



## Richard Merrill Hopper

September 19, 1938 - May 6, 2023

Richard "Dick" Merrill Hopper died peacefully on May 6th, 2023 at the age of 84.

Richard is survived by his wife, Jeanette Hopper (Ball) of Fort Collins, CO and children, Michael (Kari) Hopper (Marcola, OR), Patrick (Jeannie) Hopper (Glenrock, WY), Susan Sullivan (Hopper) (Loveland, CO), and Stuart (Dawn) Hopper (Ft. Collins, CO); siblings Donald Hopper (Angels Camp, CA) and Barbara Jean "Jeannie" Bailey (Hopper) (Pueblo, CO), He is preceded in death by his parents, William Donald and Lola Belle Hopper (Pueblo, CO), and his sister Georgiana Craig (Hopper) (Pueblo, CO.)

Richard "Dick" Hopper was born on September 19th, 1938 near Simla, CO to William and Lola Bell Hopper (Ager). He graduated from Pueblo Centennial High School in 1956. Richard attended Western State (Gunnison, CO), and then graduated from Colorado State University (Fort Collins) with a bachelor's degree in Wildlife Biology in 1961 and a Master's Degree in 1963.

Richard married Jeanette Hopper (Ball), his loving wife on January 19th, 1957 in Raton, NM. Over the years, the couple had four children, a passel of grandchildren, and a whole gaggle of great-grandchildren, along with three hunting dogs (Willow, Minnie, and Pepper), and approximately five Roboduck decoys that Richard appeared to cherish almost as much as family.

Throughout their sixty-six years of marriage, Jeanette was Dick's perfect match and often accompanied Richard on his work, hunting, and fishing escapades. They included their family and friends on many of these adventures - road trips to different states, camping throughout Colorado, hunting in Nebraska, fishing in Alaska, beach camping in Mexico and more. Richard dedicated himself to living a life in such a way that his children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren would better know how to live theirs.

After moving to Fort Collins and completing his education, Richard began working for the Colorado Division of Wildlife as a research biologist, and in later years he became a research chief. Richard was a recognized expert in the field of waterfowl management and other wildlife conservation programs. Richard's work, under Gurney Crawford (aka Father Goose), played a part in the robust population of resident Canada Geese around the local Ft. Collins area. Through his hard work, and with the assistance of his close friend and colleague, Howard Funk, the group's trapping and banding of waterfowl for federal research, along with the creation of vital waterfowl habitat, provided invaluable data for successful management practices still in use to this day, and is symbolized by the large amounts of mallards that not only fly through our state each year, but also nest locally. Richard's work legacy has had immense benefits to waterfowl hunters in Colorado, and all along the Central Flyway. Richard was a published writer in journals and books related to his research and wildlife management programs. He was a known and trusted historian of the Colorado Division of Wildlife, and enjoyed exploring the stunning wilderness areas offered by his beloved state. He was always eager to share his knowledge of the best fishing and hunting spots associated with each region of Colorado. A search of a fishing discussion forum online found a post by someone bragging about the ability to catch a eight pound bass and shoot a limit of drake mallards in the same day at 'Hopper ponds' - a place Dick constructed near Bonny Reservoir in Eastern Colorado. In Richard's retirement years, he purchased a house on the east side of Fort Collins near a

creek, that in his younger days, he would hunt duck on early in the morning, prior to going into the office, where he would spend the day working to increase the numbers of ducks in the area and expand wetland habitat.

Richard was passionate about wildlife conservation, even after retirement. He often enjoyed fly fishing in Colorado and Alaska, along with duck hunting on his property along the North Platte River, in Nebraska. He was an excellent woodworker, a phenomenal duck caller, and a crack shot with a shotgun or rifle. To watch his flawless roll cast with a “Hoprod” version of a fly rod he crafted, deliver a fly, handmade by him, into the waiting mouth of a trout was poetry in motion. He made the best campfires, grilled the best steaks, and although he rarely did puzzles he somehow always managed to load his truck for a trip in the most efficient and effective manner.

He was a generous individual who loved his wife, family, and dogs. He was often quiet and reserved, but yet quite the story teller, jokester and he was skilled at making lists. Richard often remarked that he believed that most of life’s problems could be solved by making a list, and if you had an issue it is probably due to you not making a list. Although a man of few words, he always found the right words for any situation and always made everyone feel welcomed and cared for. Just like his aim on a decoying drake mallard, he rarely missed with his words. His love and his creative turns of phrases will stick with us forever.

He was devout in his faith and a staunch supporter of the Second Amendment. He often gave to various charities/groups such as St. Jude’s, Ducks Unlimited, the Lakota Indian Nation, National Rifle Association and others. Richard’s ideal way of worshiping God was by witnessing and participating in God’s beauty while in the great outdoors, where he reminded his family that one can always find an abundance of reminders of God’s brilliance. Richard didn’t tell you to go to church or read the Bible, instead he

sat down with you in a duck blind and let you observe nature's testament of the Lord's wonder first hand. When he was asked about all of his accomplishments in life, especially around his success as a hunter and fisherman, he would humbly respond that he was "just lucky I guess." He was referred to by some as "The Goat." The phrase of adoration wasn't a reference to the newer phrase G.O.A.T. (Greatest of All Time), and although the newer reference definitely applied, in this instance the term described his hiking speed - he hiked as fast uphill as he did down - he was as comfortable in the hills as a mountain goat. Friends recalled that no matter the degree of the slope encountered on the way to one of his wilderness destinations, it was always described by Richard as "a gradual climb." As a dedicated member of the community, Richard often attended Ducks Unlimited banquets, and his grandchildren's activities and sporting events. His children remember him as a patient and kind father who loved them unconditionally, and never complained - unless it had to do with the recent performance of his favorite local sports teams, politics, or the weather.

Richard extraordinarily lived a simple, good, full life. He leaves behind a rich legacy of love.

Funeral services are scheduled for May 21st at 10:00 AM at Bohlender Funeral Chapel located at 121 W. Olive St. in Ft. Collins. A celebration of life is to be held on May 20th at 2:30 PM at the Railway Flat Clubhouse located at 2105 Hopper Ln. Loveland, CO. All are welcome to attend and celebrate. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Colorado Ducks Unlimited by clicking on the link provided below

[https://donate.ducks.org/donateOnlineSecure.aspx?promoKey=MemorialHonorGiving&\\_gl=1\\*u9wjx1\\*\\_ga\\*MTI0NDMzMzAzMy4xNjgzOTExNjYy\\*\\_ga\\_2X0ECQZQ09\\*MTY4MzkxMTY2Mi4xLjEuMTY4MzkxMTc0OC4wLjAuMA..&\\_ga=2.24](https://donate.ducks.org/donateOnlineSecure.aspx?promoKey=MemorialHonorGiving&_gl=1*u9wjx1*_ga*MTI0NDMzMzAzMy4xNjgzOTExNjYy*_ga_2X0ECQZQ09*MTY4MzkxMTY2Mi4xLjEuMTY4MzkxMTc0OC4wLjAuMA..&_ga=2.24)

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Share condolences for the family at <https://www.bohlenderfuneralchapel.com/obituaries/Richard-Hopper-3/#!/Obituary>. The family would like to thank medical providers and hospital personnel, especially the wonderful staff at Northern Colorado Rehabilitation Hospital, for their effort and care.

# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

MAY 21. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (MT)

Bohlender Funeral Chapel  
121 W. Olive Street  
Fort Collins, CO 80524

# Tribute Wall

PD

“ We lost a good one and heaven gained an angel. Prayers to the family!

*As a new wildlife officer, Dick Hopper trained all of us! He was passionate, intelligent and so practical. I have tremendous respect!*

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**Patt Dorsey** - May 19, 2023 at 05:09 PM

DB

“ I was blessed to meet Dick when, in 1976, his daughter Susan and I became fast friends. He would roll his eyes at our antics and if we were going out calmly tell us to ‘be careful.’ He was so very kind. His passing comes as a shock. However, I am sure he is enjoying a beautiful, fast moving, stream, or a snow capped mountain. This telling of his life brought tears to my eyes and showed the love and memories that will sustain you. You are in my thoughts and prays.

*Love, Debie Beyer-Pacheco*

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**Debie Beyer-Pacheco** - May 18, 2023 at 08:35 PM

DM

“ I haven’t seen Dick or His wife since the late 50’s. Always wonder where they were. My mom knew them the best. My prayers are with you all. Dianne McMahill. (Elsie Goodriches daughter).

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**Dianne McMahill** - May 17, 2023 at 12:19 PM

SM

“ For this being an obituary, this is by far the best I’ve read. What an accurate representation of “papa’s” life and the man he was. I was blessed to have been one of those people who were welcomed into Dick’s home with open arms and loved unconditionally. It was Christmas Eve a couple decades ago when my best friend took me to her “Hopper Christmas”. I remember after the festivities were over Dick and I were talking and I called him “Mr. Hopper”. He quickly and kindly said, “just call me Dick”, to which I replied, “I’m not sure I can call you that” , I was 14 and immature. His face turned a light shade of red and then said, “how about Papa?”.  
My thoughts and prayers are with you all right now during this time.  
Papa lives on in the hearts of each and everyone of you.

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**Sarah McGrath** - May 15, 2023 at 04:21 AM

SH

*Jeanette, Mike, Pat, Susan, Stuart, and Grandkids:*

*My sincere sympathy to all.*

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**Sandy Hopper** - May 18, 2023 at 07:10 PM