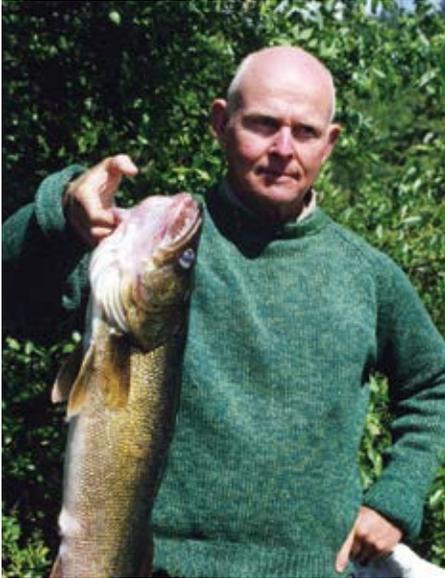


In Memoriam

Richard (Dick) Pharis,

March 13, 1937 – July 3, 2018



Following nearly a month in Foothills hospital, Richard (Dick) Pharis passed quietly away July 3rd.

Dick was a founding member of the Alberta Wilderness Association, serving two terms as President. In later years, Dick remained active in AWA in projects including the annual maintenance of the historic Big Horn equestrian Trail west of Nordegg. He supported approximately 50 conservation/environmental groups in Canada, the US, Australia and New Zealand. Early involvement with the Civil Liberties Association chapter of Calgary was an indication of his humanitarianism.

Dick was born in Indianapolis, Indiana. As a young boy in Kentucky he fell in love with fishing. Later, growing up in the state of Washington, he learned to love the mountains and camping through the Boy Scouts. For the rest of his life Dick lived by the rule “Be Prepared.”

After completing an undergraduate degree in Forestry at the University of Washington Dick went to Duke University where he received his PhD in Plant Physiology in 1961.

After working as a research scientist for the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon, Dick accept-

ed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena. At CalTech he had the pleasure of working with renowned scientists such as Linus Pauling.

From CalTech, Dick came to Calgary where he was hired in 1965 as a Professor of Botany at the University of Calgary. The Rocky Mountains definitely influenced this choice. Thus began a 53 year association with the University of Calgary and with Alberta’s Eastern Slopes.

In 1967 he met and married Vivian Marilyn Baker, a former student in the Botany section of the Biology Department. They shared a love of wilderness and took many mountaineering trips on foot and horseback in Canada, the U.S., and New Zealand. In Australia, remote outback adventures were often two to three-week camel safaris. The two became a dynamic team in defence of wilderness and land conservation.

They built a house on an acreage north of Cochrane in the 1970s and kept pack and saddle horses for traveling Alberta’s eastern slopes. From Willmore Wilderness Park to the Whaleback friends, students, and visiting scientists joined them on their sometimes lengthy trips.

Dick’s lifelong passion was fishing. Hunting was another abiding passion enjoyed by both Dick and Vivian. It could have been for birds on the prairies with their Labrador retrievers or, more often, for big game in Alberta’s foothills. As a prolific and accomplished photographer, Dick carried heavy camera equipment wherever he traveled in the world’s wild places to document landscapes, wildlife and native plants. He often purchased local landscape paintings, some of which were donated to AWA for fundraising events.

Dick’s research into the plant hormone gibberellin was internationally recognized in the field of hormone physiology. This

work attracted researchers from around the world to his lab. He published extensively, with over 400 peer reviewed papers in prestigious journals.

He was recognized with Stacy and Killam Fellowships and in 1988 was invited to join the Royal Society of Canada because of his outstanding contributions to Canadian science.

Tributes from graduate students he mentored, now in many parts of the world, poured in during his final weeks. These students now carry on his high standards of scientific endeavor. Many others were welcomed into Dick and Vivian’s personal lives, often sharing wilderness adventures and learning first hand, their conservation values.

Helping a friend plant the first vinifera vineyard in Oregon was a catalyst that led to his being one of the original members of the Grand Cru Wine Society in Calgary. When the opportunity arose in New Zealand, he became an owner and director of Torlesse Wines, a boutique winery located in the Waipara Valley north of Christchurch. For the past 25 years, Dick and Vivian have lived on their vineyard five months of each year, producing ten varieties of grapes for Torlesse.

Tributes from around the world indicate Dick influenced and shaped many lives, professionally and personally. In the words of a colleague “beneath his brusque, shy personality was a heart of true gold and a man of absolute honesty.” He will be remembered for his passionate dedication to scientific excellence, high standards of professionalism, and dedication to conservation.

Dick is survived by his wife Vivian, his sister Lynne, as well as six brothers-in-law, seven sisters-in-law and eleven nieces and nephews.