



## Richard Vincent Dietrich

February 7, 1924 - June 8, 2020

Richard Vincent Dietrich, age 96, was born on February 7, 1924 in LaFargeville, NY. Parents: Roy Eugene Dietrich and Mida Amy Vincent, who hoped he would become a minister, a professional musician, or a businessman.

Dick grew up in northern New York State first in Watertown then in Hammond. He graduated from Hammond High School, and he entered Colgate College in 1942 but left after his freshman year to enlist. He served with the U.S. Air Corps in the South Pacific during the War. He returned to New York to marry Frances Elizabeth Smith of Hammond. He then earned an MS (1950) and PhD (1951) in Geology (Petrology) from Yale University.

Dick began teaching at Virginia Polytechnic Institute in 1951, taking leave to serve as Fulbright Research Professor at the University of Oslo (Norway). He was Associate Dean of Arts and Sciences at Virginia Tech when he left to become Dean of Arts and Sciences at Central Michigan University in 1969, and he remained there, first in the Dean's office and then teaching geology until he retired in 1986.

Dick authored and co-authored over 200 publications, including more than 20 books, four of which were translated – one each into German, Japanese, Malaysian, and Russian. These included geology and mineralogy textbooks

and popular books for the general public, including *Geology and Virginia, Gems, Granites, and Gravels, and Stones*. After retirement, he and Frances traveled extensively worldwide.

Dick was a gifted musician, who experimented with several instruments and directed church choirs in his thirties and again in his nineties. He was an avid birdwatcher, who created and maintained the websites, “Birds of Mackinac County” and “Birds of Isabella County.” These were only two of a series of websites he created in his later years, including the popular “Gem Rocks” and “Mimetoliths,” a term he coined.

Intellectually curious to the end of his life, he finished a monograph on various petroglyphs found near Gros Cap, Michigan, just four days before he died on June 8 at his home overlooking his bird feeders, wren house, and Lake Michigan outside of St. Ignace.

Predeceasing him was his beloved wife of over 60 years, Frances. He is survived by his children, Rick, a minister, married to Robin, Staunton, VA; Kurt, a musician, married to Maria, Ripon, WI; and Krista, a business-owner, married to Bob, St. Ignace, MI. Also, four grandchildren: Christopher Dietrich, Nathanael Dietrich, Erik Dietrich, and Paul Dietrich; and one great-grandchild: Emiliano Dietrich-Jiménez.

Family services – in LaFargeville and North Hammond (NY) – will be at a later date. Memorials may be made to the American Cancer Society or a charity of choice.

R. Galer Funeral Home in Pickford, Michigan is serving the family.  
Condolences may be sent to the family at [www.rgalerfuneralhome.com](http://www.rgalerfuneralhome.com).

# Tribute Wall



“ *Richard Vincent Dietrich*

October 05, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *Richard Vincent Dietrich*

October 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM



“ *Richard Vincent Dietrich*

September 01, 2022 at 07:49 PM



“ *My heartfelt condolences to Rick, Kurt, Krista and the entire Dietrich family, albeit late in coming. A whole year has passed.*

*I have just learned of Dick's passing. After not hearing from him in a long while, I finally did a search today, fearing this would be the result. Dick is a giant spirit that will continue to soar; in peach pits, rocks, earth, stones, trees, our hearts; and he will be twinkling in the stars for all eternity when we stare at the night sky.*

*We met in 2010 when I was researching peach pit carving for my debut novel, *Peach Seed Monkey*. of course, anyone doing an online search with those three search words will stumble upon his website, which I did. For the next decade we corresponded many times via email. Dick was always so incredibly generous in answering ANY question I posed. He gave me such insight and details, not only about peach pit carving, but about life. I have woven them into the novel, so there's one more place that his spirit will continue to soar. I made sure that he knew he will be included in my acknowledgements.*

*He took issue with me using "seed" instead of "pit" so I found a way to include this in the story, too! 😊🐵*

*Dick often spoke lightheartedly about not being around by the time my novel publishes (I've been working on it for 14 years and getting closer). So in 2015, I published three copies of a preliminary draft and sent one to him to edit. Tickled and thrilled, he read the whole book, marked it up, made comments and returned it to me. How I cherish that copy.*

*He often wrote about Frances and their children; so I learned early on what a dedicated father he was. Reading comments here, confirms other things I had come to know: what a gifted teacher and he was, loved and respected by students and colleagues alike, and how varied and energetic his interests were.*

*I loved his sense of humor. He'd always find a way to lighten up our correspondences. We never met in person, but he has always felt like a friend from decades ago.*

*Here's to you, Dick!*

*I will not be at all surprised when I look up at the clouds and see your smile in the formation!*

*Cordially,  
Anita Gail Jones  
[www.AnitaGailJones.com](http://www.AnitaGailJones.com)*

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**Anita Roehrick** - May 21, 2021 at 04:01 PM

EA

“ *Dear Family.*

*Please accept my heartfelt condolences. Your dad meant a lot to me.*

*He will be remembered along with the lessons he taught in and out of the classroom*

*Sincerely  
Elizabeth Shaw Antkowiak*

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**Elizabeth Antkowiak** - September 28, 2020 at 07:04 AM

MS

“ My condolences to Rick, Kurt, Krista, and their families. My name is Martin Steinbis. I was a student of geology at CMU while Dick was Dean of Science and Technology. I'm not sure what it was about me but Dick seemed to take a personal interest in my education and professional career. I was honored when he asked me to be a student member on the Faculty tenure committee. Dick along with Wayne Moore shared a connection to VPI and the two of them had a huge impact on my life. As a result of their support I was one of the first CMU geologists to write a publication for the Michigan Academy of Science, I was selected for an internship at the Library of Congress my Junior year, and ultimately attended the University of Missouri for graduate work. I was quite unaware of the extent of their support until later years. Through their advice I obtained a summer internship at Chevron in New Orleans (Dr. Moore's alma matter). However, I spent my 24 year career with Amoco Corp, working and living worldwide before returning to CMU as an adjunct geology instructor in 2007. I retired to the UP in 2017 and currently live in Curtis, MI where I own and manage Interlaken Resort. I have a small science center where I share geology and biology with children and adults.

The last time I saw Dick and Frances was at their home in Mt. Pleasant many years ago. I recall Dick setting me on to a publication by Saudi Aramco which is quite interesting. He always impressed me with the depth and span of his interests and knowledge. As often happens, we loose contact with people from the past, and I'm so very, very sad that I did not do a better job following up with Dick when he moved to St. Ignas. Every time I drove across the bridge I told myself I had to find Dick's phone number and address so we could get together. The only person that seemed to know Dick's contact information was Reed Wicander who also retired 5 years ago and spends much of his time now in Brisbane, Australia. I will always regret my failure to visit Dick one last time. It was one huge missed opportunity, especially now when at age 67 when the concept of mortality is beginning to sink in.

*I'm sure many other students owe their thanks to Dick for the direction and support he provided over many years. I count Dick and Francis as two of those important people in my life who made a difference. It's sad to accept that they along with Wayne and Effie have now left us, but I'd like to believe that we will have another chance. Again, sending you and your families my very best wishes. ps. I think I have several copies of Dick's book entitled "Stones" in my collection.*

*Respectfully and thankfully, Martin Steinbis*

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**Martin Steinbis** - June 24, 2020 at 04:39 PM

KM

“*Mr. Dietrich stopped by my family farm near Hessel Michigan to take pictures of our old barn in 2011. He visited with us and gave us a copy of his book “Stones”. We visited all afternoon as he took pictures of the barn and soon found out he lived in Watertown, NY in his early years. That is my home town. My sister and I vacation at the family farm each summer and we are so glad to have met Mr. Dietrich. He was such a joy to talk with and so very knowledgeable about barns and geology. He will be missed.*

*Kathy Lamoreaux McCabe  
Watertown, New York*

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**Kathy McCabe** - June 22, 2020 at 03:24 PM

SL

“*So sorry for your loss. We shared a love of birds and nature via many emails and pictures over the past twenty years. Stan Lilley, Mt. Pleasant, MI.*

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**Stan Lilley** - June 21, 2020 at 09:19 AM