



Richard Phillips

September 13, 1923 - November 8, 2022

Richard Phillips, age 99, of Manhattan, Kansas, died November 8, 2022, in Westmoreland, Kansas.

Richard Phillips was born September 13, 1923, in the farm home of his parents near New Sharon, Iowa, to Mildred (Hawk) and Claude Phillips, their firstborn. His mother died from cardiac arrest when Richard was three years old. His natural siblings were a stillborn baby sister and brother, Charles, who was killed in a hunting accident when 17 years nine months of age. The family was joined by their stepmother, Lorena (Ravlin) Kannewurf, and her daughter Marylee in 1927.

The merged family remained active in agriculture, moving to a larger rental farm in Tama County, Iowa, in 1929, where Richard attended Star rural School ½ mile away. Then in 1935, the family moved back to Mahaska County to Dr. Wilcox's large livestock farm west of Beacon. It was 2 ½ miles from a rural school but had a tenant house for hired man's family and other advantages for farming. After finishing his 8th-grade exams, Richard entered Oskaloosa High School by bicycling to Beacon and catching a public bus with a school friend. There he majored in vocational Agriculture and was active in FFA and 4-H activities.

The family's next move was to a purchased 100-acre farm near Barnes City in northern Mahaska County in 1939. Dick's dad had become active in improved chicken and egg production, and this farm was well suited for that and purebred livestock operations. The kids rode the school bus three miles to

Barnes City High School, thriving on the rural, small-town atmosphere there. Richard expanded his 4-H Club activities, exhibiting at Mahaska County and Iowa State Fairs. Upon high school graduation, he remained home for a year, assisting with farming activities and earning money from his 4-H projects for Iowa State College.

Richard's freshman year in Ag. Education at Iowa State went well, sharing a faculty member's basement apartment with an Engineering senior. Both doing garden and housework in lieu of rental payment. Waiting tables at girls' dorms for meals and setting up bleachers, etc., at the Athletic Department for extra cash stretched his budget. With the War on, ROTC activity was featured, and the college supported recruiting by all branches of U.S. Military service. After his first quarter in school, Richard joined the Farmhouse Fraternity but continued to live in his apartment. Later, he was accepted in the U.S. Navy V-12 college prep program for officer candidacy and reported for active duty at Purdue University on July 1, 1943.

The Purdue program was tailored to College of Agriculture students, mostly from land grant colleges across the country. In Navy uniforms of Apprentice Seaman doing a bit of marching and taking courses in Navy Organization and Naval Regulation, the new sailors continue their Ag Curriculum courses with top faculty for full credit at Navy expense. They also were given options to enroll in other programs, and after one academic year, Richard opted for the Navy's V-5 aviation training program. He was brought back to Iowa, first to Ottumwa's primary training base as Tarmac Seaman 2nd Class, second to Cornell College at Mt. Vernon as Aviation Cadet for Flight Preparatory Training, and then to Iowa City for Pre Flight training.

It was at the Ottumwa base that Richard met his wife-to-be. Valeta D. Conner, a student nurse of Ottumwa's St. Joseph Hospital. They met at a USO-sponsored dance in Hanger No. 1 on the base. Neither had much time off nor spare funds, but they managed enough dates to become better acquainted and closer friends. After Richard became Naval Aviation Cadet and Valeta Army Cadet Nurse, they continued to see one another. Richard could

hitchhike in uniform from his Iowa bases to Ottumwa and be back before curfew.

The visits were curtailed when Richard was transferred to Primary Pilot Training at Norman, the Aerial Navigator Training at Clinton, Oklahoma. But over the holiday mailing season, Richard had leave. He hitchhiked to Chicago to work at a parcel sorting facility earning money for wedding and engagement rings, sleeping at the YMCA, and eating YMCA bag lunches. It worked, and he met Valeta in Dubuque, where she had a student nurse assignment to present the newly acquired engagement ring-happy times indeed.

After he received his Navigator wings and Ensign commission, Richard was eligible to marry, but as Army Cadet Nurse, Valeta was not. So, she resigned from the Army and became a civilian licensed registered nurse. They were married on August 28, 1945, before he was shipped to his VR11 duty post in Honolulu, Hawaii. Learning that Richard would have regular flights back to Oakland, Valeta came out for private duty nursing, choosing 24-hour care for mothers with a new babies. While in transit to Oakland, Richard often could also stay in the home of Valeta's client. Not a bad arrangement for the young couple.

Even better would be a residency in Honolulu, but housing there at the time was so scarce that it didn't seem possible. A lottery came to the rescue. The Navy Nurses' quarters were vacated after Japan's surrender, freeing 22 duplex housing units. Many Navy servicemen of various ranks and rates applied, so it was decided to run a lottery of the whole list; Richards's name was drawn as 13th-his birthday number. Valeta was free to come by ship to join her husband. Next-door neighbors were the Squadron Navigation Officer, a full Commander, and a Chief Petty officer, both with valuable connections for Richard and Valeta.

They had lots of great experiences in Honolulu. Valeta's childhood friends, Noel and Verla Kirby, and Richard's aunt and family were there. Richard got a small used car for touring Oahu and attending a few classes at the University

of Hawaii. For the return to the mainland and home, Richard couldn't get air passage for Valeta, so they returned by ship. He as a ship officer, and she was in the large dormitory area on the same ship. Richard mustered out from active duty in San Francisco in record time, and they were on the Amtrack Train back to Iowa.

Richard's service time earned ample credits for college training under the GI bill. But family student housing at universities was very tight. He was employed as County Extension Club Agent in his home county for a year, helping with the down payment for an apartment house in Ames in 1947 to continue college at Iowa State. The couple's first child, Judy, was born in Oskaloosa; the other four and a stillborn daughter were born in Ames. In college, Richard supplemented his subsistence under the GI bill by teaching Vocational Agriculture to veterans at Mingo High School, and then, after receiving his B.S. Degree, as Graduate Assistant in Ag. Economics at Iowa State. After his M.S., he made Assistant Professor in 1950 and earned his Ph.D. in 1952. The first edition of his college textbook appeared in 1957. His first international assignment was to Nigeria in 1960. His promotion to full professor came in 1961.

The following year, 1962, the family moved to Manhattan, Kansas, where Richard was employed by Agri Research, a private consulting company. Following eight years at Agri and one with Logistics Research in Kansas City, Richard joined the Graduate Faculty at Kansas State and moved the family back to Manhattan. He retired as Professor Emeritus in 1995 after 25 years of active service at Kansas State. Throughout his career at KSU, he worked in over 50 countries.

Richard was preceded in death by his parents, his infant daughter Deborah Sue, and his brother and step-sister; also, his grandparents, Amos W. and Dora (Hickox) Phillis and Charles Eli and Anna Cornelia (Klump) Hawk. He is survived by his wife Valeta, of 80 years, four daughters: Judith Ann Jungen of Wauwatosa, WI, Patricia Jean Cink of Bandon, OR, Rebecca K. Phillips, DC, of Albuquerque, NM, and Kathryn Sue Phillips-Israel, Ph.D., of

Portland OR, one son, Ralph L. Phillips of Dewey, AZ, twelve grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

A Graveside Service for Mr. Phillips will be held at 11:00 am. Monday, November 28, 2022, at the Union Mills Cemetery in Union Mills, Iowa. Military honors will be presented by the Oskaloosa Honor Guard. The Richard and Valeta D. (Conner) gravestone is in place in the family block at the endowed Union Mills Cemetery, Union Mills, Iowa. This cemetery is the final resting place for Richard's parents, brother, and many of his ancestors.

The family suggests memorial contributions in memory of Richard be made to the Riley County Genealogy Society, the Riley County Historical Society, or the T. Russell Reitz Animal Shelter. Contributions may be sent to the Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen Funeral Home, 1616 Poyntz Avenue, Manhattan, Kansas 66502.

Cemetery Details

Union Mills Cemetery

1430-1400 Parkin Ave
New Sharon, IA 50207

Previous Events

Graveside Funeral Service

NOV 28. 11:00 AM (CT)

Union Mills Cemetery
1430-1400 Parkin Ave
New Sharon, IA 50207

Tribute Wall



“ *Richard Phillips*

October 05, 2023 at 11:57 PM



“ *I did not know Mr. Phillips, but what a detailed and interesting obituary! My condolences to his wife of 80 years, and to his children and grandchildren! May all of us endeavor to lead such a full and fascinating (and long) life!*

Jean Stanford - November 19, 2022 at 09:17 AM