



Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D.

September 13, 1932 - July 19, 2025

IN MEMORY OF:

Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D.

Serving Location:

CRAIN FUNERAL HOME – MURPHYSBORO

1421 Walnut Street, Murphysboro, Illinois

Richard Dickson was born in Carbondale, Illinois. He was the first-born son of Elizabeth Krysher Dickson and Jason Milburn Dickson and grandson of Maude (Spear) Krysher and Frank C. Krysher (a former Mayor of Carbondale). Richie lived in Makanda, Illinois. His mother was a schoolteacher and his father was a construction worker who built their family home down the hill from his in-laws. His dad also worked on the power plants at Southern Illinois University and the locks in Sault St. Marie, Michigan. Richie's younger siblings, Robbie and Johnny, followed making a trio of boys. We hear they were a handful.

After delivering his eighth-grade graduation speech at Buncombe School (which was a most-enjoyable recitation from him on request), he went to Carbondale Community High School where he was a starter on the football

team until he finished his senior year in 1950. In 1951, he and five other teammates enlisted in the United States Marine Corps. Richard joined the Korean War effort, serving until 1954.

Post-discharge, Mr. Dickson worked in a railroad camp. He had plans to become a State Trooper or Forest Ranger. Then, he and a co-worker contracted polio after visiting a state fair in Wisconsin. His rehabilitation was done at Hines Hospital in Chicago, Illinois. There, he met a young lady from Weleetka, Oklahoma, named Carol Ann Overlease, who was completing her nurse's training. After secretly dating Richard, Miss Overlease asked for a recommendation for a new job in Marion, Illinois, as she and Mr. Dickson were to be married. Her surprised supervisor agreed. They married in Weleetka in 1956 and continued their commitment for nearly 69 years.

Utilizing the GI Bill, Mr. Dickson entered Southern Illinois University (Carbondale-SIUC) in 1956 where he earned his degrees in Forestry with a Bachelor of Science (1960) and a Master of Science (1962). Mr. Dickson excelled in his studies and was Forestry Club President, Forestry Representative to the Agricultural Student Council, and a charter member of the Beta Chapter of Alpha Zeta (an association which continued through UC-Berkeley and ISU-Ames). He was also a member of the Phi Kappa Phi SIUC chapter.

In addition, he was given a Sahara Coal Company Forestry Scholarship award and SIUC awards for scholarship and activities, including Outstanding Senior. Also, he was the Master of Ceremonies at an All-Agricultural Banquet. Surely, he was erudite and entertaining. Before graduating SIUC he had co-authored four papers. He often said he had lost the use of a leg, but gained the use of his brain.

Meanwhile, in 1959, the Dickson's welcomed their first daughter, Carol

Elizabeth, in Marion, Illinois. Aided by Carol's nursing work and Richard's bartering of garden chores for dental work and various things for his family (including a puppy named Tuffer), he pursued a Ph.D. in Plant Physiology from the University of California, Berkeley, earning that degree in 1968. He was also a member of UC Berkeley's Sigma Xi Honorary Science Society. During this time, the family grew with the addition of Diane Lynn in 1964. The family returned to the Midwest, where Dr. Dickson worked for the USDA Forest Service at Iowa State University in Ames. Their neighbors, the Kinrade's and the Stromer's, became life-long friends.

Dr. Dickson joined the North Central Forest Experiment Station in Rhinelander, Wisconsin in 1970. In 1973, their youngest daughter, Nancy Lee, was born in Marshfield, Wisconsin. His career included 83 publications and four book chapters. He was the co-editor of "Tree Physiology" and associate editor of "Forest Science." His scientific and technical works were major contributions to international literature on tree physiology that is still being used and cited by researchers throughout the world. The recognition of his being an authority in his field lead to invitations to speak at workshops in Japan, France, and The Netherlands. He was most proud of his work on the Aspen FACE (Free-Air Carbon Enrichment) Project which was a far-reaching technical study. He was, as we explained to our friends, "the big guy in acid rain and the future of urban reforestation."

Before his retirement, 32 years later, Dr. Dickson was given many awards. He was presented with an Alumni Achievement Award from SIUC in 1990 and gave the College of Agriculture commencement address in May of that year. In 1991, he accepted the Award for Distinguished Service USDA in Washington, DC. In 1992, he was honored with a Certificate for Outstanding Service to the Society of American Foresters. In 1993, he accepted another Award for Distinguished Service USDA in Washington, DC. He is the only

person to receive this honor twice. Also, in 1993, he received a USDA “Celebration of Excellence” recognition.

Richard truly enjoyed the outdoors. Fishing, hunting, and “gathering” continually fed his family and friends. He would see a wild fruit tree or a mushroom spot and return for the harvest. Visiting scientists and graduate students were frequent dinner guests and had occasionally been surprised by the Northwoods fare. He was also a recycler before that was much of a concept. The junk-yard guy probably wondered who the heck he was with all those cans. He gathered those too.

Richard and Carol returned to Makanda, Illinois after building their lovely home in a bluff and creek area of the family homestead. He continued to hunt and created another thoughtful and beautifully-natural environment. They enjoyed many years before his death at home looking out the window at the birds and the trees. We all enjoyed an idyllic life, truly.

He is survived by Carol (Overlease) Dickson his wife of 68 years, Carol Elizabeth Dickson (and Steve Pederson) of Grafton, WI, Diane (Lynn) Dickson Alderete (and Jason) of Durham, CT, Nancy LD Lee (and Jeffrey) of Makanda, IL, and his brothers Robert Dickson (and Joan) of Punta Gorda, FL, and John Dickson (and Linda) of Makanda, IL.

There are also the grand-daughters, Jill DeQuardo (and Nick) of Pewaukee, WI, Mallory Kelley (and Scott) of Waubeka, WI, grand-son Calvin Eugene Alderete (and Laynie) of Portland, CT, and great-grandsons William Scott Kelley and Jack Eugene Kelley. The family would also like to thank Richard’s caregivers, Brenda Williamson, Lorie Elsasser, Patti Parks, and Mary Vincent for their dedication. There are innumerable other family members and friends who have been influenced by this amazing, capable, and loving man.

Funeral Services will be held on Friday, July 25, 2025 at 11:00 AM with Rev. K. Stephen Combs officiating at Crain Funeral Home Murphysboro. Visitation will be held from 10:00 AM until 11:00 AM the day of the service at the funeral home.

The cremation of Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D. will be personally handled by the staff of Crain Funeral Home.

Crain Funeral Home in Murphysboro is in charge of arrangements.

Previous Events

Visitation

JUL **25**. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (CT)

Crain Funeral Home - Downtown Murphysboro
1421 Walnut St
Murphysboro, IL 62966
(618) 684-2131

Funeral Service

JUL **25**. 11:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Crain Funeral Home - Downtown Murphysboro
1421 Walnut St
Murphysboro, IL 62966
(618) 684-2131

Tribute Wall

PG

“ *Patti E (Patsy), Dawn, Cathy G & Garth G purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D..*



Patti E (Patsy), Dawn, Cathy G & Garth G - July 24, 2025 at 06:15 PM

NR

“ *Nancy and Gene Richards purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D..*



Nancy and Gene Richards - July 22, 2025 at 05:06 PM



“ *Dreams From the Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Richard Eugene Dickson, Ph.D..*



July 22, 2025 at 11:55 AM