



Richard Maurice Liebaert

February 15, 1949 - October 26, 2022

Richard Liebaert died of complications due to Parkinson's disease, on October 26, 2022. Richard was a resident of Corvallis and a long-time faculty member in biology at Linn-Benton Community College. Born in 1949, he was a Baby Boomer and member of the Sixties Generation.

Richard's parents, Lorraine E. Johnson and Maurice C. Liebaert, met on a blind date when she was in nursing school in Duluth, Minnesota. Lorraine was a Wisconsin farm girl and Maurice was a sailor on a Great Lakes steamship. They only had a few dates before they were married; then Maurice went off to the Merchant Marine Academy and served as an officer and ship's engineer during World War II.

After the war, the couple settled in Marine City, Michigan, Maurice's hometown. Richard was born on February 15, 1949. His brother Daniel was born in 1953. While the boys were growing up, Maurice literally built their house around the family, board by board. He worked as the maintenance supervisor at an auto parts plant while Lorraine worked as an RN at the local hospital. Later Maurice supervised the hospital physical plant while Lorraine handled first aid and payroll at the auto plant.

True to its name, Marine City offered an abundance of opportunities and adventures on the water. The small town is situated on the St. Clair River,

which forms the Canadian border and connects Lake Huron with Lake Erie. In the summer, Richard and his friends rode their bikes to the swimming beach every day. They fished for perch in the river and hunted frogs and crawdads in the shallows. In the winter, residents cleared off spaces for skating rinks. When the boys were older, they set out on canoe trips or spent the days water skiing, sometimes livening things up by jumping the wakes of giant freighters. Many weekends the family camped out in an old canvas tent. Richard was a Boy Scout and his mother, the church choir director, recruited him to sing in the choir.

As a youngster, Richard showed a lot of talent as an artist. He spent countless hours stretched out on the living room floor, drawing cars, airplanes, and especially spaceships. Art morphed into an interest in photography; as a teenager Richard commandeered his mother's laundry area as a part-time darkroom. As an adult, Richard continued photographing nature and travels. In his later years, he also enjoyed making fanciful assemblages from castoffs. Perhaps Richard's artistic abilities were shaped by the fact that he was touched by synesthesia, his brain automatically assigning colors to numbers, letters, and other sequences like days of the week.

Richard was a voracious reader. He would race home from grade school, wolf down his lunch, and spend the rest of the lunch hour reading, especially science fiction. His paternal grandmother was assistant town librarian, so he got first crack at all the new books. Richard's curiosity led him to delve into history, biography, science, technology, sports, and travel. If anything, Richard became more widely-read as he grew older. Before Google put him out of business, friends often turned to him for information. He was never a know-it-all, just curious about the world and all that is in it. This, along, with his dry wit, prompted his people to joke that Richard was "the ideal dinner companion."

Richard was very active in high school activities, participating in student

newspaper, drama, student government, sports, and playing trombone in the high school band. He started at center for the varsity basketball team and at tight end on the football team. He was not a great athlete, but was a very fast runner, excelling as a sprinter and setting a long-standing school record in the hurdles. On the academic side, Richard earned virtually all As and was Salutatorian and President of the MCHS class of 1967. He never bragged about it, but he was named a National Merit Scholar in 1967.

Good students, growing up in the era of Sputnik and the race to the moon, were steered toward science. Richard loved astronomy and spent many hours observing the stars and planets through a small telescope. He might have chosen to major in astronomy or physics and his career path would have been very different. But math didn't come naturally, so he chose to pursue a degree in zoology at Michigan State University. This was the late sixties, so college went by in a blur, consisting partly of studies, partly of social life in a rapidly changing world, and partly of student protest. His college experiences shaped Richard's progressive social and political views for the rest of his life.

In 1971, B.S. degree in hand and looking for a change of scenery, Richard moved to the University of California at Davis to chase an advanced degree. At U.C. Davis, he found that he did not have the patience for laboratory research but loved being a teaching assistant. He cut his graduate program short and left Davis with a Master's in zoology, looking to find a community college position. After a couple of years as a road warrior, Richard found his way to LBCC, where he taught from 1978 until his early retirement in 2004. How does anybody work at the same job for nearly 30 years? Answer: Richard loved it.

Richard started out at LBCC teaching anatomy and physiology to nursing students. His primary assignment throughout his teaching career was the

year-long biology course for biology majors—students planning on careers in the biological or medical fields. He enlivened his class presentations with vivid illustrations, personal stories, humor, and impersonations. He earned a reputation of being a rigorous but approachable instructor and a fair grader. His “lectures” were interactive dialogs; he preferred to be a “guide on the side,” not a “sage on the stage.” A favorite activity was getting students out into the field, often on long-weekend Community Education trips to favorite destinations such as the Malheur Wildlife Refuge, Redwoods National Park, John Day Fossil Beds, the Olympics, and the Oregon coast. He loved sharing with students the intricacy of a flower, the adaptations of a bird for flight, or the jewels found in a tidepool. Richard also spent a year as an exchange professor at Paddington College in London.

Richard was always delighted to run into former students as they pursued further study and careers— nurses, researchers, pharmacists, and physicians. He was once treated in the Good Sam emergency room by former nursing students and physicians and was even referred to a cardiologist who was a former student.

While starting out at LBCC and embarking on married life, Richard and spouse lived in a Victorian fixer-upper, and he became interested in Albany’s historic architecture. He wasn’t much of a joiner, but for many years Richard was active in historic preservation and he was a key player in the efforts to establish Albany’s historic districts and the Albany Regional Museum. He became a reliable volunteer in Democratic politics and knocked on lots of doors for Democratic candidates. He was a lifelong supporter of numerous humanitarian causes. In his spare time, he went backpacking, birding, cycling, cross-country skiing, and river-rafting, always with camera in hand. During his retirement years, Richard volunteered as a naturalist at the Oregon Coast Aquarium.

In 1990 Richard was recruited by a publisher to contribute to a new college biology textbook. Richard wrote the study guide that accompanied the text, as well as the questions at the end of textbook chapters. The study guide allowed Richard to flex his writing muscles, producing questions, puzzles, and stories expanding on the textbook's themes—about 10,000 questions in all. The study guide went through seven editions; old copies are still available on Amazon.

Richard was next tasked with putting together an interactive study guide—a computer CD-ROM with questions, games, animations, and simulations—to accompany the textbook. This project gave him free rein to indulge his passions for teaching, science, tech, and art all in one creation. The CD-ROM was one of the first electronic media bundled with a textbook and it also went through several editions. All of it was eventually moved online, where some of it still resides.

It took three weddings and three divorces before Richard found Cat Shelby, his true companion and soul mate. They met online in 2002. Richard said he was looking for someone “tall, smart, and funny.” Cat was all that and much more. They married in 2012, and spent their mature years together, enjoying world travel and their family of champion Irish Water Spaniels. Cat introduced Richard to scuba diving, and together they dove the Great Barrier Reef, Brazil, the Caribbean, Mexico, and Indonesia (where they also met some orangutans and komodo dragons). Cat was Richard's true love; it just took him a while to find her.

Richard was sensitive to issues around people's gender identity and supported the LGBTQ community in many ways. He was active in national transgender conferences and activities, presenting popular seminars on “The Biology of Sex and Gender: and advocating for trans rights. Richard was a founding member of Confluence, the Willamette Valley LGBTQ chorus,

singing all over the Northwest and more widely with the group, including singing at Carnegie Hall (practice, practice, practice!).

Richard was happy with his life. He had a nurturing family, a circle of close friends, and a loving life partner. He had a fulfilling career, memorable travels and experiences, and was able to fulfill most of his dreams.

He is survived by his wife, Cat Shelby; brother Dan Liebaert and sister-in-law Kathy; brother-in-law and sister-in-law Pete and Kim Thanos; nieces, Andrea Liebaert and Maddie Thanos; nephews, Nate Liebaert, Chris Thanos, Zack Thanos and Nick Pearson; ex-wives, Annclaire Greig and Ann Barlow; and numerous friends. He is also survived by his Irish Water Spaniel Luna. His parents, Maurice and Lorraine Liebaert, preceded him in death.

Tribute Wall

SW

“ I just sadly became aware of Rich's passing. He was my first physiology instructor, at LBCC (1978, RN program). His engaging classes were a major early influence on my interest in the subject. I went on (eventually) to earn a doctorate in physiology. At one point, I even found myself teaching a biology class using his book. After some years of med school teaching, I settled at a small community college, where I trained nurses just as he had trained me.

He was one of the teachers whose legacy had a continued influence on how I thought about teaching. I'm glad, at one point, I was able to connect with him to tell him so. I was (we all were) lucky to have known him.

- Stan Willenbring

stan willenbring - August 21, 2025 at 05:58 PM

CS

“ 4 files added to the album Richard wedding and other events with friends



Cathy M Shelby - December 24, 2022 at 03:10 PM

CA

“ 2 files added to the album *Richard over the years*



cat - December 06, 2022 at 07:51 PM

CA

“ 2 files added to the album *Richard and travel*



Cat - December 05, 2022 at 01:33 PM

CS

“ 2 files added to the album *Richard over the years*



Cat Shelby - November 13, 2022 at 02:12 PM

CA

“ 3 files added to the album Richard over the years



cat - November 08, 2022 at 08:06 PM

CA

“ 9 files added to the album Richard wedding and other events with friends



cat - November 08, 2022 at 06:47 PM

AL

“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



Andrea Liebaert - November 07, 2022 at 05:56 PM

AL

“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



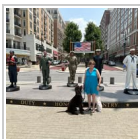
Andrea Liebaert - November 07, 2022 at 04:50 PM

CS

“ 1 file added to the album Richard wedding and other events with friends



Cat Shelby - November 07, 2022 at 04:01 PM



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Marilyn Cantrell - November 06, 2022 at 02:44 PM



“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Marilyn Cantrell - November 06, 2022 at 02:20 PM



“ 18 files added to the album Richard's Art



Cat Shelby - November 05, 2022 at 05:49 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Richard wedding and other events with friends



Cat - November 05, 2022 at 04:57 PM

CA

“ 2 files added to the album *Richard over the years*



Cat - November 05, 2022 at 01:11 PM

CS

“ 1 file added to the album *Richard over the years*



Cat Shelby - November 04, 2022 at 12:44 AM

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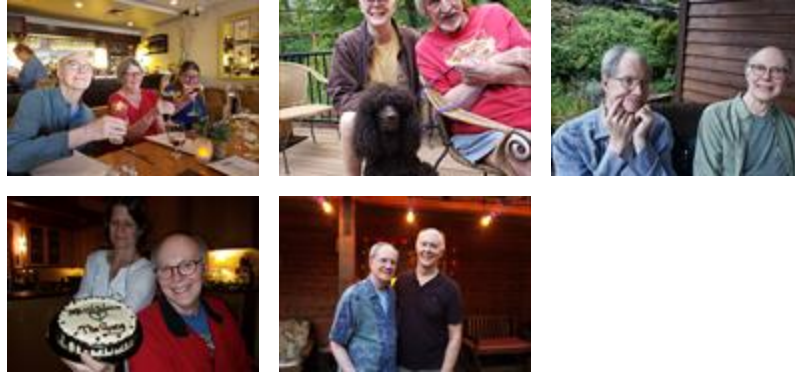
“ 1 file added to the album *Richard and Irish Water Spaniels*



Cat Shelby - November 04, 2022 at 12:41 AM

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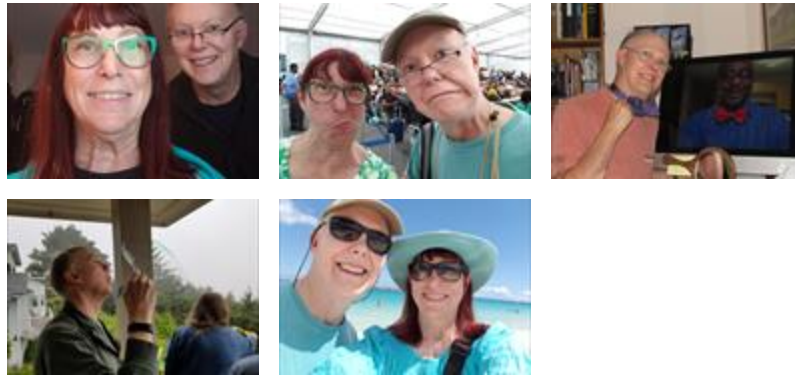
“ 11 files added to the album Richard wedding and other events with friends



Cat Shelby - November 04, 2022 at 12:25 AM

CS

“ 20 files added to the album Richard over the years



Cat Shelby - November 03, 2022 at 03:35 PM

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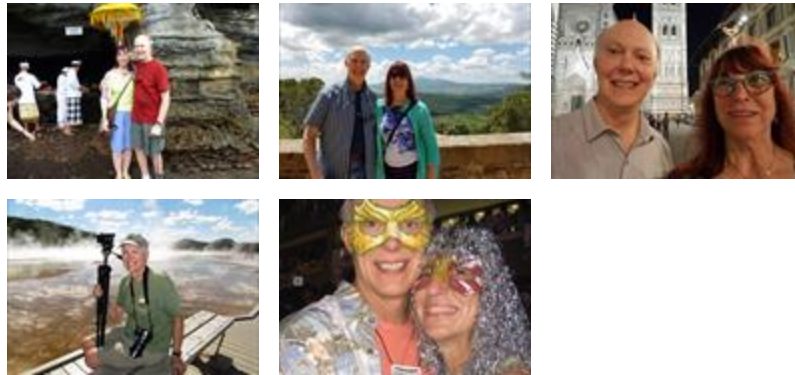
“ 8 files added to the album *Richard wedding and other events with friends*



Cat Shelby - November 03, 2022 at 02:57 PM

CS

“ 10 files added to the album *Richard and travel*



Cat Shelby - November 03, 2022 at 02:53 PM

CS

“ 12 files added to the album Richard and Irish Water Spaniels



Cat Shelby - November 03, 2022 at 02:40 PM