



Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford

July 14, 1954 - August 6, 2024

Richard "Dick" Ernie Stafford was born in Versailles, Mo. on July 14, 1954 during a historic heat wave, of which his birthday was the hottest day ever recorded in Missouri. He was the fourth of eight children born to Noah "Dice" Henderson Stafford and Melva Lee "Sugar" (Morrison) Stafford, and he attended Morgan County schools. Though Richard was generally considered an upbeat, happy-go-lucky boy who excelled in math, had many friends, and loved riding his bike around town, he also learned the value of hard work at a young age by joining his father and brothers in numerous odd jobs to help support their large family, such as working in the hay fields, cutting wood, and selling fresh fruit from the back of a truck. By age 12, he was working at Cart's Market in Versailles, Mo. By the time Richard was 16, he had become the assistant manager of IGA grocery store in Versailles, Mo.

It was also at the critical age of 16 when Richard lost his father, who was a volunteer firefighter and died while responding to a fire. Richard moved out on his own after that tragic event to help reduce the burden on his mother in the household, but he regularly gave the majority of his wages from the grocery store to help support his younger siblings and his mother, whom he cherished dearly. He also tried to enlist in the U.S. Army after high school, because his older brother Randy had been sent to Vietnam—but the military wouldn't accept him because he had cataracts.

During his late teens, Richard began courting Kathy Ann Graves, whom he first met while working at Cart's Market. (Her family stopped in on their way down from Kansas City to vacation in Gravois Mills.) Richard (and many of his friends) would often visit the Graves family at their lake house when they came to town. When he wasn't working, he could usually be found either out on the water with Kathy's dad, trying to learn how to water ski, cruising around with Kathy in her dad's old yellow Army Jeep, or with his friends at the Dairy Kup—where they often put on a display for the local teenage girls by pumping weights they carried around in their trunks. But it was clear early on that Kathy was the only girl for him, and when she went off to college in Kansas, Richard moved to Kansas City to be nearer to her.

While in Kansas City, he worked two full-time jobs concurrently at two different grocery stores, one by day and one by night, hustling to earn enough money to start a family with Kathy as soon as possible. He also completed a diesel mechanic training program and worked as a diesel mechanic in the refrigerated division for Kathy's father, Jim, at Graves Truck Line. He cherished the time he got to spend working with Jim. At Christmastime of 1974, he proposed to Kathy, and in August of 1975, at age 21, Richard wed his high school sweetheart, who would be by his side unflinchingly for the next 49 years.

In 1977, Richard and Kathy welcomed their first child, Jimmy. A year later, the family of three moved back to Versailles to buy Cart's Market when the owners, who were like extended family to Richard, decided to retire and leave the store in his hands. Richard and Kathy rebranded the store as K&R Mini Mart and ran it together for six years. During this time, Richard sustained a serious injury while playing softball and was laid up for months with a cracked skull. While on bed rest, a close friend helped him pass the time by teaching him to play guitar, and he took to the instrument like a duck to water. After recovering, Richard put the musical skills he'd developed to work by playing

local venues with a band and even winning prizes at talent competitions. (He would go on to play with several bands over the years, including the Good Ole Boys, Bread and Butter, Ranger, and Iron Horse. He sang, played rhythm guitar, and also played drums.)

In 1982, Richard and Kathy welcomed their second son, Douglas. In 1985, their family grew again with the addition of their daughter, Andrea. (They also always had pets around to love and spoil, as Richard was an avid animal lover.) In the midst of these family changes, Richard and Kathy sold K&R Mini Mart, and Richard began working toward a degree in construction management at State Fair Community College. When he wasn't studying, with his family, or playing music, Richard poured his energy into designing and building a house for his family in Versailles as well as designing, handcrafting, and selling custom-made children's playgrounds using Redwood lumber. This was fitting, since Richard always loved working with his hands, whether it was mechanical work, construction, or doing odd jobs around the house or for others. After a few years in the playgrounds business, he applied his experience and education with construction into selling residential real estate in the Versailles area and operating RKS Holdings, which encompassed buying and selling a variety of properties.

In the mid-90s, Richard was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. After more than a year devoted to intensive and difficult treatment, Richard kicked his cancer and was able to resume life. But the health crisis really brought to light how short and fragile life is, and so Richard retired to spend more time with his family and pursue hobbies.

In addition to family, pets, and music, one of Richard's big loves was racing. Richard had long been a fan of car racing, as he began bracket racing with his brothers in the '80s with a Pontiac Ventura. However, he started seriously

dedicating himself to drag racing in the '90s after his cancer scare. He loved to share his passion of drag racing with everyone, especially family and friends. He enjoyed spending race weekends in Wentzville or Rogersville with his wife, brothers, and kids—as well as visiting with friends made through racing or just spending time working on the car in the garage with his brothers and sons. Even though racing was a hobby, Richard applied to it the same drive to succeed that he did in all areas of his life. One of his most memorable moments was winning the 2012 Outlaw 10.5 track championship at Ozark Raceway Park. Richard enjoyed racing his Camaros for the better part of twenty years, until his health began to decline again and he had to regretfully give it up for good in 2016.

In his last few years, ongoing health complications from a massive heart attack and stroke diminished Richard's ability to fully enjoy all that life had to offer. However, he still enjoyed time with Kathy and their dogs, especially at their lakefront property in Camdenton, Mo. He enjoyed the slow pace and tranquility, natural beauty, good neighbors, and special times with his kids and grandkids that their lake home provided. He told his kids, on several occasions, that he had been fortunate and blessed in his life, and that he wouldn't ask for a single thing to have gone differently.

To talk with Richard was to instantly feel like you'd known him forever. To make him smile or laugh was to feel that you had been let into an inner circle. Whether he was capturing his grandkids' imaginations, shooting the breeze with an old friend, or chatting with a stranger, Richard was always the most animated when telling a good story—and he always loved to hear a good tale (or joke), too.

But family and friends really were everything to Richard. Later in life, on a few occasions of serious conversations with his kids, he commented that he may not always do or say the right thing as a father, as he lost his own dad early

enough in his life that he didn't get the chance to see what parenting past the teen years looks like. And he wasn't perfect. But he tried hard to be the best dad he could be. He always gave sound advice and then let his kids use (or not use) that advice as they saw fit. He apologized when he made mistakes and ensured that he made things right. He was fair. He was generous. He was honest and frank. He was proud. He was fun and fun-loving. And until his health began to decline in recent years, he was typically loud, boisterous, and larger-than-life. But nothing brought him more joy than being surrounded by his family—his wife, kids, kids-in-law, and grandkids—and surveying all that God had blessed him with.

Richard passed away at age 70, on Aug. 6, 2024, at Boone Hospital in Columbia, Mo., after more than a week in the ICU struggling to overcome severe lung and heart complications following a heart procedure. Though his loved ones mourn their loss, it is a blessing to them that Richard is no longer in pain and will not have to endure a standard of living below what he would have wanted.

To some he was “Mr. Stafford.” To others he was “Richard,” “Dick,” or “Dickey.” To a lucky few, he was simply “Papa.” But whatever you called him, however you knew him, we know he will be missed.

Visitation will begin at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Aug. 14th at Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home, in Versailles, Mo., followed by a funeral service at 11:30 a.m. at the same location and a graveside gathering at Versailles Cemetery. Memorial contributions are suggested to the Jefferson City Animal Shelter or to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Arrangements are under the direction and care of the Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home of Versailles.

Cemetery Details

Versailles Cemetery

550 Clay Road
Versailles, MO 65084

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 14. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home - Versailles Chapel
207 North Monroe St.
Versailles, MO 65084
(573) 378-4655

Service

AUG 14. 11:30 AM (CT)

Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home - Versailles Chapel
207 North Monroe St.
Versailles, MO 65084
(573) 378-4655

Tribute Wall

BK

“ I remember being at your wedding, it was beautiful. Dick was such a funny guy and always made us laugh. Praying for you Kathy and your family.



Barb Karigan - August 14, 2024 at 04:41 PM



“ 5 files added to the album Life Tributes



Kidwell-Garber Funeral Homes - August 14, 2024 at 10:01 AM

DN

“ Dean & Vickie Narr lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford



Dean & Vickie Narr - August 13, 2024 at 10:11 PM

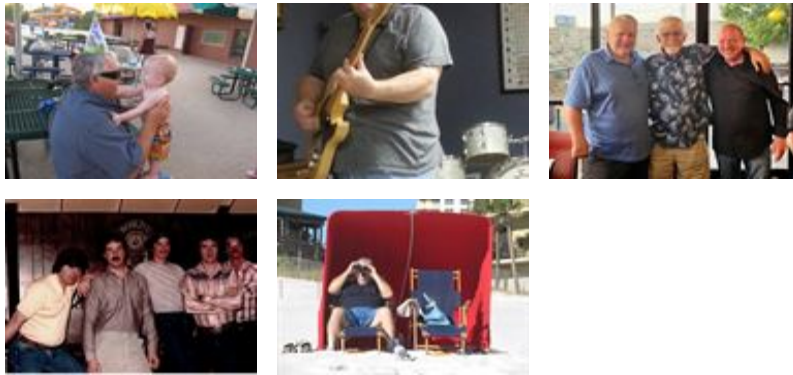
KS

Thanks Vickie and Dean!

kathy stafford - August 26, 2024 at 05:03 PM



“ 48 files added to the album *Life Tributes*



Kidwell-Garber Funeral Homes - August 13, 2024 at 06:57 PM

SR

“ *Steph And Sharrie Ruppel lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Steph and Sharrie Ruppel - August 12, 2024 at 08:05 PM

MS

“ *MARK STAFFORD lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



MARK STAFFORD - August 11, 2024 at 09:04 PM

DS

“ Debra Stafford lit a candle in memory of
Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford



Debra Stafford - August 11, 2024 at 10:22 AM

AH

“ Ann Hester-Moore lit a candle in memory of
Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford



Ann Hester-Moore - August 10, 2024 at 04:31 PM

SJ

“ Sara James lit a candle in memory of Richard
Ernie "Dick" Stafford



Sara James - August 10, 2024 at 02:27 PM

SD

“ Sheri DeJarnette lit a candle in memory of
Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford



Sheri DeJarnette - August 10, 2024 at 01:51 PM

MG

“ *Marleen Gerber-Baker lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Marleen Gerber-Baker - August 09, 2024 at 10:53 PM

WS

“ *Willa Stafford lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Willa Stafford - August 09, 2024 at 12:16 PM



One of the first people i met when i moved to versailles

Karen German - August 09, 2024 at 12:39 PM

SS

“ *Richard was such a great guy! He will truly be missed*

Stanley Stickler - August 09, 2024 at 11:32 AM

CD

“ *Cynthia Driver lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Cynthia Driver - August 09, 2024 at 10:24 AM

RF

“ *Robin Ferguson lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Robin Ferguson - August 09, 2024 at 09:57 AM

SR

“ *Shirley Root lit a candle in memory of Richard Ernie "Dick" Stafford*



Shirley Root - August 09, 2024 at 09:22 AM