“I remember, in Castle Valley, when I was maybe like 12 years old,” Avery recalls, “we had this old Chevy Blazer, and I remember him laying under it and pointing out U-joints and axles and where you have to grease stuff.”

Avery later worked with his stepfather at Glo Germ, helping to develop new products and traveling with Kingsley to trade shows. Glo Germ is a substance used to teach proper hand-washing practices by illustrating how germs and bacteria spread. It’s been sold in dozens of countries.

“It literally saved thousands of lives,” Avery says of the product. “It was neat to be part of something that you’re not doing just to make money – it’s bigger than that. Joe was always about that.”

As a real estate agent, Kingsley was known for doing what he could to help others get a leg up.

“Locally, there’s so many people he has helped, as a Realtor, get their first home,” Britta says. “Maybe no payments down, maybe a low monthly payment so they could get on their feet and get going... I’ve had a lot of cards coming in, Facebook messages [saying] ‘Joe helped me so much.’”

*A longtime member of Moab’s Rotary, Kingsley is seen here with fellow members and items ready for donation. From left: Dave Biershield, Mary McGann, Bruce Louthan, Joe Kingsley, Gordon Beh, David Schipper, Britta Kingsley, Danette Johnson, John Fogg, Mike Badger and Steve Getz. [Courtesy of Kingsley family]*



During the pandemic in 2020, Kingsley waived rent for a time for tenants who he knew were struggling to make it through.

Joe is also fondly remembered by former colleagues for his mentorship and friendship.

Moab real estate agent Rachel Moody said, “He carried a torch for me as my vice president when I was president of the Grand San Juan Association of Realtors.” One of her favorite stories from Kingsley is about the time he grew a field of mint on his Castle Valley property and was mistakenly contacted by police “for growing something else that’s green!”

Kingsley was working with a ghost writer to record his memories and compile them into a book. Among them: the one about the haunted house in Castle Valley; the mail-order pet alligator; the horse that bit his car, scratching a brand-new paint job; the former student who, years later, found and returned his cash-stuffed wallet; looking for the “motherlode” of gold in Miner’s Basin (in defiance of a miner’s promise to God); buying a TV star’s golf course

**“Joe was an example of how to be a good person, how to problem-solve, how to be involved in your community.”**

on a tropical island; hanging out with Richard and Pat Nixon in New York... to reference a few.

Befitting someone with such an unusual life, Kingsley had a unique personal taste. Peanut butter flavored whiskey was a favorite drink. He had an Excalibur car that friends nicknamed “Chitty” for its resemblance to the titular car in *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*; and he developed a penchant for bow ties, something for which Britta takes credit. She

encouraged him to spruce up his wardrobe when they met, and the distinct accessory became a signature look. His favorite bow tie, which Britta says he wore nearly every day in the last years of his life, was red-striped and made of wood.

Local real estate agent Danette Johnson knew Kingsley for about 20 years and calls him “an incredible mentor.”

“I’m glad to have known him,” she says, adding that he modeled ideals like “how to be a good person, how to problem-solve, how to be involved in your community.” ■

*Joe and Britta Kingsley photographed in Castle Valley in 2016. [Photo by Murice D. Miller]*



# WHERE OUTDOOR *adventure* AND EDUCATION MEET

Kids disconnect from their phones and connect to nature  
at Canyonlands Field Institute

By Sharon Sullivan

Overnight visitors at Canyonlands Field Institute's Professor Valley Field Camp will enjoy new accommodations now that renovations have been completed at its adventure-outdoor education camp, located in the beautiful canyon country off Utah State Route 128, the "River Road," at Mile Marker 19.

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**From left:** Canyonlands Field Institute's Executive Director Michele Johnson; Development Director Shelby Rockelein; Educator and whitewater rafting guide Jade Sulu; and Director of marketing and communication Brennan Gillis. **Below:** The new main building at Canyonlands Field Institute's Professor Valley location. The structure encompasses a kitchen, an eating area, a classroom, and administrative space. New glamping-style tents for campers will soon be completed nearby. [Photos on this page, and all pages, are courtesy of Canyonlands Field Institute]



Until recently, visitors camped outside or in teepees – which is great as long as it doesn't rain (teepees are designed to be open at the top to allow for smoke to escape – although neither cooking or heating ever took place in Professor Valley teepees).

Guests will now stay in bell-shaped, glamping-style tents with floors, cots, and doors that zip shut. Professor Valley currently has at least a dozen or more of these tents, each with a capacity to hold three or five people.

“Overall it will make this field camp more accessible and inviting to the demographic we are serving,” which is primarily middle-school students, although children of other ages, and adults, also attend outdoor programs in Professor Valley, says Brennan Gillis, director of marketing and communication for Canyonlands Field Institute (CFI). “Plus, pathways and trails were made more accessible for people with mobility issues.”

A new commercial kitchen is also now available at the site, as well as a new building with classroom space for when weather calls for an indoor classroom. A dedicated first-aid room has also been added.

A grand opening ribbon-cutting event was scheduled for May 16, to introduce community members to the new amenities and offer an opportunity to tour the site.

Karla VanderZanden and the late Robin Wilson founded CFI more than 40 years ago to offer adventure and outdoor education via hikes, river rafting, and seminars on natural history, human history, writing and art. CFI is a nonprofit organization whose base of operations is the 35-acre Professor Valley Field Camp outside of Moab.

While the majority of CFI programs are geared toward youth, 2026 adult programming includes multi-day river trips led by content-specific experts from organizations like the Returning Rapids Project, the Nature Conservancy, and others. “Imagine a field trip for adults, in a beautiful location, led by an expert,” Gillis says.

“Flowing Through History, The Past, Present, and Future of the Lower San Juan” was scheduled for May 10-15, and “Women and Water: Reflections of Labyrinth Canyon” is planned for September 21-25.

These types of outdoor experiences are not necessarily for the “adrenaline junkie,” says Gillis. They're more geared for folks who are interested in exploring and adventuring while



**Top:** As part of the recent improvements to the CFI site in Professor Valley, pathways and trails were made more accessible for people with mobility issues.





**‘Attending a CFI outdoor adventure program is often transformative for youth, many of whom have never experienced a river trip, or even gone camping.’**

learning about the area’s natural history. These adult programs help support CFI’s mission by raising money for scholarships for local youth to attend outdoor education programs.

Donations from individuals and businesses also go toward subsidizing youth programs, which include summer camps – both day and overnight – and spring and fall hiking, camping and river rafting programs.

“We work with kids from all backgrounds,” says Shelby Rockelein, CFI Development Director. “We have groups with little previous experience with the outdoors.”

The nonprofit received a huge boost when the Colin D. Fryer Foundation donated \$200,000 to fund CFI youth programming, including 100% of CFI’s summer camps for local kids.

“We are so grateful that Colin has a special place in his heart for kids to learn outdoors,” says CFI Executive Director Michele Johnson. “This support will go a long way toward our objective to ensure that youth who otherwise would not be able to afford to participate receive a scholarship.”

Attending a CFI outdoor adventure program is often transformative for youth, many of whom have never experienced a river trip, or even gone camping. Rockelein remembers an extremely shy and introverted young student who attended a three-day rafting trip on the Colorado River. By the end of the three days the child had gained new-found confidence, assuming a leadership role as “paddle captain” – directing the other five people who were also operating the oars. “They really blossomed, and found themselves in a leadership role,” Rockelein recalls. “It was a total transformation of the student.”



Another student, from Oregon, had never been rafting before coming to Canyonlands Field Institute, nor had she ever visited the Southwest. After attending a CFI river trip, she returned to Utah the following year to enroll in the Teen Guide in Training program to learn the technical skills of becoming a river guide. She ended up with a job working with CFI's river program.

A similar opportunity, the Native Teen Guide in Training Program was founded in 2013, specifically for indigenous youth in grades 8-12. The teens spend eight days on the San Juan River learning how to paddle through challenging whitewater rapids, says Gillis. Jade Sulu, a Diné youth from Arizona, is one of CFI's success stories.

As a 13-year-old, Sulu began learning technical river guiding skills via the Native Teen Guide in Training Program. Now 21, Sulu works as a fulltime whitewater guide for CFI. The Native Teen Guide Program gives kids access to training, mentorship, resources, and to experience professional development in an industry that's hard to break into," Gillis says.

While CFI serves primarily local children, kids have also come from Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, and even as far as Baltimore, Maryland. For the past 23 years, a school in Oregon has been bringing students to Utah to participate in CFI's outdoor adventure and education programs, says Johnson.

Johnson became CFI executive director in 2024, after working for the organization since September 2019. She grew up in Detroit, worked in public health for 30 years, and eventually moved to Salt Lake City. Over a 10-year span she'd bring her sons rafting through Westwater Canyon on the Colorado River in eastern Utah. In 2015, she moved to Moab and discovered CFI. "When I looked at its mission, I became a member," she recalls.

She says she began working for the organization because she wanted to make a difference in young people's lives. "I believe in the mission of helping youth make that connection outside of the classroom," she says. "CFI represents all my values," including "disconnecting from devices."

Canyonlands Field Institute has had a no-phone policy for its youth programs since at least 2018. "The goal is to disconnect to connect," Rockelein says. "Our programs are designed to help kids build stronger connections to the world around them – including





their environment and their peers. Phones are a huge distraction from this process since their primary function is to demand our attention.” The no-phone policy became even more essential to its mission after the pandemic, when teens’ online use became more pronounced, she notes.

For some kids it may be the longest, or even the first time they’ve ever been separated from their phones, she says. While staff members have occasionally received pushback from kids regarding the no-phone policy, most are okay with leaving them behind, she says. A 2024 survey reported 68% of the students saying they enjoyed being away from their phones while participating in CFI outdoor programs. A handful said that while they didn’t love being separated from their phones, they recognized how it benefited them, says Rockelein. Student feedback included statements like “I got to experience real life,” and “It was nice to be with my friends without a phone to distract me,” plus, “I realized how much it stresses me out and how much easier it is to connect with people without it.”

Several CFI programs are free for local youth, thanks to revenue generated not only from adult programs, but also memberships to CFI, that range from \$40 to \$500. Members receive a digital newsletter, and an annual report. Monthly, sustaining members receive additional thank-you gifts. There are company sponsorships, ranging from \$250 to \$10,000. In 2025, CFI reported approximately 200 members, a third of them from Utah, with 16 percent specifically from Moab, says Rockelein.

The San Diego-based Global Leadership Adventures, which sends teens on international community service trips worldwide, added CFI (its sole USA destination) to its list of trips for youth, ages 17-20, Johnson says. “We provide education on the river and stewardship by actively partnering with (federal land agencies), Johnson says.

Global Leadership Adventures adopted a no-phone policy for its programs, after seeing the success of CFI’s policy, says Johnson.

While adults are allowed to keep their phones with them on CFI trips, they are encouraged to use them sparingly during outings. Or, people can simply heed CFI’s advice to “leave your devices at home, grab your guidebook, and join us in the wild.” ■

For more information visit: [www.cfimoab.org](http://www.cfimoab.org)