

Richard Laursen Obituary 1929-2023

Richard, known to those who loved him as Dick, had a clear life focus ever since his mother gave him a bird field guide as a child: the natural world. Dick was born in 1929 to Nellie Terry in St. Helena, California. His father, Viggo Laursen, died in an industrial accident a few months before Dick's birth. Dick passed away August 21, 2023, at age 94.

His mother remarried and they moved to the remote and rough Middle Fork Feather River canyon for the rest of the depression years. It was there Dick developed his passion for nature, wild places, and his can-do spirit. He loved wild rivers, and like them, Dick was dynamic, vibrant, and a strong force that affected everything around him.

Following his Korean War service, he attended Humboldt State College graduating with a degree in Fisheries Management. One week later he married the love of his life, Carol Leach.

Dick's career was centered on the outdoors and the condition and care of the natural world. Dick's first professional job - and his favorite of all time - was as a game warden in the Sacramento Valley, where he could work with wildlife, be outdoors with flexible hours, and have professional authority. Later, he held various State positions focused on water and land use planning. He also did intergovernmental relations work with counties and the State when he worked for the Coastal Commission in Eureka.

After his 20+ year career with the State of California, Dick took early retirement to strike out on his own. He bought and fixed up old houses, took real estate classes to learn more, and eventually bought a small mobile home park. As he gained confidence and experience, he found opportunities with larger projects, including constructing several buildings.

He always carried basic tools in the trunk and could build or repair anything! House after house, rental after rental; he liked working for himself...long and hard. Eventually it led to trading the mobile home park for the first of two 100-unit RV parks.

Dick was always very active in the environmental community, donating thousands of hours to a variety of organizations and keeping up with current issues through memberships and publications on wide-ranging topics. He strongly supported the Effie Yeaw Nature Center, along the American River Parkway, which was a favorite place with its mission of bringing people and nature together.

Dick was a life-long student of the natural world with a special passion for birds which he and Carol eagerly explored all over the world, often with family and friends. He loved to learn and share his knowledge, leading birding trips and giving talks about birds and other topics for many years. When he was in his 50s, Dick became a pilot so he could soar with the birds.

Eskaton Village Carmichael was their home for his last 16 years where he happily participated in village life and led efforts to protect nature by serving as chair of the Garden and Building & Grounds committees.

Dick is survived by Carol, his wife of 66 years, and their sons and wives: Donald (Christine), David (Terri) and Darrel (Joan). He also leaves seven grandchildren: Bethany, Tyler, Glenn, Olivia, Garrett, Graham and Gracye.