



## Richard "Dick" Swindell

March 29, 1932 - August 29, 2020

Richard Clinton Swindell

March 29, 1932

Richard C. Swindell, age 88, went to his eternal home on August 29, 2020 in Wenatchee, WA.

Born March 29, 1932 in the back hills country of Hext, Texas to the late J.D. (Buster) and Lucy Swindell. Dick and his parents, along with his other siblings, became part of America's movement west as the Dust Bowl and Great Depression drove his family from the historic Menard, TX.

While growing up and attending multiple schools, he held many jobs, like selling the Saturday Evening Post Magazine in 5th grade in Oklahoma City, to picking fruit in California and Washington. He picked cotton, held a paper route, worked in a pool hall cleaning up, he was a cat skinner/heavy equipment operator in Yuma, Arizona and California and was also a truck driver in Holtville, CA before the family moved North to Washington State, landing along the river bank at Monitor, WA living in a large army tent in 1947. He attended school at Cashmere High School, was a starting player his junior year playing tennis that ended when he broke his leg. In the summer of 1948, he and the family moved to Chelan where his father worked for the Yacht Club. Wanting to graduate with his senior classmates in Holtville, CA, he returned by bus in 1949 to finish school while staying with his aunt and uncle. Dick, as he liked to be called, returned to Wenatchee after completing his senior year to find and marry a lovely girl named Leah Mae Jones and would

marry her on July 6th, 1952. She was 17, Dick 20 years old. Seven months later, he was drafted into the Army and attended boot camp at Camp Roberts, in California. After basic training and a stint states side as prison guard, Dick and Leah would have their first child before he was sent overseas to Camp Eta Jima, Japan, to train as a firefighter. Dick graduated with honors, then was sent on to Korea. He would become Fire Chief of the 7th and 25th Division. A highlight for him was when he met and talked up-close to Marilyn Monroe in 1954 while she was in Korea entertaining the troops. Dick was honorably discharged in 1955, after which he and Leah resumed their life together. Dick studied bodywork on a G.I. Bill and opened his own custom body shop next to their first home in East Wenatchee and ran it for 5 years . He bought totaled cars, rebuilt and sold them. He also worked on other clients' cars including doing insurance repair work, but his passion was building and painting custom hot rods and higher end antique cars. Dick and Leah would now have two more children, Dan and Mike while living there.

During this time in their life, they Co-founded The Wenatchee Valley Antique Auto Club. With the help of Leah, and his parents, Dick would restore a prized 1926 Pierce-Arrow convertible which was used in the Walt Disney movie "Run Appaloosa Run" which was filmed in Omak, WA. Later Dick and Leah acquired a 1930 Rolls Royce, that was rich with history, and was featured in The Wenatchee World paper.

Dick, wanting to do something different with his life, decided to go into the insurance adjusting business. He started his career with General Adjustment Bureau (GAB) in 1962 and continued until 1969 becoming certified in all lines of insurance adjusting. When GAB started downsizing, in order to stay in the adjusting business, he and Leah started their own adjusting business- Washington Insurance Services and ran it for 1 year until he was hired by a competitor company- Grange Insurance Association from 1971-1976. Dick also adjusted claims for Forney Insurance Agency in Chelan, WA before landing with Crawford and Company out of Atlanta, Georgia. Ultimately, he became one of their chief Storm Insurance Adjusters and through the years

he and Leah covered a total of twenty-three major disasters. From hailstorms to Hurricanes, Tornados, Earthquakes, Floods and Windstorms, these storms took them out on the road for months at a time and from coast to coast including Canada – they loved it.

While the family was growing older, they acquired motorcycles and rode as a family in the mountains, camping out. Dick was chosen by the editors of Trail Cycle Magazine to highlight the wonderful local trails and was featured in the June 1970 issue. Dick's riding skill found him being dared into riding his 250 Montesa up and over submerged logs in the middle of Lake Julius. Happy times!

Another highlight of his life was when after his children all joined the Wenatchee Youth Circus, he bought the Pershing Street home in Wenatchee, which on a side lot had been hosting the Wenatchee Youth Circus. Here, in the family's back yard was the motorcycle high wire, high-wire, trapeze, and other equipment where the kids would practice in the off season.

In the summer of 1975 Dick moved his family to Lakeside in Lake Chelan before in 1978, Dick's aging parents prompted a move to Ellensburg, WA where he purchased and ran the Hillcrest Mobile Home Park. It was there he learned, along with other family members how to make beautiful jewelry out of Ellensburg Blue rocks found only in the Ellensburg area. While living there, Mt. St. Helens blew covering them and their residents in an acrid, sulfur darkness. After the deaths of his parents, Dick and Leah decided to sell the mobile home park and move back to Chelan. Purchasing the historic 1903 Victorian- Yetter House and had it moved on to an empty lot along the south shore of Lake Chelan. They would call this home "The Christmas House". Many good memories were created there as a family. In time, they would purchase another house, have it moved and turned into a bed and breakfast to run.

Always finding new ways to enrich his life and others, Dick decided to run for and win a position on the City Council in Chelan, where he served for 8 years

and was also instrumental in getting the regional bus system- Link up and running. He was a member of the Link Board of Directors from 1990-1997. Dick loved going cross country on RV trips with Leah, riding trail bikes with family members in the mountains, and later racing motocross and cross country with his two sons and brother. He loved boating, fishing, jewelry making, reading, photography and refurbishing his Victorian home. Dick led one full life!

Dick was preceded in death by his parents, Buster and Lucy Swindell, a son Michael C. Swindell (1980), Two sisters Janis Swindell (2006), Billie Bliss (2007) and finally by his loving wife in 2014 after 62 years of marriage. He is survived by his brother, Thomas Swindell (Gayle) of Rock Island, his daughter, Rickie L. Chew of Reedsport, WA and son, Dan Swindell (Virginia) of Wenatchee, WA. Six grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

# Tribute Wall

ML

“ I had the pleasure of being Dick and Leah's veterinarian for their dog Guy and later for Teno. Leah was a wonderful woman and when she passed I saw Dick struggle to grasp being alone. It was such a joy to see how much his little dog Teno meant to him when he first adopted him. I remember him coming in with his fancy belt buckle and he looked like a new man having that companionship. I often thought of him and always meant to stop by and bring him a treat as he lived close to the clinic but sadly I never followed through and regret that because I truly thought of him often. I loved hearing his stories of him and Leah's work with natural disaster relief and feel very blessed to have known such a wonderful man. They were wonderful people and I will continue to think of them in the highest regard. Sending the family my deepest condolences during this loss and sharing in the memories of an incredible life.

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**Misti LeMoine** - October 07, 2020 at 05:00 PM

CT

“ Dear Family, we first met Dick and Leah in 1959 while driving our antique car on Wenatchee Avenue. They were driving their 1932 Ford V-8 Pickup and hailed us down to talk about the Wenatchee Valley Antique Auto Club. We all pulled in to the Dairy Queen on N. Wenatchee Ave (yes, it was there at one time), and had a long interesting conversation about them and us and the love of antique and old cars. Needless to say, we were not long in joining the Car Club.

*Dick and Leah and all of their kids were as down home as you could get. Wonderful times we had over the next few years. They even supplied the getaway car (1926 Pierce Arrow Touring) for Patti's and my wedding in 1960. That car was later seen in the movie "Run, Apaloosa, Run, filmed in Okanogan County. There are too many stories to tell here, but a lot of fun and memories are still with us.*

*The last time I saw Dick was at The Classy Chassis car show in 1918. Danny brought him up to see the cars and we had a good visit at that time. We will always cherish him and Leah and wish our solemn condolences to Danny and Ricky and their families. Peace.*

*Conrad and Patti Thoroughman. September 10th, 2020*

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**Conrad Thoroughman** - September 10, 2020 at 08:22 PM

DL

“ Good Morning:

*My name is Donna Luebber. I met Dick in 1969 when I went to work for GAB (General Adjustment Bureau) in Wenatchee. He was a man of humor; a gentleman. Dick sincerely loved his work. GAB was in international adjusting firm. One claim Dick worked has always stuck in my mind. There were three adjusters involved, as the claimants lived in three states. He got his assignment, read it and broke out laughing. The adjusters last names were: Swindell, Crook and Robb.*

*I also was invited to Dick and Leah's home a few times. I had wonderful visits with them. They always welcomed me with open arms. A side treat to this was I got to watch the Youth Circus practice on the back of their lot. They had the entire circus set up on their property.*

*Blessings to all of you.*

*My Best & Happy Trails.*

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**Donna Luebber** - September 08, 2020 at 12:04 PM

PH

“ *We love and enjoyed Dick being a part of our extended family. We will miss the many stories he shared of he and Leah's life. We love you Dan and Sis, and share in your loss. Pete and Deb Henderson*

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**Pete and Deb Henderson** - September 07, 2020 at 11:50 AM

ET

“ Dear Family,

*I first met Dick and Leah Mae when we founded the Antique Car Club. He was a strong and helpful member with his know how about old vehicles.*

*Your parents led an exciting life and were a great partnership.*

*Dick will certainly be missed.*

*Sincerely,*

*Earl Tilly*

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**Earl Tilly** - September 05, 2020 at 06:02 PM

VM

“ *OMGosh, Rick and Danny...I was so sorry to here about dad...so many memories through the years from circus days to Chelan..uncountable. I still look through pictures reminiscing and telling stories to the grandkids. I hope you are both well...I can't make any services as I am in North Carolina, but please know, you are both in my thoughts and prayers and I send love from a distance.*

*Vicki*

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**Vicki Merchant** - September 02, 2020 at 12:54 PM