



## Richard Jay Petersen

April 17, 1937 - March 10, 2025

RICHARD JAY PETERSEN April 17, 1937 ~ March 10, 2025

Richard Jay Petersen passed away on March 10, 2025 after having his heart valve torn during a botched surgery on February 13. Dick was conceived in Horace, Nebraska during the summer of 1936, but fate and the dustbowl decided that he wouldn't be born there. That fall his parents and Danish paternal grandfather sold their jointly owned, drought-stricken farm and the four of them: Mom (Frances), Dad (Jay), Grandpa (Johannes), and Dick (still in his mother's womb) all migrated west to start a new life in Washington State. They rented a farm in the Cowlitz River Valley town of Salkum, where Dick was born on April 17, 1937. While he was still a toddler the family moved to a farm in Riffe. This farm was right across the road from the Cowlitz River on the south side. He had fond memories of fishing the Cowlitz with his dad and grandpa, though he reckoned that he probably did more rock throwing than actual fishing. His sister, JoAnn, and brother, Jerald, were born while the family was living in Riffe. In 1942 his dad got a job as a rigger at the Kaiser shipyard in Vancouver, WA. So, the family moved to a farm they bought in the suburb of Hazel Dell, located where the Target store now sits. Dick attended Hazel Dell Elementary School until he was 10. In 1947 his sister, Marylin, was born and the family needed a bigger house. So, that summer they bought a farm in the community of Felida that accommodated this need. For 10-year-old Dick this farm was 15 acres of adventure with Whipple Creek flowing right through it. Growing up in Felida he had a number of pets including a tom cat

named Cracker Box, a collie dog named Vic, and a racoon named Smokey. His fondness for the outdoors grew in this setting where he engaged in hunting and fishing and joined the Boy Scouts of America. During his youth Dick had several sources of income at different times, these included a newspaper route, berry picking, working on a nearby dairy farm, and serving as a plumber's assistant. He attended Shumway Junior High School where he took shop classes that instilled in him a lifelong love of woodworking. He graduated from Vancouver High School in 1955. He was working at the cannery in Fruit Valley and attending Clark Community College in 1958 when his "friends and neighbors" selected him to serve in the US Army. He underwent basic training at Fort Riley, KS before shipping to Germany. The only ocean cruise Dick ever took or wanted to take was aboard the USNS General William O. Darby when he sailed from New York City to Bremerhaven. After a short time stationed in Baumholder he was transferred to the 8th Infantry Division headquarters in Bad Kreuznach where he was attached to the 1st Airborne Battle Group for the remainder of his service. He took advantage of his time in Germany to see the sights and experience the culture. When Dick mustered out of the Army in August of 1960 his parents had sold the farm in Felida and moved to Newport, OR where they purchased the Shoreline Motel. He stayed with them for a few months and worked at Georgia Pacific's Toledo sawmill before returning to Vancouver where he worked as a factory rep at Insulation and Wires Inc. up through 1964. Shortly after returning to Vancouver in 1960 Dick bought a white Triumph TR3 ragtop, which he soon traded in for a silver convertible Porsche 356D. An avid car buff, Dick was a founding member of the Via Sports Car Club. It was through a fellow club member that he met Becky Kuhnhausen, whom he wed on December 21, 1963. Together they raised three sons and a daughter whom they enjoyed taking on camping trips, particularly to the coast and the Gifford Pinchot National Forest. On January 13, 1965 Dick went to work at the Crown Zellerbach papermill in Camas as a lift truck driver. He had worked his way up into management by the time he retired 33 years later. He and Becky bought

their first house together in 1965 after having rented it for less than year. They sold this house in 1977 and completed building a new house themselves in 1978. Dick lived the rest of his life in this house. Dick's curious mind sought out knowledge and gathered new skills throughout his life. He was a voracious reader of: Science journals, fiction and non-fiction novels, woodworking periodicals, car magazines, how-to guides, and more. However, his wisdom wasn't limited to the derivative knowledge of literature. He engaged the world directly for insight and inspiration through travel and working with his hands. He enjoyed exploring natural and engineered wonders whether they were local or exotic. He witnessed many things firsthand, including: The bioluminescent waters of Lajas, Puerto Rico, Kilauean lava flows on Hawaii's Big Island, Britain's Stonehenge, Rhenish castles, a total eclipse of the sun in the Willamette Valley, and the southern cross from the low latitudes. He was sure to be informed ahead of these experiences and pondered them long afterwards. He was a kind and patient man who never hesitated to lend a hand or an ear. He often helped friends and family with auto care and all facets of household maintenance, from roofing to plumbing to electrical. He was an excellent woodworker and in retirement busied himself with making beautiful wooden furniture and objets d'art, which he gifted to those dear to him. He was preceded in death by: father (Jay), mother (Frances), sister (JoAnn), and brother (Jerald.) He is survived by: Wife (Becky), three sons (Scott, Brent, and Kirk), daughter (Heidi), four grandchildren (Drake, Brooke, Kate, and John), and sister (Marilyn.) A celebration of life will be held for Dick at Hazel Dell Community Park, West Shelter between 4 - 6 p.m. on June 27, 2025.

# Tribute Wall



“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Evergreen Memorial Gardens Cemetery, Funeral Chapel and Crematory*

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**A Memorial Tree was planted for Richard J. Petersen - March 13, 2025 at 12:00 AM**