



## Richard Dale Hassler

December 17, 1950 - November 30, 2024

Madison, WI - Richard Dale Hassler, known to friends and family as Rich, was a beloved father, grandfather, brother, son, and friend. He sadly passed away on the evening of November 30th after a fall outside his home in Madison, Wisconsin. He was 73 years young. He will be deeply missed by all who knew and loved him.

Rich was born on December 17, 1950, in Princeton, Illinois, the second oldest of five siblings. He was raised on a dairy farm by his parents, Frances and Donald Hassler. From a young age, Rich was known for his curiosity and love of learning. He skipped kindergarten after learning to read at home with his mother and mastering basic arithmetic through playing Monopoly. For several years, he attended a one-room country school, where he loved listening in on lessons for the grades above his own. Rich's lifelong love of nature also began in childhood. He fondly recalled exploring the fields around the family farm, picking blackberries and gooseberries for his grandmother's pies. As a young teenager, he started an astronomy club with friends and built a telescope from a mail-order kit to study the night sky. Later, he shared this passion with his children during family camping trips.

In high school, Rich worked at the local newspaper, where he developed halftone images in the darkroom and assisted with the manual layout process—arranging and pasting text and images onto large paste-up boards with wax.

Richard always had fond memories of his time at the paper, and often recounted stories of those days to his children, who grew up in the digital age.

After high school, Rich moved to Chicago to attend the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) on a scholarship, initially majoring in electrical engineering, and then switching to computer science after a brief hiatus working as a Chicago "Cabbie," or taxicab driver. During this time, Rich converted to Buddhism, a spiritual path that became a large part of his life. Through the SGI Buddhist community, he met his ex-wife, Debbie Hassler, with whom he had three children: Eric, Nadia, and Angelina. Rich was a loving and devoted father, who passed on his adventurous spirit and love of learning to his children.

Professionally, Rich was a software developer and entrepreneur. He founded Turn Key Systems, a successful business that he ran for many years, earning the decades-long loyalty of clients who appreciated his sharp mind and problem-solving skills. Beyond his career, Richard was also a skilled musician. He had a deep love of music, particularly jazz, and a remarkable talent for playing the piano by ear. He would frequently hear a song he liked on the radio, and could quickly figure out how to play it on the piano after only a few tries. He loved playing Christmas carols at family gatherings, performing at SGI meetings and open mics, and even enjoyed a brief stint playing a weekly "gig" at a local restaurant. His music brought joy to those around him and will be deeply missed.

Rich was an avid outdoorsman throughout his life, and felt at home in the wilderness. In his younger years, he studied rock climbing at Devil's Lake State Park with his friend, Ken, and went on to summit many mountains over the course of his life, including Grand Teton, and many other lesser known peaks. Later, Rich discovered a passion for canoeing after a trip to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness (BWCAW) with the Pappas family,

whom he met through his son Eric's scout troop. For more than 15 years, Rich helped to organize annual canoe trips to the Boundary Waters and Quetico Provincial Park, on the Canadian side of the border. In recent years, Rich set his sights on hiking the Appalachian Trail, which he had planned to complete in sections over four summers. He had accomplished nearly half of this ambitious goal at the time of his passing.

Though unfortunately cut short, Rich's life was full of meaning, adventure, and love. He was a man of great intelligence and curiosity, always eager to learn and explore new ideas, and was never afraid of a friendly debate. He had a kind and gentle spirit, and was always eager to share his knowledge. He loved his family deeply, and was proud of his children and grandchildren, whom he bragged about often. He was a devoted member of the SGI Buddhist community, and found spiritual peace and purpose through his practice, particularly in his final years. He leaves behind a legacy of curiosity, kindness, and a passion for the natural world that inspired those around him. He was, is, and will continue to be loved by those who knew him, and will live on in each of our hearts.

Rich is survived by his loving family: his children, Eric, Nadia, and Angelina; his siblings, Susan to Suzanne Hassler of Greencastle, Indiana Lucinda (George Prucnell) of Channahon, IL, Karen Hassler of Princeton, IL and Ronald Hassler (Mary) of Oklahoma City, OK, his grandchildren Archer, Anton, and Dante Hassler as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and other cherished family members and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents Donald and Frances Hassler of Princeton, IL.

A memorial service will be held in celebration of Rich's life on Saturday, December 14th from 4-7 pm at Cress Funeral Services: 3610 Speedway Rd, Madison, WI 53705.

Online condolences may be directed to [www.norbergfh.com](http://www.norbergfh.com)

Arrangement assistance provided by Norberg Memorila Home, Inc. &  
Monuments.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

DEC **14.** 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Cress Funeral Services  
3610 Speedway Rd.  
Madison, WI 53705

# Tribute Wall

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“ *It is with great sadness to read of the passing of Rich, a classmate and friend. Rich was so full of energy and life, musical and fun. He was so intelligent and I was often in awe. I will remember his compassionate ways and his smile. God bring comfort to his family.*  
*Carolyn (Krase) Burns*

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**Carolyn Burns** - December 10, 2024 at 11:21 PM