

# Richard





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# Let me tell you about the most important person in my life.



**F**or over 53 years she has been sharing her life with me. It blows me away to think that another human being as special and wonderful as Margie, my best friend and wife, has stuck with me all this time. It is an undeserved and incredible blessing because I have too often been thoughtless, careless and hurtful in our relationship. Only a saint could or would have been so patient with, accepting of, and forgiving to me these past five-plus decades.

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Margie swept me off my feet the first time we met and became the most beautiful wife-to-be who ever walked down the aisle. I am still unable to believe I was lucky enough to have been able to talk her into accepting my proposal and the huge changes in her life she would face as a result of our union. Only a week after our wedding in Bayside, New York we had to be in Indianapolis where I began my internal medicine internship. Abruptly, Margie was torn away from her loving family home and the place (New York) she had always lived. Margie had been teaching chemistry for three years in Harrison High School in New York, yet Indiana would not allow her to teach there because she had not completed a student teaching course at Barnard College (an Ivy League school)!! So, to help us make ends meet since I was paid

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only \$2,000 a year, she got a job in one of the research labs at Indiana University's Riley Children's Hospital. That was one of the first of innumerable sacrifices Margie has made for me, especially during the turmoil of our lives together during the over four decades I practiced medicine.

I realize that I have asked far too many sacrifices of Margie and I owe her more than I can ever repay for her sacrifices for me and our family. Over the past fifteen years I have been especially happy to have been able to begin to repay her for some of those sacrifices and I am so happy to see how appreciative she has been for that. Always a sociable star, Margie has now begun to enjoy the opportunity to be a leader in our social and friend's circles, freer and happier as a person since my retirement as a physician. I hope she is as happy with that freedom as I am that it has been made possible for her.

Not often enough do I see and understand what a wonderful mother of our children Margie has been. She bore us three beautiful children. Margie loves them and has always been there to guide them as they found their way in life, found their spouses, and bore and raised their children. That is another reason she is and has been the most important person in my life. I look forward to many more opportunities to say thank you to Margie. She has been and is a blessing to me and to so many others and what more could one say one's life should be about? I

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love you, Margie. Thank you, love. Bless you, love.

Now let me share with you a quite different response to this question, that of another person who came to mind as I read the question. While at George Washington High in Indianapolis I was greatly influenced by my Latin teacher, Ms. Iva C. Head. I knew almost nothing about her personal life but learned a great deal from her as my teacher. She shepherded me through the writings of Cicero and Virgil, including the Aeneid. She was very strict and put up with no 'monkey shining', as she called it when you failed to act with decorum and seriousness. One was always expected to have read the assignment and prepared one's homework. The only time I hadn't she scolded me in front of the whole class when she saw I was unprepared. I almost immediately appreciated that this meant she had much admiration for and expectations for me as her student, softening the blow and calling me to a higher level of responsibility.

For my whole life I have continued to appreciate the beauty of Latin and the classics. Knowledge of Latin was invaluable as I pursued my medical education, of course, but Ms. Head's high standards for me regarding one's preparation and study were perhaps even more important and significant. Most of all, however, I appreciated that this person who was so important in my young life showed me and her other students her love of and enjoyment of teaching. She cared selflessly for us. I think my

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warm thoughts and feelings for Iva C Head, a teacher, must have been important to me when I met the one who became my favorite teacher ever, the one who accepted my proposal for marriage!

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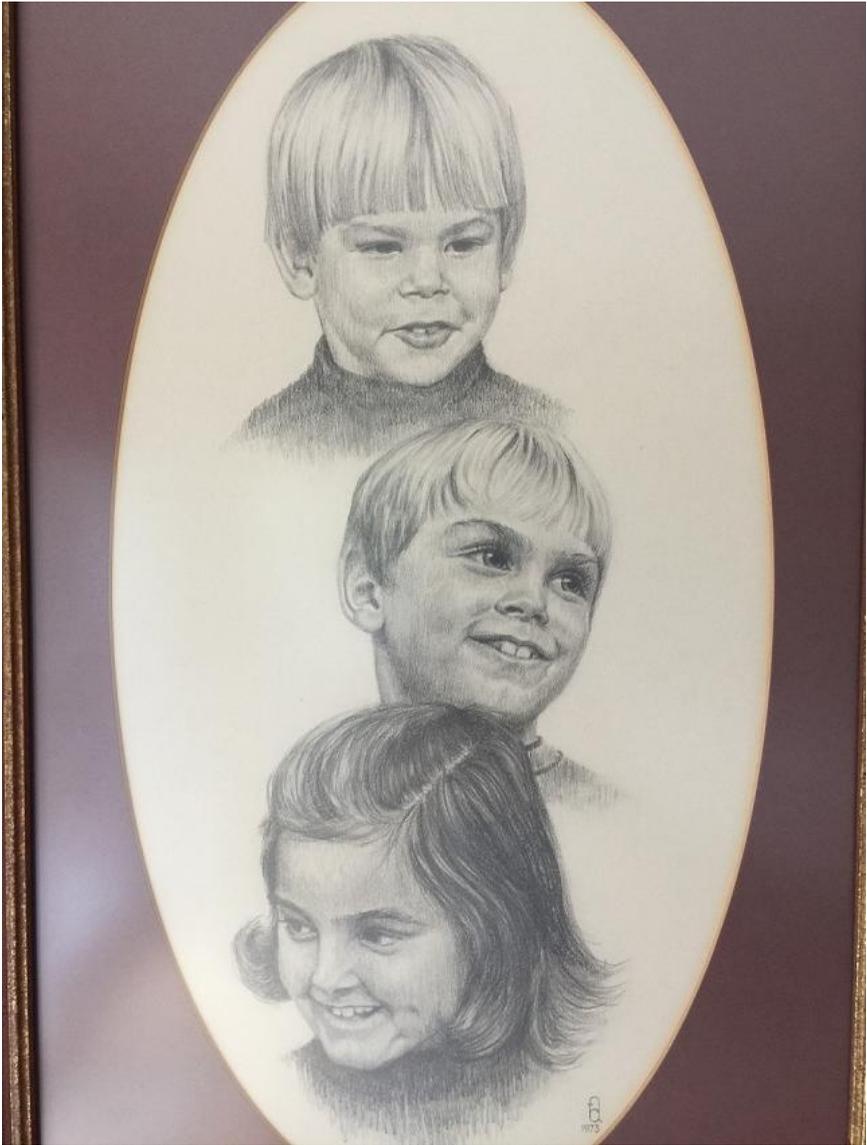
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# Which people have been the kindest to me in my life?



The person who has been kindest to me in my life has been my wife, Margie. She is my best friend and is always thoughtful, forgiving, and faithful. I am deeply grateful for her love.

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Composite pencil drawings of Kurt, Jim and Kirsten by Tom Abrams

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As painful as it is for me to mention, or even recall the experience of being on trial decades ago, I was very appreciative and deeply moved by what our three children did at that time. Without even asking, they each took a costly week out of their busy lives to be present in court to support me and Margie through that emotional and worrisome experience. Thank God, truth prevailed, and I was vindicated.



Mama and Papa's passport/citizenship photos

Mama and Papa Niederberger, Margie's parents, were parents-in-law anyone would have been fortunate to have. I was so lucky to have been their son-in-law and to have received their acceptance, their constant love and unwavering support.

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Mama and Papa with their first four grandchildren, Erica, Jennifer, Kirsten & Jim.

Others from whom I have felt kindness in my life include my mother, whose love for me and my sisters was selfless, constant, and never ending, even when I was not so kind to her.

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Mom in 2006. ALS put her in a wheelchair

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I have described in many other places in my story the kindness I was so fortunate to have received from my maternal grandmother, Marie B. Eilers.



Grandma Eilers with our family here at a family reunion.

Quietly kind and one whose thoughtfulness and concern for all students was transparent, Dr. Aura Severinghaus, was dean of my medical school, Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons. I always suspected Dr. Severinghaus collaborated with others, including my parents, to help me get back on track to becoming a physician during my very troubled first year at Columbia in New York.

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Iva C. Head, my Latin teacher at George Washington High, was tough on me but the kind of teacher I needed at the time.

Dr. Stanley Feld, friend and a fellow leader in the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, remains my friend. His friendship and kindnesses were regular and frequent while we worked together to advance the care of patients in our field of medicine.

Finally, the innumerable kindnesses Margie and I, and our children have received from Barbara and her husband, Tom Halleck. We can never thank them enough.



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# What is the farthest I have ever traveled?



I have considered answering this in several different ways, such as telling about the farthest I have ever traveled away from my home, the oldest civilization I have ever visited, the poorest people and places I have ever visited, or even the most emotional experience I have ever had.

Let me discuss these in reverse order. My most emotional experience was falling in love with my future wife in New York City while in my fourth year of medical school. Margie is a beautiful and brilliant wife any man would be very lucky to have. Our marriage has now been of more than fifty four years and we have had the pleasure of having three beautiful children who married three wonderful spouses. They have given us our delightful grandchildren. We are so fortunate to have such a close family.

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Celebrating our 50th wedding anniversary on Disney's Fantasy

The poorest people and places I have seen in my life were those in Kenya and, more recently, in Haiti. On mission trips to Haiti with fellow parishioners have looked for ways to help those in

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the village of Gros Mangle on the island of La Gonave in the bay off the mainland to achieve a better life. Although our work goes on today, I feel so deeply sorry for the continuing misfortunes of the people of Haiti and pray our world will find ways to help these people not only overcome their misfortunes, but no longer face meanness by those who have been in control in Haiti, both in the past, present, and in the future.



St. Alban's Haiti mission group 2012

With respect to the oldest civilizations I have visited, we have visited Kenya, South Africa, Egypt, China and Greece. It doesn't matter which you consider the oldest, I suppose. What matters is

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what those civilizations have meant to our world. Each has made significant contributions to our culture and history. I have appreciated the chance to see, hear and learn about that, making my world a very interesting place to have lived.



Our group in Greece

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Dickeys, Mooneys and Schafers at the Acropolis 2016

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Finally, I address the travel I have been privileged to have made around our physical world. Much of it has been with Margie. Prior to our marriage, my travel was limited to our country, Canada and Bermuda. Since our marriage, we have traveled widely, including visits to Jamaica, St. Kitts, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Haiti, Cuba, Nassau, Bermuda, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Columbia, Canada, Kenya, Egypt, Ireland, England, Scotland, France, Norway, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Croatia, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, Malta, China, South Africa, Russia, Australia, Mexico and the Philippines.

The farthest I have been away from home must have been to Australia and China. Each is about halfway around the globe (12,000 miles) from where we lived at the time. I have been most fortunate to have had the opportunity to have seen so much of our world.

# What is one of the most beautiful places I've ever been?



**M**ountain and wilderness scenes come to mind. The Napali coast of Kauai, the lofty peaks of Glacial National Park, the Wrangell range and Denali/McKinley in Alaska, Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, the coastal range of Norway, Mt Ranier, the Rockies and the Alps, all of which we have been privileged to have seen!

Each time we drive west on I-40 from our Hickory home into the Blue Ridge Mountains of the very old Appalachian chain, I enjoy the pastoral and inspiring scene those mounting, rolling, beautiful, old, forested mountains present. That experience, in the presence of my loving and kind wife, ranks right at the top of the most beautiful places I have been.

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The Blue Ridge, North Carolina

Perhaps a close second to that would be when Margie and I visited the Garden of the Gods just outside Colorado Springs on our three week trip out west in 1964, en route into the Air Force.



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What is it about these places and scenes that makes them so memorable and special to me? The simple explanation would be how inspiring beautiful mountain scenes are to most people. I was a boy who grew up in the Midwest with its vast flatness and endless fields of corn, yet I have fond memories of trips to the 'mountains' in Brown County in southern Indiana. They were mountains to me until I first actually saw mountains. When on a family vacation we drove to Florida through the Appalachians. In the following years, the specter of the even more impressive peaks I have seen must somehow conjure up some happy thoughts of earlier years. Now, when Margie and I come upon another mountain scene, I experience the pleasure of recalling such experiences of the past, but the inspiration of witnessing another gift of unspoiled beauty makes being alive so enjoyable.



Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania

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Mt. Ranier, Washington



Denali (Mt. McKinley), Alaska

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El Capitan, Yosemite



Fjord, Norway coast

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Glacier National Park, Montana



The Wrangells, Alaska

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Napali Coast, Kauai, Hawaii



Rare rainstorm induced waterfall on Uluru

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Uluru or Ayer's Rock, central Australia ourback

# What things are most important to me in choosing a home?



**I**n choosing a home, I have always wanted a warm and comfortable place for my wife and family, a place in which we could look forward to living. What is most important to me in choosing a home hasn't changed much over the years, even as our family grew and our children left the 'nest.'

Since our marriage in 1963 we have moved a lot and chosen many homes, choices always influenced greatly by a desire to provide a private bedroom for each of the children and a place for our family to comfortably live, rest and play.

The first few years of marriage Margie and I had to move several times while I was completing my medical training and serving my two year obligation in the military (all doctors had to serve at least two years back then). When I finished my medical training

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and was ready to open my practice, Margie and I needed to select a place to settle down.

After our wedding, we spent a week or so at my parent's home on Green Hills Lane in Indianapolis while we located the half-double rental, pictured below, in Speedway where we lived for just over a year.



Rental on Worth Street, Speedway IN

Then we were off to serve my two years in the Air Force. Our first home in the Air Force was an apartment in San Antonio, Texas. I attended flight surgeon school for three months at Brooke AFB. Then we moved to my assigned base, Altus AFB, in southwestern

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Oklahoma where, while we were waiting to get on-base housing we rented a trailer in town. We celebrated Christmas in the trailer. Here is Margie holding our 20 month old baby, Kirsten.



After a few weeks, still waiting to get into base housing, we moved out of the trailer into a rental house near town. The 'yard' was dirt, with lots of tumbleweed. Once accepted for on-base housing ('Capehart' housing), we moved into a beautiful home for the remainder of our two years in the Air Force.

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Our Capehart home on Altus AFB OK

In 1966, I completed my military stint and we returned to Indianapolis where I continued an internal medicine residency at the Indiana University Medical Center. As a family of four (Kirsten was now two and Jim one) we rented a home on Wexford Road with a large fenced backyard and a flowering crab-apple tree in the front. I recall Mama visiting and picking crabapples there. We took pictures of her and later of Tante Mary standing next to that tree when she visited us.

When my three years of internal medicine residency and first year of endocrinology fellowship were completed in 1969, we moved to Farmington, Connecticut, where I opened my private

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practice. We house-sat at the Winchell-Smith mansion during the summer while our new, colonial style development home was being completed. We were most appreciative of a very generous gift from Mama and Papa Niederberger which enabled us to purchase our first home. We lived there (see below) for four years.



Whispering Rod Road, Farmington, CT, 1969

After four years in practice there I closed my practice and joined a hospital-based medical group in North Carolina. We bought a home (below) on Carolyn Street in Statesville, NC where we lived for two years.

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910 Carolyn Street, thirty years after we lived there. We planted those trees in the backyard!

My practice was very demanding so I found a five days a week, and no night call job doing research for a drug company (Hoffmann-La Roche) in New Jersey. Margie and I found a lovely, large colonial home on a large wooded lot. With the help of a generous loan from Tante Mary, we were able to purchase the house (below) and lived there for eight years.

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Our home at 23 Glenwood Road, Upper Saddle River, NJ

One of the most fun things we did during those eight years in New Jersey was to buy a cabin on an island in the middle of a lake (Big Pond) in the Berkshires of Western Massachusetts. We discovered Big Pond when our friends, Jack and Betty Barter, from West Hartford, invited our card-playing group to visit them at their cabin on the island. In 1975 we completely rebuilt the rustic cabin (below). On Big Island in Big Pond, in Otis, Massachusetts, this is what it looked like when we bought it. As shown, the lake froze over in the winter so we walked or tobogganed across about a half-mile of ice to get there.



‘Avalon’ on Big Pond, Otis Massachusetts

Kirsten’s (LD = Lynn Dickey) drawing of her upstairs bedroom window at Otis, showing one of the original windows. The renovations we made were massive and we sold the place several years later (1982) when we moved back to North Carolina.

After seven years doing pharmaceutical research at Hoffmann-La Roche in New Jersey, and a year or so at American Cyanamid in nearby Pearl River, NY, I left the drug industry and completed my second year of endocrinology fellowship at the new University of Connecticut Medical Center in Farmington, Connecticut. I decided to reenter practice and join the reorganized group I had been with earlier in Statesville, NC. The

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new home we built there in 1983 was a contemporary design on Gleneagles Drive East in the Statesville Country Club. It was an energy-efficient home with solar-heated hot water, a glass-enclosed solar side porch to gather heat, and extra-thick insulated six inch stud exterior walls. Heating and A/C costs were incredibly low.



After about six years, the design and build bug bit us again, and we built a more traditional home on a lot only two blocks away, on the golf course on Deauville Road. It had a lovely screened porch like the one we so enjoyed at our place on Big Pond, but while we loved sitting on the porch, we soon learned how challenging a screened porch can be in springtime in the pollen-rich South!

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23 Deauville Road, Statesville NC only a couple of blocks from our previous home there on Gleneagles. We had a beautiful golf course view.

I left the Statesville Medical Group in 1990, opening a solo endocrinology practice in Hickory, NC. In 1992, we built a new home at 262 Harbortown Drive on the north shore of Lake Hickory. We enjoyed the lake-view from our back porch and had much fun in our sailboat and bow-rider ski boat.

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Our place at 262 Harbortown Drive won Yard of the Month, too!

While living in Harbortown we wanted a vacation home, having sold our place on Big Island when we moved back south. We purchased mountain property, designed a vacation home to be built there in the Black Mountains of North Carolina, overlooking Mt. Mitchell, but decided we would rather have a home at the beach. So, in 1994 we purchased a three bedroom place at Sunset Beach, NC. Our family grew too large for it so, in 1999, we built a four bedroom place on the oceanfront. Margie and I, our children, our grandchildren and lots of visiting family and friends have enjoyed 'Looney Dunes' for the past seventeen years.

Richard



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The wide beach at Looney Dunes, Sunset Beach NC

After living for 12 years on Lake Hickory in Harbortown, we built our current home, another Southern Living design, behind the first green on the Rivercrest (now Ole Still) Golf Course. We have a nice yard and lanai, with arches. It is a wonderful place to sit

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and relax, read, enjoy the sounds of our fountain, and have guests over for cocktails.



Family at 707 West Main, 2015.

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51 Players Ridge Road, Hickory, NC

Our priorities in a home have been comfort, spaciousness, neatness, attractiveness and newness. Margie and I have had fun finding or building homes meeting these criteria. We know we have never designed the perfect home and we are reluctant to tackle that challenge again. We have had fun trying and are happy that our children have also enjoyed our family's homes over the years.

After posting this story I realize there is a different way one could answer this question. Think of the movie character 'ET' saying, "Home", and what that means. I was born in Illinois and

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grew up in the Midwest. At times, a yearning for 'life' in the Midwest, not the physical place, but the style of life there, creeps into my thoughts. The feeling I experience then seems to be a longing for freedom or a longing for escape from the discomfort of an unpleasant or difficult time or situation. Soon, however, my spirit is lifted by an awareness of the many blessings I have been privileged to have enjoyed in this life.

# A life of loving gardening



**L**ast night I awoke thinking about my stories and realized there is another story I have to tell which runs through most of my life... the story of my life-long relationship with the plant world, the grass, bushes, flowers, and trees in my life. This morning I went to the front porch to remove the cover I had placed over the pot of petunias which have survived a mild winter and are still alive.



Our 'wave' petunias

Since as long ago as I can remember, plants have been an important part of my life. They call me to pay attention to them, they give me joy, and they give me purpose.

When I was very young, we lived in a rental house in Indianapolis. Our yard was small and I recall no flowers, trees or even a nice span of grass. We often visited my paternal grandparents who had a home with a large yard, including a lot next door where I enjoyed playing croquet. There was a long row of peonies across the end of the croquet field, behind which was a large garden. My maternal grandmother lived with her sister

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and they had a simple yard with a frog pond next door. I loved to hear those frogs singing as we went to sleep there.

@When my parents bought their first home, in 1945, in Indianapolis, it had a fair-sized yard, a few non-flowering bushes and two elm trees in the front. The back yard was open and my Dad eventually planted a row of trees along that lot line once the empty lot next door was built on. I do not remember any flowers except a row of hollyhocks across the alley along the back of the house behind us.



Hollyhocks

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I grew to love those hollyhocks and have planted them in many other places where I have lived since then. Currently the only ones I have are those in a cross-stitch of an English cottage my mother gave us.

During my teens I spent some time each summer at Grandma Eiler's home and she would take me to the annual gladiolus festival (begun in 1938) in Momence, a town near Kankakee, Illinois.



Gladiolus

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I grew to love gladiolus and, many years later I surprised Grandma when, after spending the summer in Bermuda doing research, I hitch-hiked from the East coast to her home, bought a bouquet of gladiolus, and appeared at her door with the flowers in front of me.

A few years earlier as a teenager, my grandfather picked me up in Indianapolis to take me to Kokomo, Indiana, where, as part of his job for Ferro Enamel Corp he was to inspect a new oven his company was building for Frigidaire to enamel appliances. We drove on to his home in Streator, Illinois and on the way I had seen some pretty, orange flowers growing along the road. I asked Grampa to stop along the highway so I could pick some for Grandma Dickey. Grandma loved them but I had no idea they would only last a day. They were daylillies!

Richard



Daylillies

During my college years I was fortunate to be on a beautiful campus with a mile-long walk lined with sugar maples from the school of religion building at one end of the hill-top campus, to Old Kenyon at the other. These trees were spectacular in the fall.

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Maples along Middle Path at my College (Kenyon)

Then I went to medical school in New York City. Except for Central Park and a riverside park along the Hudson River, NYC was a monotonous collection of concrete and brick. I missed flowers and flowering shrubs and trees. When I left for college my parents had moved into a new home and whenever I was home I enjoyed the flowers and the beautiful 'canna' bed they had planted in the yard. After some thought, it occurred to me that my love of gardening may have related to the side yard at Grandma Dickey's home, where she had the peony bed and where we played croquet, and to the 'canna' bed Dad had at our home on Green Hills Lane in Indianapolis.

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Peonies

Otherwise, garden-wise, my first seven years of college and medical school were pretty bleak until I met Margie and got to spend some time at her home in Long Island. Mama had planted zinnias in the back yard. Here is the painting of her zinnias, done by Mama's backyard neighbor. It hangs in our home now.

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Mama's zinnias

Then we were married, moved to the Midwest and lived in a rental half-double home in Speedway, Indiana. I planted a garden! A year later while I served my two-year draft obligation in the US Air Force, we had a few flowers in our base-housing's

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back yard. Back to Indiana for my residency and fellowship, we enjoyed the flowering trees but had no garden...we were just too busy working and raising our three children to do that. As I entered practice in Connecticut in 1969 we enjoyed designing and planting our new home. About 32 years later, when I visited the area, I was amazed at how much the trees and shrubs had grown and filled in the open field on which our first home had been built! At each home we have had we have enjoyed having a place to dream about, plan and actualize what we wanted as a yard, garden and pleasant outdoor living space.



Clematis and columbine at our Hickory, NC home

Richard



This beautiful red maple was my Christmas present to Margie in 2006.

Richard

# The Grandparents I knew



I knew only three of my four grandparents because my maternal grandfather died only five years after his marriage to Grandma.

At that time, my mother was only 4 years old! He died of kidney (renal) failure or nephritis. I think he had renal failure related to the gold or lead in the paint he used. He was a sign painter and sign painters licked the painting brush to get a really fine tip. His premature death left his wife, my grandmother, Marie Belle Seidholz Eilers, to raise three youngsters (Mom age 4, the eldest, and Uncles Carl (aka 'Bud') and Bob).

Grandma had to move into one of her brother's (Uncle Pete's) rental houses with Bud and Bob, the two boys, while my mother went to live with Grandma's sister, my Great Aunt Luella and her husband, Great Uncle Albert, and their only child, Mom's cousin Marjorie. It was the time of the Great Depression. Aunt Luella's 'Big Little Store', a food and dry goods business, went belly-up

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and Aunt Luella took up selling Beauty Counselor merchandise. I am not sure what Great Uncle Albert did but Grandma began working as a sales clerk in the children's wear section of the local department store in Kankakee, Illinois, a job from which she eventually retired.



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I was close to Grandma Eilers, seeing her perhaps once a month on our two hundred mile one way drives to visit the other grandparents, who lived 50 miles further west in Streator, Illinois. In my teens, I spent many summer weeks with Grandma Eilers and Aunt Luella. They continued to live in the little house in Kankakee after Uncle Albert died in his forties, when I was seven. We often played cards and I think Grandma and Aunt Luella let me win at cards sometimes just to keep me happy.

When I was a teenager, they moved into an apartment where I visited them in the summer and where I kept busy riding a bicycle cart selling ice cream for a local vendor. As a teenager who loved his Grandma, I had a dream which I shared with her, that some day I would build a home for her, using cinder blocks. I think I actually designed that dream home! The reality was that it remained one of my childhood dreams, one Margie just reminded me of, so I must have shared it with Margie, too!

I loved gladioluses and the annual gladiolus festival near Kankakee. While in college I spent a summer doing research in Bermuda. Rather than hitch-hike home to Indiana from New York, after returning from Bermuda, I hitched rides 700 miles directly to Kankakee, where I bought 'glads' and appeared at Grandma's door with that bouquet in front of my face to surprise her. I had planned to meet and spend some time in Streator with Grandpa Dickey, who had been in the hospital at Indianapolis

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most of that summer for treatment of severe burns he suffered when he crashed his airplane in Arkansas. That crash and fire took the life of Grandma, his wife, earlier that summer. After visiting him I hitch-hiked home but ended up in jail instead... that is another story.

Mom's mother, Grandma Eilers, was a generous and loving woman and the model my mother followed. Grandma lived into her late eighties. The Midwest family reunions of her clan, the Seidholtz and Heitkamp families, were and remain, fond childhood memories.



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In the preceding photo taken in 1953 at our 1936 Sharon home in Indianapolis, Grandpa and Grandma Dickey are on the left and Uncle Glenn and Aunt Marilyn are next to them; then Dad and Mom and the four of us: Elizabeth/Betty, me, Barbara/Barb and Sharon.

Grandpa Dickey was an 'engineer' with only an eighth grade education. After he died I realized that when he said 'kindee,' meaning 'kind of', he was using a term used by his Scotch predecessors. I had always thought that he was just not too sophisticated. Grampa worked for the Ferro Enamel Corporation. He traveled a lot, by car, around the country to manage the construction of the giant and complex furnaces to bake enamel on appliances. He loved Packards (pretty high class automobiles in that day) and family gatherings at his home in northern Illinois.

Almost every month my family drove 150 miles to Kankakee, Illinois, where we would see Grandma Eilers, briefly, then head on west 50 more miles to Grandpa and Grandma Dickey's, in Streator. As I recall, my family did this most every month and holiday. Our family enjoyed the large side yard in Streator where we played croquet. While Grandpa Dickey was a hunter and fisherman, my Dad was not and I never learned those sports. Grandpa and Dad were both avid card players and both learned to fly and had a plane. I admired Grandpa Dickey but don't recall

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feeling particularly close to him, even when I spent a couple of weeks at his hospital bedside. He was severely burned in the plane crash that killed Grandma, at age 59, and it nearly killed him. Grandpa lived to be 89 and played a role in my choice of Kenyon College. His boss, the president of the Ferro Corporation, was also the chairman of the Board of Trustees at Kenyon College, my alma mater, and Grandpa, undoubtedly at his bosses urging, told me I should consider Kenyon.

Grandma and Grandpa Dickey had seven children, losing two children in their early childhood. Grandma spent all of her time providing for and raising their other five children, of whom my Dad was the eldest. She was an excellent cook and she and Grandpa made my family's holidays really special at their family home in Illinois. She had a beautiful and productive garden in the back of the side lot and kept a nice house. I loved sleeping on a feather-bed in the upstairs hall floor there. One of several daughters of my great-grandma Hyduk, a Czech immigrant, I recall she gave good hugs. Often present wearing an apron, she used real cream for cooking, as I found out one morning when I got up early at her house and drank a quart of pure cream, thinking it was milk.

# What's something I made of which I am proud?



**T**he answer to this question that came immediately to mind was the playhouse I made for our children at our rental house in Indiana in the 1960s. I built the playhouse using 3/4 inch plywood and it was large enough for an adult to get into. There was a dutch door opening and a solid floor. I built it so it could be disassembled and moved. The children used it for a year or two before we moved to Connecticut where I opened my medical practice. As we were planning our move, I found out it would cost hundreds of dollars to move and we just couldn't afford that so we decided to leave it in Indiana. I wish I had a picture of it to post here. I hope Kirsten (she was only 4 or 5 then) and Jim (only 2 or 3) have memories of playing in it.

I also remember the stick and cardboard playhouse my sisters and I built in the back yard on Sharon Avenue, the one a big wind, even perhaps a mini-tornado, lifted up and brought back

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down to the ground in smithereens.

I've loved gardening most of my adult life and have been very proud of our gardens. I have attached a shot of our garden at our rental in Speedway, the first year we were married. It seems we only grow a few tomatoes now and they bring fond memories of the many gardens we have made in the past.



Our garden at 1410 Worth Street, Speedway, Indiana in 1964.

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The ice-skating and hockey rink were lots of fun in our flooded backyard in Unionville (Farmington), Connecticut.

Nearby was the sandstone-walled patio I built in the back of our first home in Connecticut. I built a tree house behind our Glenwood Road home in New Jersey and finished the basement there in time to celebrate Kirsten's 16th birthday.

We purchased and rebuilt our 'camp' on Big Pond in Otis, Massachusetts and enjoyed it so much with family and friends. Following are the shots of our Otis home On Big Pond, before and after renovations.

Richard



Before



After

## Richard

Margie and I have been crazy designers of many homes over the years, always finding something in each one which, in retrospect, we wish we would have designed a bit differently.

Surely I have forgotten to record many of the things that came to mind when I awoke in the middle of the night last night. What seemed most interesting to me was the question of what these craft activities meant about me. What was the underlying meaning or significance of these projects or activities? I believe the most meaningful were those which gave pleasure to me but most often only because they gave pleasure to others. I wonder... isn't that what our life on this earth is and should be about anyway?

Richard

Richard

# What was my mom like as a child?



## Richard

Mom was only 17 when I was born. I was fortunate to have had such a pretty mother. When my father died, I called my pastor for advice and guidance over the phone so I could lead my father's funeral services. That went well but six months later, when Mom died, I simply felt too emotional to be able to lead my mother's funeral services. At my Dad's service I had asked our children and others to offer remembrances but I found myself unable to do so. For Mom's service, I had a pastor lead the service but did offer the list of my thoughts. I was too emotional to do otherwise. That list, which follows, still well represents my feelings about my mother, what she was like for me and for so many others.

"I would like to share with you some of the snippets of thoughts I have had about my Mom as I thought about this service honoring her life. I will not repeat thoughts about Mom that others have already shared this afternoon.

My thoughts about Mom (Catherine Marie Eilers Dickey) were:

Christmas together as family in Illinois and, in later years, in Indiana;

Mom's smile and her undying love;

Mom's constant support, no matter what;

Her perpetual response: "I'm fine," never troubling others with her own needs or troubles;

## Richard

Hot oatmeal or cream of wheat for winter breakfasts;  
Mom's delicious rice pudding;  
Her suet pudding each Christmas, a family tradition;  
Just wait 'til your father gets home!';  
Our safari together with Mom and Dad in Kenya;  
Our vacations in Fort Lauderdale;  
An apple candy birthday on the skyline drive in the Shenandoah valley;  
Her call each year early in the morning at the time of my birth;  
Her time as the den mother for my cub scout troop;  
Mom's undying love for Dad, for us, and for all her family and friends.

Here is Mom playing the board game with Tom Halleck and me in Florida in 2006... one year before she died from ALS.



Richard

# My most memorable birthdays



Several birthdays come to mind. We celebrated my fortieth at our summer home on the lake at Big Pond, Otis, Massachusetts, in 1977. We had just finished rebuilding much of that early 1900s cabin named 'Avalon' and what I most vividly recall is that, even though I was forty years old, I did not feel old. I felt great. I thought that because my father was 'dying from poor health,' as he put it, from the time he was thirty. He lived to be nearly 88! At forty, my health was fine and I was happy with our lot in life. I had a good job; we had a beautiful home in Upper Saddle River, NJ; my wife was healthy and we had three healthy kids. We all enjoyed the home on the lake even though it required us to work on improvements while there. We had many good friends on the island at Big Pond, enjoyed playing cards at friend's homes on the island, sailed in the Sunday races on the lake, and golfed at the nine hole golf course in Blandford. It was all good.

## Richard

Another birthday I remember well was when I was about 11. I had gotten into some poison ivy while exploring the area near Big Eagle Creek in Speedway, Indiana. I had such a really bad case because, while the rash was pretty extensive, my biggest problem was that, because I had taken a leak in the ivy, I had the rash all over my crotch area. I was not circumcised so my foreskin swelled up and I had to 'ice down' just to be able to pee! My mother took a picture of me receiving my birthday cake, candles glowing, while lying in bed recovering. I was in bed for a week or two but, because it was August, I did not miss any school. Next time I got poison ivy my parents took me to the GP and he gave me a shot of steroids. That probably helped. I am still very sensitive to poison ivy and oak, which gives me a good excuse to move my ball to a more favorable lie when I get into a bad spot while golfing! Sometimes I have to explain that to a 'by-the-book' golfer friend who never improves his lie. I recall my eleventh birthday too. What was special about that one was that I received a gift from my Grandmother Eilers' sister, Great Aunt Luella. For my eleventh, Aunt Luella gave me a red and white vinyl wrapped radio. Aunt Luella had decided to give a special gift to each of her nieces and nephews on their eleventh birthday and that radio was mine. It stayed with me for many years. I recall that radio often, usually each time a birthday comes up for our children and grandchildren.

## Richard

My 70th birthday was celebrated with a special golf tournament for me and my neighbor, Frank, who turned 76. I was really pleased that Kurt was able to come to play. We invited family and friends, including all the guys with whom we played golf here in Oliver's Landing, enjoying drinks and food at the clubhouse afterward. Frank and I had to play wearing grass skirts provided by our friends. Don't ask me about how well we played but we had a great time. It was a tournament with special 'twists'. The idea to celebrate with a golf event came to me because a patient/friend (Fred Rydberg) in Statesville, invited friends to join him in a round of golf to celebrate his seventieth at the Statesville Country Club years earlier. Subsequent to my seventieth, as coordinator and organizer of the Monday-Thursday Men's golf group at Ole Still Golf Course (formerly Rivercrest), we have celebrated special birthdays of several of my fellow golfers. Nice memories.

## Richard



Birthday boy in grass skirt and Kurt at green #2

Then there are the plans for my 80th! Margie and Mike Rozea, a friend, are planning a golf tournament for me on August 21, my actual birthday. There is even a solar eclipse that very day in our area! I am looking forward to the fun we will have but asked our children to celebrate my 80th during our family beach week this July so they will not have to make a special trip to Hickory in August.

Sunday, July 16, was our second beautiful day at the beach this summer, under Jim's new tent. Jim got up early every day to erect it on the beach, right at the end of our access walkway.

## Richard

That day, I was totally surprised when I came back from the beach for lunch, and walked into a house full of family greeting me with song, and my birthday celebration meal. While the rest of us were at the beach, Kirsten and Devon were busily preparing the house with festive decorations, getting a BBQ meal for all of us to have at lunch-time and, for dessert, a cake with 80 lighted candles, which took me three breaths to blow out. The BBQ meal, decorated room and table, cake, cards and gifts were a wonderful gift all enjoyed!



Richard



The festive decorations and happy 80th cake. Another gift was Gillian's painting, now hanging at the beach.



## Richard



Then there were the UA flip-flops, and fish wall-art, and a kayak adventure treat to 'Crab' and Bird Island.



## Richard

After completing several puzzles, we tackled the challenging 'August 21, 1937 New York Times' front page puzzle, continuing the birthday celebration, along with a grilled chicken, steak, and shrimp dinner. (The puzzle brought us up to date on important events of that day, the day I was born.) That framed puzzle is now featured in our pool room at home!



My birthday celebration included a competitive game of Jeopardy, organized by Abby, who researched the '1937' questions. Four teams competed: Margie and me vs. Kirsten, Devon and Gillian vs. Jim, Meri and Jakob vs. Kurt, Abby, Sophie and Anna. Never doubt for a minute that this family would miss a chance to compete. What fun!

## Richard

Then there was the bocce ball competition. Here are the bocce ball champs, Kurt and Abby. Kirsten and Devon were the runners-up:



Richard



I am most grateful to Jim and Meri for treating the family to a dinner and show at Medieval times as part of the celebration, pictured above.

Thank you to all of our children and grandchildren for such a nice, early 80th birthday. It was a fabulous 'birthday week' at Looney Dunes, and after some long trips home, all families arrived home safely.

# What are my go-to stories, ones I like telling over and over?



**I** have always enjoyed sharing some of my hitch-hiking stories. Here are a few.

**FIRST EXPERIENCES HITCH-HIKING:** I went away to college and my college, Kenyon, was in eastern Ohio, 250 miles from my home in Indiana. My parents brought me and my stuff to school but when I wanted to go somewhere, I had no transportation. I was a scholarship student and Kenyon did not permit me to have a car at school. I was on my own to find a way to get home or anywhere else, other than the nearby town, Mt. Vernon. Kenyon students could get a ride the five miles to Mt. Vernon by standing on a certain corner in Gambier, the college village. There were only 400 students then at Kenyon, all men, and one could find a return ride to the college by standing on that corner in Mt.

Vernon.

To get home for a vacation break or holiday, I would try to find another student from Indianapolis with a car to give me a ride. I had no money to take a bus and there was no bus service, anyway. The problem was that finding another student with a car who could give me a ride home didn't work well. After my first year at Kenyon, I decided I could hitch-hike to get around and then, during my third year at Kenyon, a friend and classmate who lived just southeast of Indy, offered to give me a ride in his car, for gas money.

When it was time to return to college during my first two or three years at college my parents gave me a lift to a stoplight on the main highway, US 40, on the east side of Indy. There, dressed nicely in coat and tie, I thumbed rides the 250 miles to college. It didn't take me long to learn that I needed to ask where the driver was going before getting in, however, because I had been dropped off in the middle of nowhere a couple of times and for those of you who have hitch-hiked a lot, you know what trouble it is to try to hail a ride when standing out in the country with no stoplight to slow traffic, and everyone roaring past.

THE TRIP HOME WITH A TOOTHACHE: One Saturday I just could not continue my studies because of an excruciating toothache. I needed a dentist badly, so I decided to go home. Two of the rides

## Richard

I got that day are very memorable. The first was in a dump truck and the jarring ride just about killed me. After an hour or so I was dropped off by the driver at a stoplight (a good thing) and got a ride with a good-looking gal who was headed west toward Indiana. After I got in her car and told her my destination she said she was going to Indianapolis, too, 200 miles down the road. She even offered to take me directly to my home! First and only time that ever happened, and a bit strange, I thought, for her to be so accommodating. However, with that terrible toothache I was certainly not going to turn her offer down.

I began to think maybe she was after more than I was prepared to offer, but figured my Mom would be home and that would make it easy for me to get out when we got there. In retrospect, I must have been crazy not to have been delighted with the opportunity to have some fun with her! At any rate, when we got to my home, I thanked her for the ride and she left. Only then did I find no one at home; the doors were all locked and I had no key or way to get in! So I busted out a window in the garage where our old (1947) Chevy was and, noticing the toothache was abating, called a local girlfriend and invited her to go out to a drive-in movie.

I was amazed that the terrible toothache had stopped hurting and after returning home after the movie, I found a way to get into the house and went to bed. My parents were nowhere to be

## Richard

found. I had no idea where they were and they were still not home the following morning. I had slept well but when I got up in the morning and looked in the mirror the whole side of my face was swollen. I actually cried I was so ugly. I needed to locate my parents and find a dentist. I later learned they had gone up to my grandparents home in Streator, Illinois, 200 miles away. They arrived home that Sunday evening and we arranged for me to see a dentist (my Dad's boss's son) the next day. He found that I had a cracked tooth which had abscessed (hence the pain) and killed the root (hence the relief overnight). He opened the canal and said I needed a root canal. As it turned out, that was only the first of several cracked roots which had been the result of my participation in softball intramural sports at Kenyon. Blinded by the sun, I had caught a softball in my mouth.

The dentist arranged for me to have the root canal done for next to nothing at the dental school in Columbus, Ohio, sixty miles from Kenyon. Dad allowed me to take the old Chevy to school so I could commute to the dental school. I had many other root canals done over the next few years while at Columbia, spending lots of time in the dental school there while I was in medical school. Then, I had porcelain caps made while I was in the Air Force. So my dental care in dental school clinics and the Air Force saved my parents and me a lot of money.

## Richard

TO HELL WITH COLLEGE, LET'S GO TO EUROPE AND OPEN A McDONALD'S: My closest friend and classmate, Dan, and I decided during our second year of college, that the rat race to medical school was not our cup of tea, so we decided to go to Europe and open one of those new fast food places. There were none there yet. We had no money for the trip but figured we could find a small boat to get across the ocean. I don't recall what we were thinking (if we were) or drinking that day but we really did get a ride into Mt. Vernon to begin our journey. Then we headed north toward Cleveland but got no ride and the evening was rapidly darkening, so while we waited for the hoped for ride we played a game where you put your hands under the hands of the other person and try to suddenly reach around and slap the top of the hands of the other person before he can pull them away. I recall not liking that game much and after a couple of hours, with no prospects for a ride, we decided to give up on our idea and return to college. Sounds incredible, even to me today, but it actually happened. Both Dan and I eventually graduated and became doctors.

### GETTING HOME FROM MED SCHOOL IN NEW YORK CITY:

Years later when I was in my third year of medical school in New York and home was still Indy I found that hitching rides from New York City was just impossible. So to get home, I got a ride to Philadelphia with Dan, who lived there. He was in medical school

## Richard

at Columbia, too and would drive into the PA turnpike King of Prussia service plaza near Norristown, where I would begin hitch-hiking home at the on-ramp of the plaza. You weren't allowed to thumb a ride at the toll booth areas. This usually worked well and I would ask the driver who picked me up to let me off at a plaza area before his exit rather than going off the pike. Once in western Pennsylvania I would leave the pike to continue west on US 40 the remaining 400 miles to Indianapolis. @However, one time, rather than get off in western Pennsylvania I decided to stay on the turnpikes (the Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana pikes) all the way to northern Indiana (South Bend area), even though it was longer (a total distance of 805 miles to Indy that way).

The rides were good and I arrived at the South Bend turnpike exit about sundown with another 175 miles to go, down US 31 South. Finding a well-lit place at a stoplight, I put my thumb out and soon was picked up by a fellow heading my way south. After a couple of miles and a few minutes of conversation, I realized what this fellow was looking for and it was not my cup of tea. I decided I needed to dump this ride and, when he asked how far I was going I pointed down the road to the next stoplight and told him that was my destination. That was a longer trip than usual home that day but I did arrive safely before dawn.

## Richard

A BETTER WAY HOME FROM MEDICAL SCHOOL: After my prior experiences and difficulties hitch-hiking home from New York, I decided there might be a better way. I read in a New York paper about a company that sold used New York taxi cabs to people all over the country. These cabs were usually only a few years old but with hundreds of thousands of miles on them. The company advertised them, offering them for a few hundred dollars, delivered to your home. You wouldn't believe how many folks took the deal, folks from all over the states. The company would find a person who would deliver the cab to the buyer, paying the driver nothing, however. For those agreeing to deliver the cab to the buyer, they put a couple of extra tires (all the tires were pretty bald) in the back seat, took off the Yellow Cab light and sign on top, and left the Yellow Cab signage as it was.

I decided this was my ticket to a free ride home for Christmas vacation during my third year of medical school. All I had to do was buy the gas and pay any tolls. Figuring I could get home to Indiana for a few bucks this way, I signed up to deliver a cab to a fellow in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. That would get me home and, since my family would be driving up to northern Illinois for Christmas at Grampa's, I could drive the cab up there and then drive on west to Cedar Rapids the day after Christmas to deliver the car there. Since one of my classmates needed a ride home to Louisville, KY for Christmas, I offered to drive her to

## Richard

Indianapolis if she would share gas costs, and drop her off at the bus station in Indy so she could take the short bus ride down to Louisville.

I went to pick up the cab and on the way back to the dorm it over-heated so I went to a gas station in the city, called the buyer in Iowa and he agreed to pay the repair cost. Then I picked up my classmate from Louisville and we were off to Indiana in an ugly yellow cab. Surprisingly, we had no more problems en route to Indy but when I arrived home, Dad asked me not to park it in the driveway because it looked like a wreck. The next day they and I were off to Illinois... they in the family car and me in the cab. After celebrating Christmas at Grampa's I drove on to Iowa to deliver the cab. I met the buyer at the railroad station because he told me the cab was a surprise Christmas present for his wife. What a surprise this would be for her, I thought! Soon, I was thumbing my way back to Grampa's to ride back home with my parents. The ride I got back to Grampa's was interesting. The young folks who gave me a lift were Jehovah's witnesses and were determined to convert me en route to Grampa's. Since I didn't want to get out of their car because they were taking me within a few miles of Grampa's, I managed to stave off their recruitment of me for Jehovah while not offending them. That was one more memorable ride.

## Richard

**FASTEST RIDE EVER TO COLLEGE:** One cold winter day (it was well below freezing) I was returning to college after Christmas vacation at home. I was first picked up by a fellow in an old car who was going about 45 MPH and headed about 60 miles down the road, usually a good ride. Shortly after he picked me up a fellow in a Jaguar convertible went flying past us and I noticed he had a license tag indicating he was from Cleveland, Ohio. I knew his route to Cleveland would take him right through the town of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, only five miles from my college. Darn, I thought, I missed that good ride. Some miles down the road that fellow had pulled off the road and was putting the convertible top down! I told my driver that, if we came across this fellow later, maybe at a stoplight, I could ask if he would take me on to Ohio in the Jaguar. Not much later, that very thing happened and I piled out and loaded into the Jaguar convertible, top still down because it had broken. I found out the driver was a race car driver and was making a non-stop run back home to Cleveland from New Orleans. He gave me one of the most exciting rides I ever had. I almost froze but he was a superb driver, topped 100, and averaged almost 80 on the two lane roads as we rode through Ohio. I was shaking in my shoes as I waited on the corner in Mt. Vernon for a ride out to the college that afternoon.

**DATING AND THE HENRY J:** As I mentioned in an earlier story about my experience of first being away in college, dating was

## Richard

difficult since Kenyon was all men and the college was isolated. By the fourth year of college, my friend Dan and I had had it with hitching rides to one of the co-ed campuses for a date on Saturday night. Neither of us had much spending money and we were both on scholarship, so we were not allowed to have a car at college. Somehow we saved up a total of \$100 and decided to try to find some wheels because, too often, we couldn't find a ride back to college after our Saturday night date. We would stay overnight in the lobby of a dorm or frat house on the campus where we had our date and hitch a ride back to college on Sunday morning. That was a problem, too, because we had compulsory chapel attendance on Sunday at Kenyon. We decided we would have to find a car for no more than \$75 because registration and tag was \$25.

We hitched the sixty miles to Columbus, Ohio, where we could find used cars for sale. There we found three or four lots with one or two candidates for a car which would meet our needs. The nicest was a 1940 or so four-door torpedo-back Buick but it was \$100, so no deal. Next was a 1948 yellow Packard convertible, only ten years old, in pretty good shape and the asking price was \$75, workable for us. It would have been a great set of wheels, but its electrical system powered everything, including the starter, the windows, and the retractable top. The battery was no good, so that was out. Finally, we came across a 1953 Henry J

## Richard

with light blue paint and dark blue polka-dots all over it. A two door sedan with stick shift, it had rusted out floorboards, and a defective electrical generator system, but the battery worked. The salesman said we could just use the battery to have lights if driving at night and suggested we limit our driving to full-moon nights to save battery power! We paid him \$75, got the thing licensed and tagged, under Dan's name, and drove back to Mt. Vernon. Mt. Vernon was a few miles from the college and so we parked the car on a residential street and walked to the corner in town where Kenyon students could get a lift out to the college in the village of Gambier. Our plan was to return for the car the next Saturday and drive to a nearby co-ed college town where we could find a date.

That next Saturday when we returned, the car was gone. We went to the police station to report the theft, learned that the police were quite aware of the car because the folks living where we had parked the car had called the police to report an unsightly junker parked in front of their house, and had the police tow it in to a storage garage. We were happy to have found the car, paid the \$5 storage fee and headed down the road. All went pretty well that day and since it was a full moon as we returned that night, we didn't have to use the lights except to put them on briefly when encountering a car coming toward us. Now we had to decide what to do with the car for the coming week, not wanting to

## Richard

leave it in town, where it might get towed again. We couldn't take it out to the college because the dean might see it and find out a scholarship student had it, so we drove it out into the country beyond the college, parked it on the side of a rural road and walked back to college.

Five days later, Dan was called to the dean's office, confronted about the car, and told he had to get rid of it. The dean told him the sheriff who had found it would give him \$50 for it. Dan came back to the dorm and told me that. I reminded him that we had always talked about what it would be like if you took a stick shift car down the highway and suddenly shifted it into reverse. I knew a junkyard for used cars in Mt. Vernon where we could do just that, near the junkyard where I thought we could get at least \$50 for the car. We figured that, if the gears got stripped when we shoved it into reverse near that junkyard, we could just push it the rest of the way and sell it to them. Excited by the idea, Dan told the dean we would take care of getting rid of it. Later that day we did exactly what we had discussed, and nearly killed ourselves when Dan threw it into reverse. The gears ground into scrap metal and the car did a wild 180 in the middle of the road. We managed to push the thing into the junkyard and got \$50 for it.

Richard



Above, a Henry J, but ours was rusted out, and light blue with dark blue polka-dots!

OFF TO DO RESEARCH: Between my junior and senior years of college, while reading an extra-assignment, three decade old research paper on the embryology and development of the kidney, I discovered that the commonly accepted concepts might be in error. I called my friend Dan over to the library and shared this with him. He agreed, and I met the next morning with our biology professor who had never read the paper, and suggested we do a summer research project to check it out. With his guidance, we obtained a premedical research grant from New York University School of Medicine to fund the research over the

## Richard

summer vacation. We discussed our plans with the world's expert on kidney development, Homer Smith at NYU, and together decided where we could best do the research. The best place to do the research was at the Bermuda Biological Research Station on St. George, Bermuda, a site supported and staffed by scientific researchers from Johns Hopkins, Columbia, Yale, and New York University. We went to Bermuda and had a good time, but our project, requiring obtaining and fertilizing fish eggs to study the development of the kidney, was just not feasible. We worked with an NYU professor who discovered the way the kidney concentrates, using a feedback loop of the type that some animals use to rewarm the blood coming from an ice-cold limb.

At the end of the summer, we returned to New York to debrief at NYU and I decided to hitch-hike to Grandma Eilers place in Kankakee, Illinois, about 750 miles away, where Grandpa Dickey was to pick me up and take me over to his home in Streator for a few days. Grandpa had been in the hospital all summer for treatment and grafting of the severe burns he suffered in a plane crash in Arkansas trying to extract Grandma Dickey from the wreckage. Grandma died and Grandpa was hospitalized in Arkansas, and then transferred to the burn center at Methodist in Indianapolis where I had spent a few days at his bedside before going to Bermuda.

## Richard



Grampa Dickey, drink in hand and dress shirt and tie still on, walks into his backyard at his home in Streator, IL

After my visit with Grampa, I was hitch-hiking home to Indianapolis one Saturday morning to get ready to return to college. My first ride was with an Illinois state cop who dropped

## Richard

me off in Decatur, Illinois. It was another 175 miles over to Indianapolis and while I was waiting to get a ride from Decatur a local motorcycle cop came up to tell me hitch-hiking was against the law in Decatur. Thinking back on the fact that my first ride had been with a state cop, I just needed to get out of town to continue my trip. I figured I just needed to get out of the city limits of Decatur, so I asked him where the city limits were. He told me to just wait there, outside a gas station. I waited. Shortly after, I realized he had gone in to call the paddy wagon to take me to jail.

It was not long before I was put in a single cell, by myself, in the holding area of the county jail. As the afternoon wore on, a large boil on my left elbow began draining and the only dressing I had was the flax seed poultice Grampa had put over it. He had sucked the core out that morning using the suction he created by emptying boiling water from a Coke bottle and then placing the bottle neck tightly over the boil hole.

Meanwhile, because my cell was next to the interrogation room I could hear the interviews of three guys who had just been arrested for a botched robbery. Each was interviewed separately, out of earshot of the other two, and each was told he would get off if he confessed. Each did, and soon all three were thrown into a cell in the overnight holding area of the jail. Now it was Saturday evening and, after I had complained to the jailer about

## Richard

my bad elbow, I was transferred into that holding area, too, but was in a lockup area separate from the rest of the prisoners, which included a few drunks as the night wore on. I was able to talk with those three guys and when they realized they had each confessed they were really mad.

The following morning (Sunday) each of us was transferred a few floors up to the county jail itself, for fingerprinting and in-processing. I was told my hearing would not occur until the following day so I decided to refuse to cooperate with the process until I was given access to a phone to call my parents. This was prior to the law being changed, giving an arrested person Miranda rights but I was allowed to call home and then was fingerprinted and processed into the county jail, where I was assigned a cellmate. I was a bit scared because I had heard that rape of younger boys was a popular past-time in jails like this, so I hoped I would not have to stay overnight and sleep in the same cell with him. Another thing was that the inmate in charge told me I must contribute to the inmate tobacco fund by allowing the 'turn-key' (see, I got to know a lot of jailbird terms) to take some of the money that had been taken from me the day before, for safe-keeping. Everything except my shirt and pants were taken from me when I was brought in. That was to keep me from doing something crazy, like hanging myself with my belt. Over that Sunday afternoon, in conversation with the other inmates I

## Richard

learned that hitch-hiking was not the charge but 'vagabond' was the charge for what I had done, and the fine and sentence for that was usually \$150 and 150 days!

Late that Sunday afternoon the turn-key called me and let me out to meet a judge. He was with my Dad, who had gone to the country club and gotten the judge to come take my plea. The judge asked me how I plead and when I asked what the charge was, he said it was 'disorderly conduct.' I said I was not guilty of that, only of hitch-hiking. The judge asked me again, and my Dad practically yelled at me that I had better confess right now! So I said 'guilty' and after he paid the costs and fine of about \$50 he drove me home. I still have the scar from that boil on my left elbow, reminding me of the experience. When I applied for top secret clearance in the Air Force I explained that my actual crime had been hitch-hiking, not disorderly conduct, which would have kept me from getting top secret clearance and being able to serve as a flight surgeon.

Don't you wish you had hitch-hiked so your youth could have been as exciting as mine?

# If I could choose any talents to have, what would they be?



**A**ny talents I would choose to have, or to actually possess? Let me begin by addressing the former.

I would like to be able to play the piano and guitar really well! I think I enjoyed playing piano as a youngster but quit regular practice when I entered college. That was partly because I realized there were several other more talented pianists playing the piano in the lounge of my college dorm building. Now I only play our piano occasionally and not that well. I always have been envious of those who sit down and play by ear.

Another talent I would have liked to have is piloting an airplane. The rub was, that required money and time for lessons. After missing the opportunity to take lessons at my airbase because the airplane had crashed just before I got there, I thought about

## Richard

flying lessons again when I began practice in Connecticut. I made the decision not to do so because that would have required me to spend valuable time away from my family and would have cost lots of money that we didn't have.

Social skills and the ability to relate easily with others have never been my strong card. I have actually never understood why. Margie has increased my social skills, pushing me to be more outgoing and engaging in social relationships. I appreciate that, even though it usually makes me uncomfortable, because I know she is right. Nevertheless, I would still like to know why I lack some social skills. Perhaps the pressure to be productive and serious and successful has something to do with it. It may be that this might have impaired my facility at relationships.

Finally, I am struck by how many of the few close friends I have had in the past have died at relatively young ages and of unusual causes, like alcoholism and AIDS.

Now, to a few talents I do have.

My ability to work hard and use my brain power to become a physician has been perhaps the most important talent I have had and used effectively. I am proud of what I was able to do to meet the medical needs of so many. Now that I am retired, I am focusing on some other talents.

## Richard

I am good at and enjoy gardening. It has now become a focus of my life; it is a joy to have a home where I can work in the garden. I often think of the beauty it brings, not only to me, but others, so I will do it as long as I can.

I have been good at organizing others to achieve important objectives. This was best exemplified, I think, by my participation in the formation, success and growth of the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists (AACE). I was able to create and organize several important committees as well as serve on the executive committee, and as President. Since my retirement from the practice of medicine in 2005, I have continued to use my talents as a volunteer in the indigent clinical services here in Hickory, and as a consultant in the school programs in Alexander County.

## Richard



In recognition of my service at the Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Clinic, Hickory, NC

Finally, I believe I have been a caring and loving husband, father and grandfather. Of all my talents, I know that this has been the most important one. With respect to our children, Margie and I have always tried to be loving, wise, and generous with our time, treasure and attention for them. It is heart-warming to know they appreciate that.

Richard



At Caitlin's baptism.

