



Richard Thomas Gjertson

October 20, 1949 - July 27, 2023

Richard Thomas Gjertson, 73, of Waconia, MN, passed away on July 27, 2023, surrounded by his loving family, following sudden cardiac arrest.

Richard was born October 20, 1949, in Madison, WI, to Mildred and Chester. The quiet middle child between two sisters, Richard spent his days playing baseball and hockey with childhood friends. He went on to earn a Horticulture degree at the University of Wisconsin.

Richard met Sandy in Oshkosh, WI at the Paine Art Center & Arboretum, and they discovered their shared passion for plants. They married in 1977 and eventually settled in Waconia, where their children Leah and Daniel were born. Family life was central to Richard. He was a devoted fan of his children's musical and athletic endeavors, attending concerts, marching band, drum corps, hockey, skiing and running events through their high school and college years and beyond.

His strong love of nature pulled him outdoors, and Richard was always ready to go hiking, cycling, cross-country skiing, canoeing, fishing and birding. His favorite place was his Northwoods cabin, a peaceful family retreat since his childhood. To his family's chagrin, he enjoyed getting up before dawn for coffee by the fire, before launching into days of fix-it projects, wood chopping, boat rides, secret trails and a little fishing at sunset.

Richard brought his horticultural skills to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum, joining the staff in 1996. For 23 years he lovingly tended its natural areas including the bog, prairie and woodland wildflowers. He led restoration efforts

that have given countless visitors deeper, more immersive experiences in nature. He mentored many staff and volunteers and was always ready to share his extensive knowledge of and passion for native plants.

Richard retired in 2019, yet valued being with longtime Arboretum friends and continued to work part time. He was not one to sit still for long. Richard returned to playing cello. Together with Sandy, he tackled a series of major home and cabin renovations, nearly complete at the time of his passing.

Richard adored his three young grandsons. Ever an artist and craftsman, he found time in retirement to create beautiful wildlife paintings and handcrafted wooden toys for them. They dearly loved their "Boppa", as they read books, hung holiday lights, listened to records, played outside year-round, and were planning their first fishing trips together.

Richard was predeceased by his parents, Mildred and Chester. He is survived by wife of 45 years, Sandy Tanck, children Leah Gjertson (Erik Hembre) and Daniel Gjertson (Allison Quinn), grandchildren Haakon, Leif, and Thoren Hembre, and sisters Mary (Rob) Stroud and Nancy (Chip) Plummer.

A memorial service will be held at the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum on October 23, 2023, at 3:00pm. In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift to the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum or the North Country Trail Association.

Tribute Wall



“ *I'll never forget the first time I visited Sandy at home in Waconia - as I entered I heard beautiful cello playing on the lower level of the house. I thought Sandy had Yo-yo Ma playing on her CD - but it was Richard. His music was a metaphor for his life - meaningful and beautiful. He is missed.*

Jean Larson - October 09, 2023 at 01:30 PM

“ *When I started working at the Arboretum, I was fortunate and blessed to start out with Rich's crew. He treated me with kindness and respect, which I'm very thankful and appreciative. The good Lord now has a wonderful gardener tending to his gardens.*

*Sincerely with Gratitude,
Scott Stanley*

Scott Stanley - August 20, 2023 at 04:19 PM