



## Richard Gerald Harber

April 29, 1925 - July 24, 2023

Richard Gerald Harber, 98, peacefully passed on Monday, July 24, 2023. He and his wife Gerry recently moved to Guntersville, Alabama from Southern California to be close to family.

Richard, or as some called him, Dick, was born in Los Angeles. He was raised by Albert and Goldie Harber, where they lived in a small home in Colton, California. Dick's father worked as a train mechanic and his mother was a telephone operator.

Dick experienced a boyhood with strict boundaries and little extravagance. One of his joys was when he got a home projector and was able to show cartoons to his friends at his house. He could not afford many films, so they often watched the same one many times. He and a friend began developing and printing pictures for neighbors when he was about 15 years' old to help raise money for things like bicycles, fireworks and cars. An interest for film and its mechanisms was showing itself early and would ultimately become a bigger part of his life.

Dick developed a love for music at a young age. His path began with the organization called the National Institute of Music and the Arts, who brought out-of-work musicians as door-to-door salesmen to unsuspecting mothers getting them to sign up children for a year of lessons. He played the violin and

earned the coveted position of first chair. He marched in the high school band with the accordion.

Dick credited his love for music as a large influence that changed his life. He spoke glowingly of lessons from famous musicians and being in an over 100-person orchestra that played at the San Francisco World's Fair. The end of high school saw him drafted into the army where he demonstrated enough talent to be in the Army Air Corps during the WWII conflict.

The young private trained for crew chief responsibilities for the B-24 and C-47 glider tow operations that were to take part in the D-Day invasion. At the last minute, Dick was transferred to C-46 squadron that was on its way to support the China Hump operations. His children have often credited this change for the reason they are alive today. Dick was honorably discharged as a sergeant from the 15th Combat Cargo Squadron and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with One Oak Cluster among many other decorations and citations.

He returned from the war, married and pursued a degree with his wife and his wife's mother. They graduated together on the same day from Redlands College. All three found teaching jobs at local schools. Dick was showing interest in the audio-visual elements being utilized in classrooms at the time. He was not pleased with the elementary school situation; seeing administrative and parental ambivalence, he was growing restless.

In spring of 1950, there was a State Level meeting in San Diego of the Audio-Visual Association. Dick and his wife both attended where they met leaders from the University of Southern California 's film school, Dr. Lester Beck and Bill Mehring. Dad fell in love with movie making and used the rest of his GI bill to begin his studies at USC. By the time he graduated, Bob Hall, then head of the film department, asked him to join the new staff production unit that would

be making films for the university and other sponsoring units. He made about \$1.50 per hour, which translates to about \$3,000 a year.

In 1954, the production unit was called upon to make a film of a lecture that a Professor Gage of the Art Department was giving on Abraham Lincoln. Well, what do you know? Here was the man my dad had seen a few years earlier at Redlands, and he was going to make a film of his work. The film was shot in five days. It took two or three weeks for him to edit the captivating experience of watching the sculptor carve the bust of our civil war president while giving an abbreviated biography at the same time. THE FACE OF LINCOLN won the Academy Award for Best Two-Reel Short Subject in 1955.

Dick's group went on to make a whole series of films on sculpturing with Mr. Gage, for National Educational Television, now called PBS.

Although the movie business was booming at the university and across the industry, at home, Dick suffered through a painful divorce. Fortunately, God brought an angel to him in his new love, Gerry. Both Dick & Gerry continued to work in their respective fields, she as a Los Angeles City School Teacher and Dick earning his full professorship. His focus was primarily camera and editing, and a passion for technical excellence inspired leaders in the filmmaking industry.

After 40 years at the USC Film school, Dick retired in 1990 and the couple moved to Palm Springs where they built their dream house. They traveled all across the world, enjoying their time together. Dick occasionally helped Habitat for Humanity with building houses for needy families in between a few rounds of golf with local friends. The two of them were married for 52 years at their passing.

Dick is survived by his three children, four grandchildren and six great

grandchildren.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUL **29**. 10:30 AM (CT)

Carr Funeral Home  
1960 O'Brig Avenue  
Guntersville, AL 35976  
(256) 582-3411  
[carrguntersville@gmail.com](mailto:carrguntersville@gmail.com)

# Tribute Wall

MM

“ Dick was one of my teachers at USC and I was very impressed by him, both by his technical knowledge of filmmaking but also the value he put on integrity and professionalism. We'll never see another one like him.

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**Mark McDonald** - August 12, 2023 at 12:01 PM



“ Mr. Harber was one of the best teachers and role models at the USC film school. I will never forget his kindness and sense of humor. I remember the joy of receiving a phone call from him, saying that one of my student films had won an award. I was so excited I could hardly speak. He was genuinely happy for me and was always encouraging to his students.

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**Chris Vogler** - August 09, 2023 at 02:36 PM

LA

“ Dick Harber was one of the best teachers ever at USC. I remember he co-taught my first class in filmmaking (8mm no less) and at that first class he said something to the effect of take a look at the the people you're sitting next to....one of them will be gone next semester and the semester after that other student will be gone too.....and if you graduate there will be jobs for two of you. Fortunately he was wrong about the job market because there was an explosion in the business with the old guard retiring and a new breed taking their place. He had a great, biting sense of humor and will never be forgotten. 98 years! What a good life for an exceptional teacher. Condolences to everyone in his family and thank you all for sharing him with us.

*Leith Adams*

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**Leith Adams** - August 08, 2023 at 03:41 AM

DW

“ Dick was my favorite USC professor, because he taught with such sincere enthusiasm and passion! I'll never forget him. -- David Wechter, Class of 1977

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**David Wechter** - August 03, 2023 at 08:23 PM

SL

“ Stacey L. planted a grove of 10 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Gerald Harber.

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**Stacey L.** - July 31, 2023 at 10:57 AM

AH

“ Andy’s remembrance from service:

*Dad passed to me the love for all things technical, especially mechanical, things to work on and fix, or break, with your hands that required the concurrent engagement with the brain. Since the university was also trying to keep up with the latest in technological trends, once in a while my dad would bring home some excessed piece of equipment he thought might interest a young boy. I was so inclined as to want to know how a thing worked, I LOVED taking things apart One I recall was a record player with the multiple speed mechanism. Taking it apart was fascinating...all that a boy of 6 or 7 could dream for! Of course most of these projects were never reassembled to their former glory. . . This was fine for my dad’s projects however was not so positive an experience when disassembling my mothers telephone.*

*Another very special memory for me was occasionally helping out with dad when he was working odd jobs around the University. . .OK, my helping value as a 6 or 7 year old might be questionable, but I vividly remember at least this one example. Dad was asked to film the basketball games for the team to review. . . Team filming was not as easy as videos or digital recording is today. In the mid 1960’s it required picking up the camera and film stuff from the horse barn, and stopping by a dark room to load the film into the Mickey-mouse canisters. This is where some of my earliest life memories were made.*

*Dad would tell me to grab onto his pant leg and don’t let go. Then it got REALLY DARK! If I was alone or with anyone else, the pitch black element would’ve excited my already overstimulated imagination to the point of permanently connecting fear-based synapses in my brain that could never disconnect. Instead of promoting damaging development, these and so many other experiences with my dad built boyhood memories that strengthened an image: Dad was safe. Dad was calm. Dad was interesting. Dad was tough. Dad was talented. Dad loved me. . . Even before I understood what love really meant.*

*Dad's are often the first example and representation of who God is for a child. I'm thankful for my dad and the way he was able to live those characteristic traits and point me to a relationship with The Heavenly Father. Thanks Dad. See ya later*

Andy Harber - July 31, 2023 at 10:40 AM

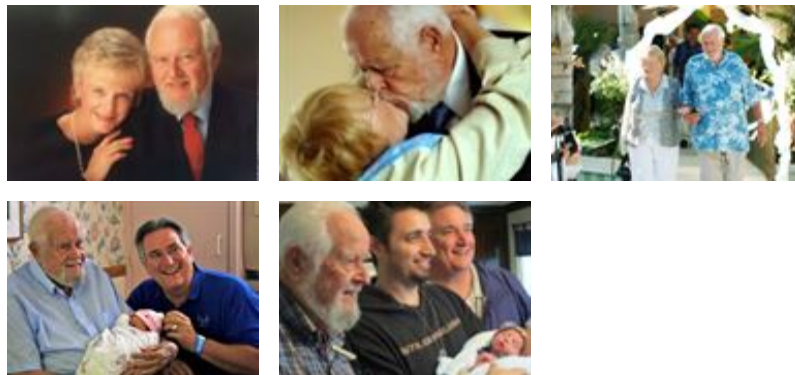
TW

*Dick was instrumental in getting me a teaching assistantship that allowed me to go to USC. Otherwise it would've been unaffordable for me. He was also a great teacher. I can't remember a single criticism that wasn't meant to be constructive. And even after almost 50 years I can still hear his laugh. My heartfelt sympathies to his family and friends. And thank you Dick. -Terry Wimmer (Class of '77)*

Terry Wimmer - August 10, 2023 at 11:17 PM



“ 52 files added to the album Life Tributes



Carr Funeral Home Guntersville - July 29, 2023 at 10:27 AM

“Dad taught Cinema—Editing was his specialty, with camera-work running a close second. He was the editing teacher in a class called 480 (“four-eighty”). This was the class where advanced students made *The Film*. The 22 Minute short subject that would be shown at the 480 screening. By the time I was at USC, the 480 Screening was a huge event, held in a large theatre on campus, with lots of industry pros invited. (George Lucas made the original “THX-1138” in 480—the screening of which got him a job with Francis Ford Coppola, which led to being able to make “*American Graffiti*,” which led to... well, you know.)

*Dad was always the Master of Ceremonies at the 480 Screenings. His dry wit, sweet sarcasm and genuine love of the films and the students always came through. And there was the Goody Reel. Dad would spend the year collecting scraps of film from editing room floors. Outtakes from various student projects, clips of students just hanging around the department Quad, film of professors teaching—or bantering—or hollering. And he would cobble all of this together into what was known as The Goody Reel. It was a fun way to memorialize the school year, and have a few laughs to relax everyone before the screenings of these films that had so much weighing on them.*

*In 1983, George Lucas decided to donate a whole lot of money to build a new Cinema School. Until then, the Department had been housed in old World War II Quonset huts, which were condemned every year. Every year, just enough shoring-up would be done to lift the condemnation until the following year, when the poor decrepit buildings would be condemned again. George wanted the department to have a new, shiny space, but also had great affection for the old space, which now, because of him, would finally be demolished. He felt that it was up to him to preserve the history of those first 50 years in some way—and what more appropriate way than on film? So, he hired Dad (and Dave Johnson, I think) to make a documentary. They spent a year or more interviewing senior faculty that had been around for a long time (including each other),*

*lots of former students who were now industry pros, and putting together a history of The First 50 Years. After all that work, when George screened the first edit, he was less than effusive. Dad (very confused) told me that George said he'd thought it would be funnier. I replied, "Well Daddy, he did hire the King of the Goody Reel, after all."*

*It had never occurred to Dad that his sense of humor—his wonderful sense of fun, and how fun it was to be part of that department, was one of the reasons he was hired. They re-cut.*

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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 04:18 PM

“ One of the lovely, lovely things about going to the University where my father taught was that on Tuesday mornings, he taught an early class—an 8:30am class. And in order to beat the traffic from where he lived down by the beach up to the University in the morning, he would have to leave the house by about 6:15. If he left at 6:20, he would be sitting in traffic. With no traffic, it was about a 30-40 minute drive, but there was always traffic, and if you hit that Morning Commute Traffic, it could be more like an hour-and-a-half. Or more. So he would roll out of bed and into his car on Tuesday mornings and hit the road between 6 and 6:15, get to campus about 7, and go have breakfast.

*I had a standing invitation the entire time I was at University to meet him for breakfast on Tuesday morning at 7. Any Tuesday morning I wanted, I could just go over to this restaurant where he always had breakfast and meet him. And there was never any pressure about showing up or not showing up—Of course there were no such things as cell phones, so I couldn't call him last minute that morning to let him know I wasn't going to make it—I mean, I either showed up or I didn't. that was it. And he never ever said to me, “Where were you last week?” (or “Where were you the last three weeks?”) or “Gee I missed you.” He never ever said any one of those things, although I am sure they were all true.*

*The really great thing about those breakfasts, was that I would kinda roll out of bed and amble over to this restaurant, and we'd get our eggs and toast and whatever, and sometimes we would just sit there quietly and say, “Coffee.” “Yeah, Coffee.” And not talk about much of anything. But we did end up talking about just sort of daily stuff. Something about being still sleepy when the filters are still off. I hadn't lived with my dad since I was 11, so we didn't have the daily, sort of mundane, not-special kinds of contact—do you know what I mean? The un-special kind of contact you have with family members that is probably the most intimate kind of interactions we have—the non- “important” feeling ones. And when the only time you see somebody is when you are visiting them, or they're visiting*

*you—they would come see me in a show or I would go to their place for a holiday—then you are always somebody's guest, they're always your guest, there is always sort of 'guest' behavior. It wasn't just sort of hanging out—ever. it wasn't regular.*

*So, the fact that I got all those times—over the course of four years—of just sitting with him, over breakfast, with no particular agenda for an hour before he went off to teach his 8:30 class and I ran off to my 22 units of whatever craziness I was doing, was such a blessing. It was so lovely that we re-found each other as adults. He would complain to me about stuff that was going on—internal politics at the University (He would say, in the middle of a sentence, “I know none of this really matters in the wider world—I get that—but this is where I work, and this is where I spend my time, so this is what I'm looking at and thinking about and dealing with.”) And I would tell him about whatever was going on in my world and we got to know what was important to each other by what we spoke of in those quiet little mornings. I have always been so very grateful we had that.*

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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 04:08 PM

KH

“ When I went to college, it was to the University where my Dad taught. It never occurred to me not to say, whenever I met anybody who was in the Cinema Department, “Oh, my dad’s on the faculty there!” “My dad’s one of the teachers!” “My dad works there!” And they would ask me who he was, and I would tell them, and every single time, without fail, every single time (this happened dozens of times), they would say, Oh! Dick Harber—he’s one who really cares, he’s great, he’ll bend over backwards to help you with a project, he’s amazing. They would always have to most complimentary things to say. As I went on through college, I did meet other people who were kids of faculty, in fact, my first dorm roommate (I think they put us together because we were both children of faculty), was the daughter of the head of some department or other—anyhow, other children of faculty that I met did not have the experience I did of positive response—in fact, I discovered that most of them hated the fact, or just didn’t mention the fact that they were children of faculty. But it never occurred to me—never once—to not be proud of the fact that my dad taught in the Cinema Department. And like I said, people were always so complimentary about him and so—effusive, really—about what a great teacher he was, so it was nice to hear that. I loved that. I loved hearing that about him.

Katherine Harber - July 28, 2023 at 03:53 PM



Kathy. I have a friend who this week was an actor in one of the USC student film projects. I hope you don't mind but I shared the first section of your memory about your father's role at the school on her facebook posting about the film. You wrote a very nice tribute. Your Father was a great man and I really enjoyed knowing him and talking with him for the last 40 years.

John German - July 29, 2023 at 01:04 AM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Katherine Harber - July 28, 2023 at 03:45 PM

VR

*Kathy,*

*I'm sure that you don't remember me, but I was at USC the same time that you were, when you were a dancer and actress in all of the productions. As impressive as that was to me, the fact that Dick Harber was your father was even more! I became a Film Production Major my Junior year and introduced to Dick and Dave Johnson, who of my favorite people in the world, my life changed. My entire life switched gears because your father didn't look at me as that poor child who didn't know anything about filmmaking and had to learn the hard way, but I was the empty vessel that he could fill up with a love of film and story and sound and camera and music that would last me a lifetime. I send my most deep condolences to you and your family at this sad time, but how you and we were graced with such a wonderful life as we had knowing and loving Dick Harber, our lives were enriched beyond measure.*

*All my love,*

*Vicki Rhodes*

*Class of '78 School of Cinema - Production*

*P.S. Do you know where Dave Johnson is? I went to Ken Miura's Funeral service a few years ago, I can't say how much they meant to me in mere words.*

Vicki Rhodes - August 04, 2023 at 04:52 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:34 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:29 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:27 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:26 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:25 PM

KH

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



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**Katherine Harber** - July 28, 2023 at 03:22 PM

AH

“ 43 files added to the album *Andy Remembers*



**Andy Harber** - July 27, 2023 at 10:00 PM

NF

“ Nancy Faner and Doug Faner planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Richard Gerald Harber.

**Nancy Faner and Doug Faner** - July 27, 2023 at 04:03 PM

NF

“ Nancy Faner and Doug Faner purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Richard Gerald Harber.



**Nancy Faner and Doug Faner** - July 27, 2023 at 04:03 PM