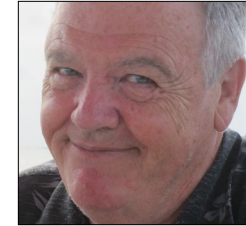




Richard Landon Sims
Memorial Ritual

Deep friend of the universe

June 12, 2021



Richard Landon Sims Memorial Ritual

June 12, 2021 • 10:30 a.m. Orillia, Ontario, Canada / 8:15 p.m. Kathmandu, Nepal





Richard Landon Sims Memorial Ritual

12 June 2021 • Aruba, Canada, India, Nepal, United States

Richard and I are living on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabeg and Wyandot peoples. We acknowledge the ancestors who walked upon this land. We honor the history of these lands and the Spirit of Love, Healing and Justice.

Photos and music

- “Blue Skies” by Willie Nelson
- “Over the Rainbow” by Israel Kamakawiwo’ole
- “What a Wonderful World” Louise Armstrong

Welcome to the Circle Jan Sanders

- Family
- Rama First Nation and Orillia
- Institute of Cultural Affairs
- Nepal and India
- Social Artistry Group
- Aruba

Prayer and Song Lorraine McRae

Stories Honouring and Celebrating the Full Life of Richard L Sims

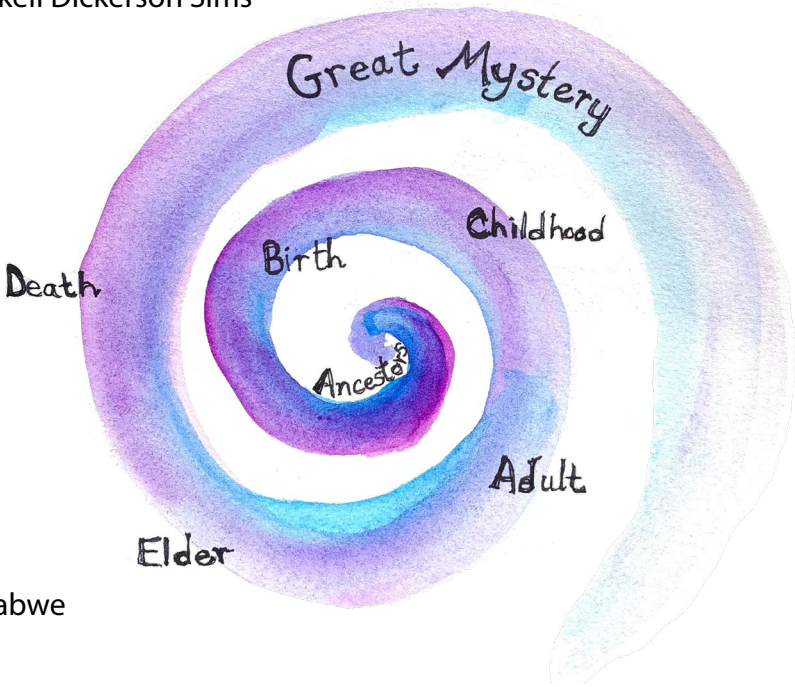
Ancestors — Jewel Taylor Sims and Haskell Dickerson Sims

Birth — Sparta, Tennessee, Dec 7, 1944

Child — Sparta

Adult — Tennessee and South Carolina

- Chicago
- Fort Ord
- Chicago
- Korea
- Taiwan
- The Philippines
- Chicago
- Elder* — Orillia, Ontario; Nebraska
- Colquitt, GA, Orlando, FL
- Nepal, India
- Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe
- Aruba

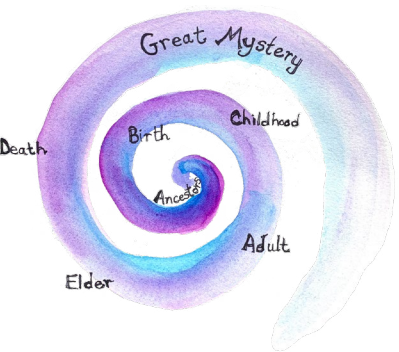


Please turn the page.

Death — Leacock Care Center, 1:15 p.m., April 27, 2021

The Existential Moment Jan Sanders

“Death came shortly after 1 o’clock in the afternoon. I was sitting next to Richard finishing up a call with David Dunn. Richard was watching me, eyes open with a slight smile on his face. David and I had been writing an article on work Richard conducted in a ICA/ Social Artistry workshop in Nepal, which we were just completing after several months. I realized that Richard’s breathing had stopped. I waited to see if it would begin again, however, it didn’t.”



Silence: Language Without Words David Dunn

“This is where it’s really important to realize there is a language without words. We just sat silently in our Zoom meeting. In a little while Jan said, ‘Let’s sing *Journey On*.’ I’d like to sing it for you now. Hum along with me.”

Journey On

Tune: Elcho Island
Journey on, journey on, all humankind,
Future is waiting for you.
Struggling, stumbling, all the life through.
Future is waiting for you.
Hum the tune
Journey on, journey on, all humankind.
Mystery is waiting for you.

Great Mystery

We come from a dark abyss, we end in a dark abyss, and we call the luminous interval life.
Nikos Kazantzakis, *Saviors of God*

Sitting in Richard’s presence Jan Sanders

“And with that Richard passed into the Great Mystery. I wasn’t prepared for it to be so beautiful. So peaceful. I really had the sense of him joining his family and community on the other side. I was able to be there with him and give him a cedar wash to freshen him up for his journey. I had a little tobacco, which I placed in his hands. The tobacco was both a symbol from his youth as they grew it on the farm and it is an Ojibwe understanding that you offer the tobacco on your journey. I continued to sit with him and gave him that time of passing while I played his favourite love songs. And then the thunder and rain began.”

Dearest Brother Richard Dr. Larry Ward

As you know our little life is big.
Wrapped in a great disguise, hidden in the leaves of time, being human.
I smile when I remember earth adventures, sweating, laughing and finding joy in loving action.
I find solace in the great silence we all share,
I taste sweetness in the timeless bond of our hearts,
I find joy still hearing your footsteps in the sand of time, sowing seeds of kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity.
I embrace too the mystery, depth and greatness you still embody.
I embrace too that we are really undefinable but you already knew that, I see now it’s the secret of your humor and your smile.
I embrace a life well lived, a heart-song well sung,
Shinning the dharma light across the mysteries of time and space.
Thank you, Richard

The Thunders Lorraine McRae

“When Jan called me shortly after Richard’s passing, I heard the loud sounds of the thunder beings and the rain came down fast and hard. I remember the story told to me by our dear friend, Merle Assance-Beddie, an Ojibwe elder. She and Richard had a deep respect for one another. Merle was at the passing of her own mother when the thunder beings came and Merle said to her mother, “You are so very special for the thunder beings to come and escort you home.” And that is what I felt hearing the thunders when Jan’s phone call came of Richard’s passing. It was an acknowledgement of Richard’s safe journey home to the creator and to the ancestors, and to the great joy, wonder and mystery of it all.”

The Mystery Unfolds — Jan reads a selection from Richard Wagamese*

ME: I miss my mother sometimes. Really bad.
OLD WOMAN: Maybe try missing her really well.
ME: How do I do that?
OLD WOMAN: See that sunrise? See how beautiful the colours are? How clear and clean the air feels? How good it feels inside of you?
ME: Yes. It’s wonderful.
OLD WOMAN: She lives in that. So maybe just say, “Thanks, Mom” when you see and feel things like that.

JAN [to myself]: “I miss Richard really well now.”

*Embers: One Ojibway’s Meditations, by Richard Wagamese (1955–2017), pg 158. Richard Wagamese is an Ojibway from Wabaseemoong First Nation in NW Ontario and one of Canada’s foremost First Nations authors and storytellers.

The Future

Memorial Fund — Dr. Tatwa Timsina

A Memorial Fund in Richard’s name will support youth work in Nepal.

Richard’s ashes

Richard’s ashes will be scattered in Ontario (Victoria Falls), Tennessee, Chicago, Florida, Nebraska, Georgia, Aruba and Nepal.

Closing

Traveling Song and Drumming — Lorraine McRae

Send out — Rev. John Patterson

“Richard Landon Sims, brother Richard, we send you beyond to the same place and the same love from which you came nearly eight decades ago. Sisters and brothers who remain behind, lift high the torch that Richard has carried throughout his life and about which we have heard today. Treasure his humor, low key thoughtfulness, his humility and his appreciation of all those whom he met. If you were one of those who got to spend time with Richard, you have known what it means to be loved profoundly, and enlivened and healed. This was a man who searched! He cherished! He celebrated! And now, he rests in peace. Having contributed his life, to the flow of human history. May his greatness continue to inspire us.”

Lingering for conversation — Jan Sanders

Jan will remain for reflections and comments. You can also type or paste into the chat.

Thank you to David Dunn, Scott Camp and Betsy White Costley for music and Zoom support.

Scattering ashes at Victoria Falls



Thank you
for joining this journey
Jan

Christine, Lorraine and Jan were assisted by Sharla, who climbed down the steep banks and Mark, who drove us along the dusty, narrow road to the falls.



Friends wrote kind words

Dick was a very fine man. We looked forward to his visits to Sudtonggan. (From the *Island Ventures* staff who worked with Dick during his ICA days.)

Dick was a tremendous fundraiser in Manila. His personality with his unique sense of humor was a perfect fit for working within the Filipino culture. He was a good friend, was fun and could always be depended on to come up with the right suggestions when we were stumped. *Aimee Hilliard*

Richard stands out for me as a man who expressed his support of the ICA work and especially your role in that work internationally in a creative, rather heroic manner. That’s the way it struck me when you told me he was a taxi driver in Chicago, among other such innovative efforts, in support of your family’s mission. He captured my imagination after that! *Trish Broersma*

I remember with delight becoming aware of Richard’s murmured jokes in the back of the room at the MLSA classes (Masters of Leadership in Social Artistry). What a great traveling companion he must have been on your many, many journeys and the journey of life itself. *Lisa Nelson*

The photo catches his soul’s smile and reminds me of weekends at the Creative Community Conferences. ...May you grieve peacefully as we celebrate this good man with this delightful dry sense of humor. *Judi White*

When we were in Colquitt together, I remember Richard’s wit, his humor, his gracious inclusivity and his well of kindness. His memory is etched in the lives of many. Sending light and love to you and Richard for his peaceful transition. As you go forward in the celebration of Richard and your life together know that your friends around the world are holding you. *Karen Johnson*

Over the years of workshops, conferences and trainings...I appreciated Richard’s presence. My mind might be spinning on what next or what to do and with his quiet observations and humor he would bring me fully into the present....So much gratitude for the work and wisdom that you and Richard have brought to the development and teaching of Social Artistry around the world. *Peggy Dean*

Jean Houston and Peggy Rubin, colleagues in the Social Artistry Movement said, “Richard was an original—a wise, thoughtful soul whose laughter and humor came from a deep source of the absurd.” *Jan*

My first thoughts have been of you, your long path, your entwining with this good man, your great care (and probable exhaustion), all the unsaid and unsayable challenges you’ve lived in these last six years. I hope you can exhale and rest and be supported in a million ways, loved deeply by all of us who love you and Richard.

Richard reminded me of my dad, who always had a similar spark in his eye/soul, and a bend in his personality that meant you never knew what was coming next. Sometimes that was hard, but in the long view, it shines among the best things, becoming what I treasure perhaps most in human interactions. Richard had that shine, and even with me, who he knew hardly at all, he radiated quiet warmth. *Myotai*

Richard Sims

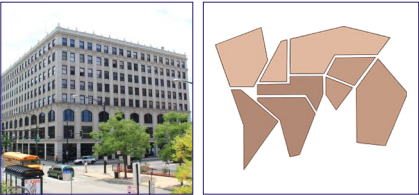
Deep friend of the universe, powerful teacher, gentle caring soul

Richard Landon Sims, 76, of Sparta, Tennessee, United States of America, was born in the White County Hospital on December 7, 1944 and died at the Leacock Care Center, Orillia, Ontario, Canada on April 27, 2021.



Richard learned to work hard and expect little as a little boy on a farm in Doyle, Tennessee. He honed his people skills as an Eagle Scout and Future Farmers of America speaker. He sharpened his dry humor while completing a bachelor's degree at the University of the South. He was drafted into the Vietnam War while enrolled at Chicago Theological Seminary.

He took the next step on his life journey with the Institute of Cultural Affairs. As a staff member, he helped communities develop socially and financially in Illinois, Oklahoma, Korea, Taiwan, Philippines, and Georgia. The City of Chicago became his home base for many years with eclectic employments including a taxi driver, neighborhood developer, and trader with a seat on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange.



Richard, and Janet Sanders, of Scribner, Nebraska, have been loving partners for 24 years. They married in Chicago in 2007 and made their home an hour north of Toronto in Orillia, Ontario, on the shores of Lake Simcoe.

Richard and Jan created a series of leadership seminars that address issues like community building, re-imagining



education and HIV/AIDS awareness, drawing on the resources of earth wisdom and Social Artistry. His teaching assignments took him to Nepal, India, Aruba, USA, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. Richard spent several months in Kenya working with the Maasi people to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. He received a Master's Degree in Social Artistry Leadership with Dr. Jean Houston. Richard and Jan continue to be allies to Rama First Nation, an Ojibwe community near their home in Orillia.

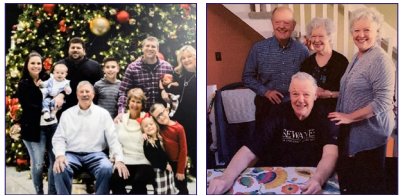


Colleagues and friends across the world will miss Richard. A colleague said of Richard "he entered my heart in a way hard to express. He had a spark in his eye/soul and a bend in his personality that meant you never knew what was coming next. He always radiated quiet warmth." Another friend said

Richard "was a deep friend of the universe, a powerful teacher and a gentle caring soul."

The twin brothers — Joy and Sorrow and Life and Death — are dancing in this celebration.

Richard ("Dick" in his childhood) was the son of Haskell Dickerson Sims and Jewel Taylor Sims. His siblings are John Sims (Lynda, Cookeville), Jane Sims Camp (Harry deceased), Susan Sims Hall (Ken, McMinnville) and Samuel Dickerson Sims, deceased (Charm, Rock Island). His nieces and nephews are Jack Sims (Lynlee, Lenoir City), Eleanor Sims York (David, Livingston), Scott Sims (Rhonda, Nashville), Carol Camp White (Jim, Taos), Scott Camp (Patsy, Hilton Head), Reesa Vides (Raphael, Hobe Sound), Brian (Melinda, McMinnville), Ken (Richmond), Steve, (M'liss, Rock Island). There are many loving grandnieces and grandnephews.



On the Sanders side of the family, Richard's brother- and sister-in-law, Paul and Joan Sanders, live in Omaha, Nebraska. There are two nephews, Dave (Karly) and Mike (Stacy); three grandnephews, Madan, Anthony and Evan; and two grandnieces, Aubrey and Addison.



Richard and Jan were "adopted" by a Nepali family, Pramila KC, Bijaya and grandniece Prabijjya, who live in Kathmandu.



The family thanks Fatima and Brighton and the Leacock Care Centre, Orillia, and our Simcoe condo neighbors' compassionate care.



We celebrate Richard's completed life on earth. His ashes will be scattered in the many places he loved.

You may make a memorial donation to the education and community development work Richard supported in Nepal. Jan will forward the donations to Nepal.



Janet Sanders
2-1 Olive Crescent
Orillia, ON L3V 7N5, CANADA
jansanders5@gmail.com

Family and friends shared their memories of Richard

People told stories around the Zoom circle during and after the memorial ceremony. Many have been included here, some lightly edited for clarity. Jan

Susan Sims Hall (Richard’s sister, Tennessee)

I am here in McMinnville, Tennessee with my husband Ken and Richard’s Big Sister Jane. You may have heard Richard speak of growing up on our grandparents’ farm. Our mother Jewel Taylor Sims remembers him running around the farm in only his diaper. He must have delighted all the farm residents. Richard followed brothers Sam and John all around the farm. Two farm accidents stand out in our family stories. Richard fell off the hay wagon when he was about 10 and a teenage friend of his fell out of our hay loft. Both boys survived their hay accidents.



Richard, Jane Sims Camp and Susan Sims Hall



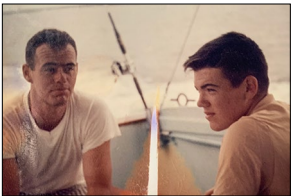
Susan and Richard

When I was young, I began following Richard wherever he went that he would let me go. We would go walking in the woods. He was the great big brother, always leading so if a branch would come to swat me in the face, he’d hold it back and protect me. One of our favorite days was in the summer when mom packed us lunch. We would go to the creek and pick blackberries.

Sister Jane remembers the day of her wedding, because Little Richard was the ring bearer. He was very excited because we had cases of ginger ale on the back porch for our at home reception—a big deal in those days.



Richard, Carol and Scott



Sam and Richard fishing

As you saw in the pictures, Richard’s school days were busy. He was an Eagle Scout, a catcher for the local baseball team, and the radio color man for the football games. He helped dad milk the dairy cows morning and evening. His Future Farmers of America interest was speaking, not animals. He had awards at the state level.

We loved our Richard. He was witty and fun and as I hear the stories from you, I know you knew that about him too. Thank you, Jan.

John Sims (Richard’s brother, Tennessee)

I remember the time around the table each night. I think our mother wanted us all to be missionaries. We read the Bible a lot. I remember at one time, Daddy, who was a soil conservationist and a U.S. Government employee, talked about going to a foreign country and teaching people agriculture. I can’t help but think that maybe mother was inspired by the suggestion or that at least she encouraged it. It was a choice they could have made but chose not to; dad continued to teach farmers on the farm. He loved it when he showed a farmer where to build a dam and he would create a pond for the animals in an area that had no water before. When my mother was in her 80s, she was still delivering food to those people. So what Richard inherited was the missionary spirit. Sam, our older brother, got an



Richard and brother John

agricultural degree and spent five years in the Philippines as a Methodist agricultural missionary. So I’m sure that Richard continued Sam’s Iliad work in various projects that affected people.

Another story is around our mother Jewel who was 90 and in a nursing home. When the siblings expressed the need to have Richard come back home and help care for her he took a leave from his limousine and taxi driving to be her companion. But that was not the extent of his influence. He charmed everybody in the nursing home, including the nurses, the doctors, the classmates and his mother’s church friends. He related his memories of mission times and experiences with great humor and turned a hard time into a very good time. That’s a special memory for me. Thank you, Jan.

Mary Laura Jones (ICA, Michigan)

I was with Richard at the University of South Carolina in 1966 when the Ecumenical Institute was teaching courses at the Methodist center. Richard and I, plus some others you might know—Don Bondi, Carol Pierce, Don Bushman and Harry Clarkson—were members of what we called the Tuesday Morning Group. We were particularly interested in integrating the University of South Carolina, including the social and political groups. We decided to meet candidates and run them for office. All of our candidates were black students who were just starting at the University of South Carolina. In those days, there were no pictures of the people running for office and all of them won. It was absolutely fabulous! Richard was always kind, loving and loyal, and of course, he was always entertaining and humorous. We were always grateful to have him with us.

Don Bushman (ICA, Texas)

Yes, I would like to add a bit about the Tuesday Morning Group. Everywhere else, they were called cadres, but in South Carolina, that was highly suspicious. So instead, we met at 6:30 a.m. in the morning and became known as the “Tuesday Morning Group.”

[Jan] Thank you. He continued doing those little groups throughout his life. I had to laugh at that story because he also worked on elections here in Orillia.

Dr. Marilyn Crocker (ICA, Maine)

We will cherish your presence. Our dear colleague, Richard, whom we always knew as Dick, was a “contemplative,” even before he knew it. He represented one who was “called,” despite having had his theological training at CTS interrupted by Vietnam. And that experience likely deepened his “call to serve.” As a young man, when we knew him in the 1970s, he was the “quintessential catch,” and many young gals, from Philadelphia to Hong Kong, swooned over his long eyelashes, kind countenance and winsome smile. But he waited for years and chose Jan as his partner; and a wise man he was. In Dick’s mature years he became a Spirit Guide, receiving, embracing and welcoming the gift of Divine Presence, then sharing it with and inviting others to say yes to opening their own hearts and minds. Yet his abiding qualities from 40 years ago until now shone through his being: faithful, kind, thoughtful, self-effacing, steady and sweet.

We will cherish your presence, Richard Sims, among us always. With love and gratitude, Joe and Marilyn Crocker.



Lynda Cock (ICA, North Carolina)

Jan, I wanted I want to thank you for sharing these most poignant events of Richard’s life. I’ve always talked about Richard as my Tennessee buddy in the Order. There were a few of us from Tennessee. Dick was such a joy; I just remember him calling me “Hello, Tennessee.” Greetings to his family. We really appreciated meeting so many of them in Junaluska. Thank you for a beautiful event.



Terry Bergdall (ICA, Illinois)



I was 18 years old when I went to Chicago West Side for the first time. I was invited to join the Collegium of this group of people and there across the room was a young man in a military uniform. I remember asking whoever I was sitting next to, “Who is that?” They said, “That’s Dick Sims. He’s on assignment from the Order to the US Army.” As an 18 year old, with the Vietnam War at the height of its intensity, that really caught my attention, so I went over and said hello. Ever since, that’s been my dominant image of Richard.

Ted Williams (Rama First Nation, Canada)

First of all, Jan, God bless you. We love you and Richard. When our young daughter Julie was introduced to Richard, she couldn’t remember his last name. One day we were listening to country music and Julie remarked that Richard looked like Randy Travis. The next time she saw him, she said, “Oh, there’s Richard Travis.” And so in our family, we fondly recall our time with Richard as Richard Travis. We know that he obviously loves Jan deeply. Before I go, I want to say to Richard’s friends from around the world, that Jan did some excellent work with us in the early 80s and 90s and helped us turn around as a community to what we are now. She’s like one of the members of the community. It’s with love that we were here today.

Dr. Tatwa Timsina (ICA, Nepal)

I met Richard not only in Nepal, but also in Chicago, Omaha and at your home in Orillia. We had a very good time with Richard when he came to Nepal, he was always very active. One memory was the long 12-hour drive in the back of an open truck he made during his visit to Southern Nepal. He literally reflected that that was the most wonderful part of his life. His sense of humor was very powerful. He did not talk that much, but the way he was communicating through his body language inspired me a lot. Even without uttering any sounds, you know, he could communicate. That was the powerful gift that Richard had. During his visit to Nepal, we had many visits to different monasteries, temples and various spiritual places. That is what he very much appreciated.

His role while he was here was very motivational for many youth who he was always around. We were running a series of programs among youth that encouraged them to create “Trim Tabs”—small projects with big impacts. Richard was very interested in the trim tabs and listened to the youth describing their planned work. He always had some reflective questions for the youth. Whenever I met him, whether in Chicago, Orillia or Kathmandu, we had good reflections.

I celebrate his journey to the heavenly abode. We remember Richard, who is always in our heart.

Pramila KC (Nepal)



Ninth wedding anniversary, 2016

Thank you for letting me call you my grandma. I am calling you grandma because in our culture, when you see people who are similar to your grandparents you cannot call them by name. Sometimes I tried calling you by name, but it doesn’t feel right. So that’s why I started to call you Grandma. And now you are my adopted grandma. And so Richard became my Grandpa. And I feel so blessed that you both are somehow part of my life. I also appreciate the things that you taught me through social artistry which changed my life. Our training program was the turning point of my life, which is why you are such an important person to me. I still remember the last time Grandpa was in Nepal. At that time, we had several Social Artistry training sessions and I got a chance to become your co-facilitator.

Another time you both were helpful to me is when I beat cancer. I got a new life and through that journey, all the tools of Social Artistry became like medicine for me to cope with the side effects of all the cancer treatment.

The final thing I would like to recall with Grandpa is that after we finished one training day we went and celebrated your ninth marriage anniversary. That was a great moment.

Thea Patterson (ICA, Canada)

Memories of Richard in Kenya. I met Richard in Chicago at the ICA’s *Kemper Building* in 1973–74. We were both assigned to Operations working with the inimitable Doris Hahn. We went our separate ways soon after that to meet up again many years later, in Toronto, when Richard began to visit Jan. We know how well that turned out.

In 2006–07 our destinies entangled as Jan’s and Richard’s skills and experience joined John’s and my passion for an HIV/AIDS project with a Maasai community in Il N’gwesi, a community near the foot of Mt. Kenya, north of Nairobi. As the project got further underway, the Pattersons and Jan and Richard joined a small team of volunteers, including our daughter, Miriam, in Nanyuki and Il N’gwesi, to begin a series of visits and training sessions in HIV/AIDS.



HIV/AIDS Africa Team at Abbey North, Ontario



Gathering in Tanzania for South Africa HIV/AIDS Workshop

And this is where Richard begins to shine in my memories of that time: bouncing along impossibly rutted, Boulder-strewn trails in a Jeep, swerving crazily through a jungle dotted here and there with giraffes, deer and the occasional elephant. Richard is smiling, joking with the driver as we jounce and bounce along. Adventures appealed to him. The Jeep splits a tire and Richard is there to help lift, shove, do whatever to assist, with that smile and a string of upbeat comments.

At the village site, when we finally arrive, Richard is in his element, greeting and having fun with all the local people and youth volunteers and helping to set up camp for whatever session is being planned. He made a fast friend with one, Richard Legei. They were part of a team that helped forty-plus youth understand HIV/AIDS and HIV/AIDS testing processes, develop teaching dramas and skits, and equip them to do house-to-house visits.

Richard’s appetite for adventure, his unfailing good sense of humour in the midst of chaos and upset plans, his befriending of the local Maasai youth and elders alike, are the memories I would share and leave with you today to honour dear Richard.

Christine and Mark Douglas (Rama First Nation, Canada)

Richard was going to bring a prize pizza back from Chicago and showed up with the pizza box. However, when I opened it, salivating, we discovered it was empty. Richard said, “At the border, they wouldn’t let me in with food. So I had to eat it.” (*Elder Mark Douglas*)

Christine added to the story. We heard that you guys got married in Chicago. When you came back to Rama, you tried to tell us you’re married, but we didn’t really believe it. We had to get a little get-together in our backyard with elder Merle who married you all in the Ojibwe style. She put a big buffalo style blanket around you. It was a beautiful ceremony and then we all believed that you were really married.



Gathering of WOWW, Wise Old Women and Warriors, Ojibwe Territory

[Jan] Pam Bergdall wondered out loud if she really needed to give the \$50 for the marriage licence in Chicago to ensure that we would actually get married. She was our guardian angel whenever we came to Chicago.

Rev. Karen Huffman Millson (Canada)

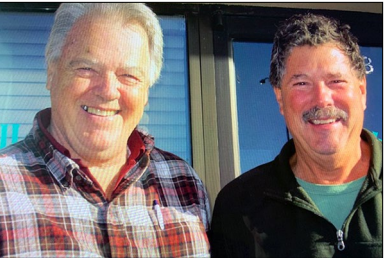
Richard has been a real gift here in Orillia. I was a minister at St. Paul’s, a United Church with Methodist roots. Richard and Jan were part of our *Circle of Light* and 3:30 p.m. live alternative services. Together with Michael Jones and Blair Bailey we created a new way forward. We wanted to awaken our common wisdom, which we called *Wisdom Circle*. Richard provided leadership throughout.

He was, as Jan said, very passionate about the work of Thomas Berry. Thomas talked about a natural sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human, to damage this community is to diminish our own existence.

Richard wanted to share that with us, so for three years, on Thanksgiving weekend, he created a walk through a wooded area called Grants Wood. We also invited the wider community to come and be with us. As we walked, every so often he would tell the story of the universe by Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, to help us see ourselves as so much a part of the unfolding story of the universe. He also arranged for there to be poetry and drumming and music by Jan and by Fred Joplin. It was a powerful experience led by Richard. People were deeply moved, it was clearly a time of awakening to our common wisdom. And so I feel deep gratitude for what Richard brought to this. His presence carries his gentleness, his humor. So thank you Richard and Jan, thank you.

Paul and Joan Sanders (Jan’s brother and wife, Nebraska)

It’s good to see you and all your friends I’ve heard about over the years. My story is about the Sanders clan and being quite football related. When this Tennessean came into our lives, Nebraska and Tennessee were at the top of their games. Every Thanksgiving or Christmas, we always went to a bowl game, and several times we did play Tennessee. The game that I remember was the Citrus Bowl down in Orlando. We had packed up the van and gone to a couple of Bowls there before. So when Richard and Jan came down, we loaded them into the van.



So we get there and we’re having a great time, but we decide that we’re going to move to the other end zone. Well, Richard and a friend wanted to stay in their present seats. The game ends and we’re all walking out to the van and we’re waiting and we’re waiting. And there’s no Richard. The friend comes. Richard thought that he was supposed to go right, but I knew we had to go left to get out of the stadium. So he is still outside the stadium walking around a dangerous neighborhood. Four hours later, it’s getting dark and still no Richard. Everybody is out looking for him. Finally here comes David, our eldest son, running up and Richard is behind. David says, “Yeah, I finally found him. He was just talking to people, walking around just seeing what kind of a day they’d had.”



It fits right into his nature: always stopping, visiting with people, always asking what was on their mind and what they were thinking. Joanie recalled that after this we got him a badge with phone numbers on it.

Gino Vrolijk (Aruba)



I first met Richard in 2014 during the Education Leadership for Collaboration Course, held by the University of Aruba. We all experience Richard as always quiet, peaceful and calm. He is a fortress to be with when one is in a storm. When you’re in a storm, you really want to be next to him, because everything cools down. You become a fortress with Richard.

During Jan’s teaching, you will not hear a single word from Richard. But at the end, he always stands up and inspires us all with reflection questions about the day’s session. And with his sense of humor, you fell through his reflection. And you also feel relaxed. He inspired us to embrace all the opportunities that change brings with it. The way we experience Richard every time, at the end of the session, it’s really a time when he seals all of our experience during that day.

I remember Richard with his touch of humor. I likes to joke around and have funny times with him. The last time I saw him was in Oregon at the Social Artistry Train-the-Trainers in 2016. One evening we went to dine out. At the end of dinner we were discussing who would pay the bill. I said, “In Aruba, we have what we call a Dutch Treat—when everyone pays for his own bill.” Richard, who has a quick mind, said, “Well, Gino, you’re the only Dutch person here, so you pay the bill.”

I think what Richard left with us was one of the famous quotes of John Dewey, who was a prominent American scholar. Dewey’s famous quote is what I believe Richard will leave with the island of Aruba: “We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience.” That sums it up for me for this time. Thank you.

Robin-Ann Didder (Aruba)

First of all, greetings to everyone. I had the privilege of being part of the first cohort of the Educational Leaders for Collaboration. Richard was part of the team. I remember one simple question at the end of the first day. I asked, “Who’s that gentleman sitting at the back of the audience?” It was Richard. I was curious because he wasn’t giving any teaching at the moment, but he was there, sharing his spirit. He is the first gentleman I’ve seen doing that. He would sit gently, whether the session was one hour, two hours, or, most of the time, eight hours a day. He will always sit patiently. He will just have this peaceful spirit around him. Never angry, always with a smile, while expressing concern for us. He would ask “How are we doing?” That is something I’ll never forget.



You’re all sweet people and Aruba has gotten the opportunity to learn from you. When I got an invitation this morning to join this gathering, I thought, “Wow, so many years have passed,” but I said, “I can not miss this opportunity to join you all.” Thank you, Gino, Jan, Doug, Juliet and Pancho. I do believe you have touched many. And I do believe there is only one unique Richard, but his spirit will be there.

Pancho Geerman (Aruba)

Once again, it’s such a pleasure and a joy to be here with you remembering the way Richard touched us. I also enjoy being together with you, you’re a great team. Indeed, our family has very warm feelings towards Richard, because you got to know us, many people didn’t take the time to get to know us in our home. Just the same as Richard, we come from nature and we go back to nature. Yes, and that is such a wonderful experience. I sincerely welcome you back to visit us. You have a room whenever you would like to come. You’re most welcome to our whole family. We wish you a lot of strength. We know he gives you the strength to continue. Big hugs and love from all of us. So take care of you and thanks for sharing this wonderful time of your life. Thank you.

Robertson Work (North Carolina)

Jan Sanders asked me to read a poem. I originally wrote this poem for my wife, Mary, who died in 2003. We were all in Chicago and Korea together back in the 1970s and shared a deep personal friendship. I’m changing the name from my late wife’s to Richard’s.

Where are you? Richard? It is so quiet without you.
So still, where is your boundless energy? Where is your quick mind?
Where is your strong voice? Where is your tall presence?
Where is your cheer, your warmth?
Now, we must look within our hearts for what defines you.
We must look at everyone and everything to find you.
You are everywhere. But we must look carefully. We must listen expectantly.
Thank you, for your love. Always.

Jan reflecting on Jack Gilles’s story (Litibu, Mexico)

Richard, already well into his journey with dementia, was still quite willing to hop on a plane for our next adventure. We travelled in early 2018 to Litibu, Mexico to see Jack and our ICA colleagues. Richard’s

experience finding himself in the wrong bed and getting lost in familiar areas resulted in several new stories. Jack talked about the gift of his wife, Judy Gilles, and their relationship as they lived with her dementia. We both understood the deepening of love that is possible as one’s life unfolds within the world of a spouse’s dementia.



Visiting ICA colleagues in Litibu, early 2018

Eunice Miclat Shankland (ICA, Colorado)

I light a candle
to honor your journey,
for living the wisdom of experienced life,
to celebrate the expenditure of each moment, each turning point in your life’s journey:
Birth, growing up in Tennessee, making choices along the way
Acting on those choices with resolve
Harvesting wisdom, growing compassion and hoping with dedicated work;
And much more... specifics will continue to unfold as they emerge from the reservoir of memory.
Thank you, Richard, for joining us in the Dance
For keeping pace with Life’s rhythms over the years.
Journey on... along the path you have taken... and
On the larger common path of Life Itself.
Until we meet again.
Journey on...

Jan Sanders (wife, Canada)



Richard moved to the Leacock Care Centre in November 2019, after I had spent a couple days in the hospital. His sister Susan came and helped him move into the centre. In December we had a great 75th Birthday celebration with Rama and Orillia friends. The family came for another visit in February which was wonderful.

And then COVID came, which meant that Richard was in isolation for three different lockdowns. During the lockdowns we developed several new ways of communicating.



At the first lock down, the PSWs brought the residents out onto the balconies. Richard was on the third floor. Family members would drive around the front and honk our horns and wave wildly. When most people left, I got out of the car and put on a large heart left over from Valentine’s day. I would dance out front of the balcony and Richard would watch and wave. At times I would also sing “You are my sunshine” or “Blue Skies.” One day I waved by opening and closing my hand. Richard responded by doing the same hand gesture. Wow, he really can see me! In the second and third lockdowns, we created “throw-a-kiss” communication: Richard would catch the kiss and place it in his heart. It was fascinating to dive deeper into non-verbal connecting. It’s like I fell in love with him all over again. That period was such a gentle time; a whole different way of learning how to be.





Shortly after the third lockdown began, I got an essential care giver badge and was able to go in under strict controls. I would bring in little treats; one time it was a hamburger and french fries. As I was pulling out one fry, I asked Richard if he wanted one? He dramatically put two fingers up, and we had a good laugh. Our laughter reminded me that one time he said to me that his mission was to make sure I laughed every day.

In April, he continued to have a series of *strokes* and couldn't move very well. When I went in on Friday night, April 23rd, he was being served pureed foods for supper. He was eating as if it was his last supper. It was just strange; I'd never seen him eat so much. I said my goodbyes. The next day I discovered that he wasn't eating or drinking at all. We went through four days of that. We



had beautiful times, just sitting next to each other, holding hands, listening to Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash. On the fourth day, the nurse called in the morning and said I needed to come in, that Richard was having difficulty breathing. It was about nine o'clock in the morning.

Death came shortly after one o'clock in the afternoon.

Pat Webb (Oklahoma)

I just wanted to say what a blessing this very intentional and very beautiful time together has been. What a great honor to be able to celebrate Richard's life. I knew the two of you always as a couple. I never knew Richard any other way. And the being of your togetherness has blessed us all. And it continues, it will continue because he is in you, and you are in him. And that union continues to be very good medicine to the world. Thank you. Thank you dearly.



Dave and Mike Sanders (nephews and families, Nebraska)

Aunt Jan, you and Richard have always given me a different way to look at things in the world, which I greatly appreciate. You know, you were always worried about me. Making sure I found my place on this journey. So, along with my brother Mike, who was on this call earlier, we just want to say that we can't thank you and Richard enough for all the wisdom and inspiration that you've imparted upon us. We want to thank everybody for joining, it's been a real treat, a real pleasure to be on the call.

Sherwood Shankland (ICA, Colorado)

This has been a very powerful two hours. And the wisdom of waiting this 45 days, I think is really an important piece, it lets the journey settle. Waiting hasn't lost its feeling of poignancy, either the joy or the sorrow. Your presence Jan has been very powerful and not just sitting at the side to have some officiant-aficionado run the program, but there you are, and we're here for you and we love you. Thank you very much.

Afterword

Jan and I had been collaborating for over a year on a project that was part life review and part career debrief. Jan wanted to document the practices of Social Artistry and participatory methods that she and Richard used in their work around the world. I brought my experience as a writer, editor and desktop publisher. We met weekly over Zoom, recorded hours of conversations about their work and had just begun to circulate our first publication: a digital *zine* documenting a powerful ritual event in her's and Richard's transformative work with their Nepali colleagues. And then Richard died.

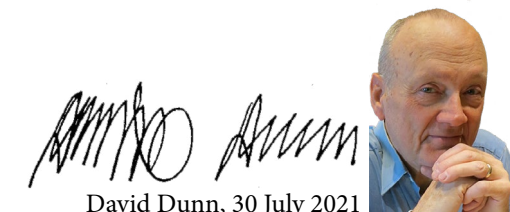
Death. We knew of course that Richard was in the final months of his life. But we could not have known that we would share the moment of his death. Jan was at his bedside in the Leacock Care Centre in Orillia, Ontario and I was at my computer in Denver, Colorado. Jan was suddenly silent; I was attentive. Jan said Richard had stopped breathing. I went on high alert. I asked if I should stay or leave. Stay. We sat together in silence, 1,569 miles apart. Jan finally suggested that we sing "Journey On." We sang through our tears and when we finished, I excused myself, ended the Zoom meeting and left Jan to sit with Richard. I sat silently with myself, breathing, and wept. Death calls for silent listening and tear-filled singing.

Creation. Death is so silent and so alive, it asks, "What are we to make of this?" Richard's death focused our attention on creating a memorial ritual. Our late ICA colleague, Dr. Nancy Grow, described the past-present-future flow: we recollect the past; then, in the *existential moment* of the present, we define who we are and what we are about; and finally, we choose how we will launch ourselves into the future. We wondered if we could create an existential moment in virtual space large enough and long enough to hold the whole world. Jan created an event for family and friends that marked the existential moment of Richard's death and I crafted this memorial booklet for the event that celebrated his life.

Gift. We experienced wonder and awe. Richard brought his deep friendship with the universe. Jan brought her immense selfhood. She invited stories, photos and memories, then convened a whole world family to share them. Neither Jan nor I knew whether she could carry her own grief and sustain her own presence in the story telling needed to recollect the whole truth. We witnessed wholeness: both grief and gratitude, both presence and transcendence. In the event, we all beheld her delight in the attention of friends and her gratitude for the drama that was unfolding. We all held her in being and she invited us into the harmony of the spiritual traditions that guided her's and Richard's lives.

Life. Energy is released in orchestrating rituals, telling stories, and opening ourselves to the witness of spirit elders. Compiling and sharing photos, memories and water colors creates a tangible gift that embraces both sadness and joy. Energy is released in discovering truth through making real things.

Jan sent a riveting photo of Richard (page 18). He looks straight at the camera and his gaze follows me. Richard, unique and unrepeatable character that he is, asks, "Are you becoming the unique and unrepeatable character that you are?" This is my own inescapable question and inevitably, humanity's also. Our capacity to heal and make whole grows as we become unique and unrepeatable friends of humanity. But in humanity's existential moment, only deep friends of the universe can mobilize the aims and energies needed to save our planet and all who inhabit it. Behold the *Invitation* in Richard's eyes.



David Dunn, 30 July 2021

