Celebrating the Life of

Bicycling in Kunming, China
1986

Richard Van Slyke

August 17, 1937 - August 30, 2019

Richard Maurice Van Slyke
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Richard Van Slyke was born in Manila, the Philippines, on a stopover to the Brooklyn Navy Yard from Shanghai, China, where his Navy Officer father was stationed. His mother had been about to give birth when the Japanese invaded China, and the U.S. ordered all personnel out immediately. Richard had fond memories of his early years growing up in a walkup on Brooklyn's Clinton Avenue. But as World War II progressed, his parents grew uneasy about their military location and decided to send him to stay with his Uncle, a Ranger in a Michigan nature preserve.

At the end of WW II, the family moved to a Los Angeles suburb – Westchester, California — where Richard discovered the beach, and body surfing. After high school, he attended UCLA and lived in Hermosa Beach, where the Lighthouse Bar featured jazz artists — well-known artists from the East Coast often performed with lesser-known West coast musicians. Richard's enduring love for jazz dates to that time.

After the Computer Was Invented

During his teen years, he held a series of jobs from delivering newspapers to holiday gift-wrapping. It was through a newspaper delivery job that Richard gained a scholarship to Stanford University where he earned a BS in Physics in 1959 followed by a PhD in Engineering from UC Berkeley in 1965. At Berkeley, he was a student of George Dantzig, a mathematician who devised the simplex method — an algorithm for solving problems that involve numerous conditions and variables — and in the process founded the field of linear programming. There was not yet a department of Computer Science.

During the heady days shortly after the computer was invented and opened a whole new world of possibilities, Richard worked with like-minded colleagues doing research in mathematical programming. Together, in 1969, Richard and his colleagues started a company – Network Analysis Corporation (NAC) – a telecommunications consulting firm that played an important role in the development of the ARPANET, the precursor of the Internet. The company, it was decided, should be based in NYC where so many large corporations are located.
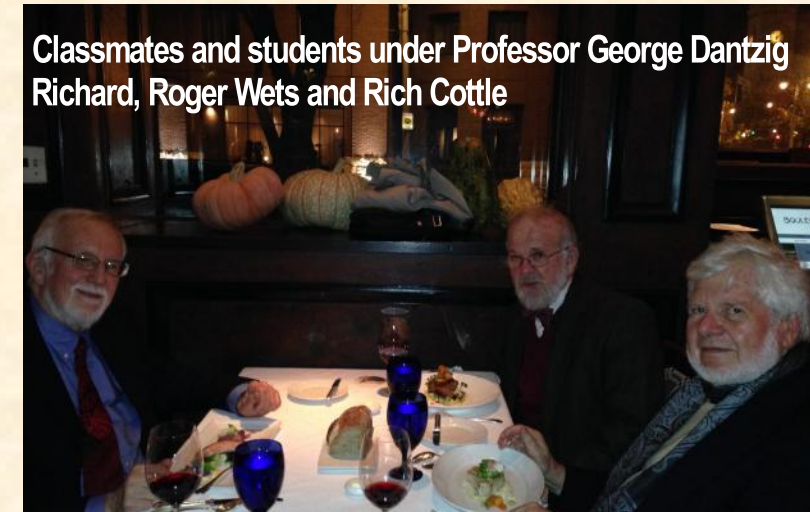
Richard and Irene

In July of 1969, Richard and Irene, who met in 1967, drove across country and rented an apartment in Port Washington, Long Island. Irene came East, not committed to staying, but in 1969 she agreed to marry Richard if the couple moved from suburbia to the city. After reading an article in *The New Yorker* singing the praises of living in downtown Brooklyn, that is where they moved in 1970. Throughout their marriage, Richard was supportive of Irene's political and community work — as campaign manager for State Senator Montgomery and as a board member of the Brooklyn Queens Land Trust.

At Network Analysis Corporation (NAC), Richard consulted for many large corporations to integrate computers into their networks. He worked with five of the six largest US banks, AT&T, NYNEX, the Xerox Co., E.F. Hutton, Metropolitan Life, the Department of Defense, and many other users and providers of information services. He always called himself a mathematician, but he chose the field of computer science because he wanted to do something "useful." Figures were his love, second only to Irene.

Continued to Teach

After 11 years, NAC was sold and Richard began his career in academia. He started teaching at Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey and then in 1980 at Polytechnic Institute in Brooklyn. From 1983 to 1988 he was director of NYS's Center for Advanced Technology in Telecommunications (CATT), where he helped start two industry-oriented Master's degree programs in telecommunications management and information systems engineering. He was head of the Polytechnic University Department of Computer Science from 1995 to 1996.

Richard co-authored with David Stallings, a successful book on telecommunications, and served as an editor of the journal "Networks," published by Wiley and Sons; in all, he has over 40 publications in books, technical journals, and the popular press. Although he retired in 2006, Richard taught Financial Management and Risk Analyses as a professor emeritus at NYU Polytechnic and continued to revise and produce material for telecommunications publications.

Classmates and students under Professor George Dantzig
Richard, Roger Wets and Rich Cottle

Richard with niece, Gail Grossart

Program

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Demetrice Mills
Past President, Brooklyn Queens Land Trust

Richard with Stephen Salaff

New York Times article and photo profiling MetroTech and the CATT Center (1985). Photo by Chester Higgins

Wedding Day