

In Memory of
Richard Charles Kardell
April 8, 1938 - November 24, 2021



Obituary

Richard “Dick” Charles Kardell, 83, passed away on the evening of November 24, 2021 at Anthology Senior Living Home in Kansas City, Missouri. Dick was born to Vern & Vivian Kardell in 1938 in Salinas, California.

Dick was a prolific story teller who was known for regaling his friends and family with tales from his life. It is in the spirit of that storytelling that we hope to do his life justice here with just a few of his stories.

The Kardell family’s American story started when Dick’s great-grandfather immigrated to the United States from Sweden in the 1800s with permission from the King of Sweden. A generation later, Dick’s father, Vern, opened a bar in Salinas called the “526 Club”. On the weekends, young Dick went to the club to clean under the bar stools, and was compensated with any change the club’s patrons had dropped.

Vern sold the bar shortly after Pearl Harbor so he could enlist in the Air Force. He served as tail gunner in the South Pacific mostly. Vern’s service was the beginning of multiple generations of Kardell aviators. While Vern was deployed, Dick’s mother, Vivian, also helped the war effort by working in the shipyards in Oakland California as a welder. Vivian commuted every week to work in the shipyards in Oakland for the duration of the war and during this time he lived with his grandparents, “Mom & Pop”.

Mom and Pop lived about 8 miles from Fort Ord, an Army training base on the California coast. Living in such close proximity to the base and with both parents serving the war effort, Dick’s childhood was profoundly shaped

by the war. He recalled that the area near Fort Ord was once shelled by a Japanese sub. As the war continued, the area had frequent blackouts. All the lights had to be turned off, and Dick hid under the furniture with Mom and Pop until the all-clear siren was sounded. Dick continued to live with Mom & Pop when his parents divorced.

As a result of the difficulty of war times, Dick learned to be self-sufficient and remained an avid learner throughout his life. In 9th grade he got an afterschool job at a hobby shop. There he started building and flying model airplanes. This job foreshadowed a lifelong love of airplanes that stayed with him until the end.

After the war, Vivian moved to Amarillo where her brother, Art, owned a bakery. Art helped her open a small café there. The café was successful and she opened a second larger location. At her café Vivian met a customer named John Heket, who she would later marry. After they married Vivian sent for Dick to come live with her and John. Dick credited John for changing his life: "this marriage would change my life forever! Going from living in a small, rented two-frame house with very limited income, to living with John in a very nice stone house in the best part of Amarillo, would change my social status forever! John took me in as if I were his blood son. I now lived in the right part of town and went to the right school. I made good friends and had a great life. I worked weekends at John's bus station and made enough money to buy my first car. A 1936 Chevrolet that I paid \$140.00 cash for. I was the only kid in the ninth grade that had his own car. I was always the one that was available for a double date." Later in his teens Dick took his first flight in an airplane. He and his friend Dan Jackson, decided to rent an airplane and fly to Wichita Falls for a hunting trip. Dick was amazed that their pilot was an 18-year-old. Dick watched over the pilot's shoulder and peppered him with questions all the way to Wichita Falls. So began Dick's life in the aviation industry.

After his first lesson he was excited to tell his step-father, John Heket, who he called Dad, about his day's adventure. His mother overheard from the kitchen while she prepared dinner. Dick recalled her declaring "You did what?" with dismay when she walked in to their conversation. She was staunchly opposed to Dick continuing his flying lessons. Fortunately, John showed a substantial amount of interest in his day's events and supported Dick's pursuit of his pilot's certification.

After reading a book "Eight Hours to Solo," Dick was inspired to do just that and flew his first solo flight after only 8 hours of instruction. At 16-years-old he completed his pilot's license and soon thereafter his instructor's license. He taught anyone that was interested in learning how to fly including his original supporter, John. In those early years Dick piloted charter flights for many in the oil industry including T. Boone Pickens.

In 1961 Dick got his first airline job with Central Airlines flying the Douglas DC-3. He would later fly the Convair 600, Convair 580, and Boeing 737. Dick reached many distinguished heights in his airline career. He was a check airman, Cleveland base Chief Pilot, Houston base Chief Pilot, and Director of Operations for Continental. The latter was one of his proudest achievements.

In addition to his pilot career, Dick was a deal maker and business entrepreneur. He owned a full-service gas station, opened a sailboat store, wildcatted for oil, developed real-estate, and brokered airplane sales.

Dick married his high school sweetheart Janet (Jana) Robertson and they had three children together: Karon, Ken, and Kana. Dick and Jana were both fierce competitors. They raced sailboats and won numerous regattas together, while their kids played on the lake shore. No one would ever accuse Dick and Jana of being helicopter parents. Dick never liked helicopters anyway. He said they flew by beating the air into submission. Jana passed away January 2, 2004. Dick and his second wife, Cheryl, also enjoyed sailing together but they mostly cruised for fun in the Caribbean. Cheryl passed away October 8, 2006.

After Dick retired from Continental, he decided to build a real airplane, a fully acrobatic RV-8 with the new-found time on his hands. He enjoyed flying formations in his RV-8 with his best friends. Their group, Lone Star

Freedom Flight Team, performed at local airshows and did flybys at numerous local events in the Houston area. His call sign was Hacksaw. I'm sure there's a good story there, but it's one Dick never shared. When he wasn't flying airplanes, he was on the golf course playing to win. Other hobbies he enjoyed during his lifetime were building and flying remote controlled airplanes, model ship building, oil painting, and playing classical music on his guitar.

Dick's warm personality enabled him to easily make friends wherever he went. He worked hard, played hard, and lived life his way. He would tell you that he was blessed to live a long, full life. I'm sure that if he were able to read this obituary, he would have stopped somewhere on the first page and said "That's good enough".

He is survived by: Daughter, Karon McGovern and husband Robert of Warsaw, MO. Their children Lauren Browne and husband Peter, John McGovern and wife Elizabeth, Adam McGovern and wife Katelyn, and Daniel McGovern. Great-grandchildren Noah, Naomi, Amoriah, Annabelle, John, Shayella, Abrielle, and Abigail. Son, Kenneth Kardell and wife Tandra of Aurora, CO. Their children Kristine Roach and husband Zach, and Jacqueline Kardell. Daughter, Kana Steinmeyer and husband Michael of Independence, MO. Their children Jessica and wife Hailey, Caleb Steinmeyer, and Jael Steinmeyer Mackey and husband Sean. Great-grandchildren Sawyer, Junie, and one on the way. Sister, Barbara Hawryluk and husband Cory. Her daughter Malia Balsam and husband Doug. Grand-nieces Kiah Jones and Kirsten, Mila, and Kallie Balsam.

Services will be held at Langsford Funeral Home
Saturday December 4th
Viewing 10:00 Services 11:00
115 S.W. 3rd St
Lee's Summit, MO 64063
Grave side to follow at Lee's Summit Historical Cemetery
806 SE 3rd St
Lee's Summit, Missouri

-<https://langsfordfuneralhome.com/tributes/richard-charles-kardell/>
(12/5/21)