



# Richard Douglas Stern, DDS

MAR 21, 1948 - MAY 14, 2016



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## **Richard Douglas Stern, DDS**

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**B**ig Rapids-Richard Douglas Stern, D.D.S., 68, of Big Rapids joyfully received God's grace and entered Heaven through Jesus' mercies on May 14, 2016 after an extended illness. He was surrounded and lovingly cared for by his dear family and Spectrum Hospice. He was born on March 21, 1948 in Detroit, Michigan, the son of Melvin and Mildred Stern (both deceased). He lived with his family on the west side of the city working as a newspaper boy. During his Mackenzie High School days and into college, he earned money for school by working long hours as a party store clerk. Dr. Stern graduated from Wayne State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Zoology in 1970. He went on to earn his Doctorate in Dental Science at the University of Michigan, School of Dentistry in 1974. In his second year of studies, he met his beloved wife Caroline. They married at Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Troy, MI on May 11, 1973. Caroline worked to support them both in Rick's last year of Dental School with her job as a bibliographer at the University of Michigan's Graduate Library. They loved west Michigan and accepted Dr. Bob Scharp's offer to be a partner in a group dental practice. The two dentists happily worked together, first on Sanborn and then built the distinctive cedar clinic on the corner of Locust and State Street. Each dentist amicably decided to practice solo in 198, with Dr. Stern staying at the 106 Locust location. Daughter, Dr. Christa, and afterward son, Dr. Paul, joined their father to form the group dental practice of Caring Family Dentistry in 2001. They dramatically expanded the building and grew the practice from its original size. Dr. Rick retired from dentistry in 2011. He lovingly supported his dear wife Caroline all her 43 years of teaching at Ferris State University, and he continually encouraged her when she went back to school later in life to complete her doctorate degree. Since 1974, Rick quietly and generously shared his time, talent, and treasures by being an active church member, dedicated Bible study student, and diligent Elder at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Big Rapids. He enjoyed



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making Elder's visits to nursing homes, shut-ins, or anyone who wanted to hear about God's good grace. He was devoted to on-going service to others in our community on dental projects and doing Christian and civic volunteer work. His joy each summer for more than twelve years was going on two week long dental mission trips with his wife Caroline and their Honduran "mission family" doing volunteer dentistry for the poorest of the poor through the Christian Medical Missions International team in Honduras. There, he bonded with fellow mission team members such as Jorge, Bill, Tom, Lee, Herman, Klaus, Jessalyn, Ada, and many others. The mission team contributed many long days of loving labor and medical/dental materials to the thousands of subsistence farming families who would walk to the mission clinic for their only access to health care. When Dr. Stern remodeled his dental office in Big Rapids, he was blessed to be able to donate and ship most his used equipment to help start a new dental hospital in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. Rick was an amateur theater organist, avid boater, but most of all - he was consumed by studying his Christian faith, witnessing God's love and grace to others, and sharing the "Good News" of the Bible with everyone he could. Dr. Stern was a lifelong student of dentistry and a contributing member of the American, Michigan, Chicago, West Michigan, and Big Rapids Dental Associations and the Academy of General Dentistry. He truly cared about his patients and staff and was well known for his wit, humor, compassion, intelligence, kindness, work ethic, and gentle dental skills. "Opa," as he was known to family, is survived by his loving wife of 43 years, Caroline (nee Lind) Stern, Ph.D.; three dear children: Christa Stern-Lubahn, D.D.S., F.A.G.D. (husband Brad Lubahn and grandsons Mason and Jack); Paul Stern, D.D.S., P.O.S. (wife Heidi and granddaughters Kylie and Alivia); Myra Stern, M.A., all of Big Rapids, and adoptive son Dr. Gemechis Roro of Oregon. He is also survived by his brothers Robert (Joyce) Stern; Larry (Debbie) Stern; brother-in-law Richard (Anne Marie); sisters-in-law Christine (Robert) Hage and Catherine (Larry) Montsinger; his "recreational debate partner" and mother-in-law, Letizia "Letty" Lind formerly of Big Rapids; numerous nieces and nephews; and many brothers and sisters in Christ from St. Peter's, the community, Honduras, and beyond. Caroline and Rick learned important lessons in Christian faith when they



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lost their fourth child, Richard D. Stern, Jr. who died in infancy, and father Richards "Dick" Lind. Christian funeral will be 11:00 AM, Tuesday, May 17th, at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Big Rapids, with Pastor John Bookshaw officiating. The service of commitment and burial will take place at Highland View Cemetery, with a reception to follow in St. Peter's gymnasium. Dr. Rick's family will greet friends at the Mohnke Funeral Home in Big Rapids on Monday, May 16, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM, and at the church on Tuesday from 10:00 AM until service time. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that memorials be made to St. Peter's Lutheran School (408 West Bellevue, Big Rapids, MI 49307) for upgrades to the playground that is used by the school and neighborhood children, or to St. Peter's Lutheran Church for Rev. Tim and Beth Heiney's new mission hospital in Mali, Africa.



## Tribute Wall

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KO

**Kayode Oguntoyinbo** posted:

Words are not enough to express how much I miss my friend. Memories of me playing the organ together and discussing the scriptures together with Rick will never go away. The Hope of his salvation that assures our reuniting again on the last day is consoli

October 6 at 8:00 PM

RR

**Randall Root** posted:

Dear Caroline and family, I just now learned of Rick's passing. I'm so sorry. As you know, Rick was one of my best friends throughout dental school and the year that I lived in Big Rapids. What a great guy. I loved the man. My heart breaks for

July 16 at 8:00 PM

CM

**Carol Ann Mumy** posted:

Dear Caroline and family, I am so sorry to have learned of Dr Rick's passing. His faith, love of life and family, and dedication to doing God's work was an inspiration for all. He made a difference in the lives of many, including me. I am blessed t

July 11 at 8:00 PM

HV

**Herman Von Oy** posted:

A great brother has left us briefly until that wonderful re the Lord has planned for us. (John 14:1-3)

May 30 at 8:00 PM

LB

**Larry Bajor** posted:

I will miss your gentle ways, the wisdom you displayed as an elder. I am happy that you are with the Lord. Enjoy eternity with Him.

May 16 at 8:00 PM

PB

**Pam Bloom** posted:

May God's love surround you and give you peace during this difficult time. Please know you and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

May 15 at 8:00 PM



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PP

**Patti Pedersen** posted:

My thoughts and prayers are with the Stern Family. May he live on through all of your memories.

May 15 at 8:00 PM

JD

**Jennifer Derwin** posted:

My thoughts and prayers are with the Stern family and family at Caring Family Denistry at this difficult time. Dr. Richard was a great man and will truly br missed.

May 15 at 8:00 PM

AK

**Andy & Fran Kantar** posted:

Caroline, our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family during this difficult time. May all you find peace and comfort in the sweet memories that all of you shared as a loving family.

May 15 at 8:00 PM

SV

**Sam & Terry Ventocilla** posted:

Thank you for all you have done for Big Rapids. Many smiles have been left behind. God Bless.

May 14 at 8:00 PM

PS

**Pasquale Diraddo And Lisa Sandin** posted:

Dear Carolyn and family, our hearts go out to you all. Such a loving and dear man will be well missed. May his journey be blessed and filled with grace.

May 14 at 8:00 PM

BC

**Brenda Dulaney-Connell** posted:

Dearest Stern family, I am so very sorry to learn of Rick's passing! What a wonderful man, just makes me smile to remember him, his humor, his love of family and great pride in each of you! God's comfort, strength and blessings to each of you!

May 14 at 8:00 PM



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**Barb Grant** posted:

My thoughts and prayers are with the family on the passing of your loved one. God Bless

May 14 at 8:00 PM



## **Memories only last if you share them**

Join us in honoring Richard by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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