



## Dr. Richard "Dick" Hecker

March 25, 2023

Our loving father, Richard Jacob Hecker, 94, of Fort Collins, died at home on Saturday, March 25, 2023, one day before his 95th birthday.

Dr. Richard "Dick" Hecker was born on March 26, 1928 in Miles City, MT to John Hecker and Elizabeth (Schleder) Hecker. He graduated from Sumatra High School in 1945 (class size 3). Following high school he worked on the family ranch near Sumatra, MT for seven years, then served for two years in the U.S. Army in the Free Territory of Trieste. After his discharge from the Army, he attended Montana State College in Bozeman, graduating in 1958 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agronomy. It was here that he met the love of his life, Diane Marie Lauer. They were married on August 12, 1958 in Terry, MT.

He was awarded a fellowship by the Beet Sugar Development Foundation to attend graduate school at Colorado State University. He earned a Ph.D. in plant genetics in 1964 while employed with the Agricultural Research Service, USDA in Fort Collins, CO. With two young children in tow, he transferred to Salinas, CA where he served as a scientist for one year before being transferred back to Fort Collins to serve as scientist and research leader in the Sugar Beet Research Laboratory, Agricultural Research Service, on the CSU campus, until his retirement in 1992.

During his service at CSU he was a faculty affiliate and taught classes in plant breeding and guided graduate students in their studies for advanced degrees. As a scientist he contributed significantly to the development and adoption of hybrids in sugar beet, the discovery and development of genetic resistance to pathogens of sugar beet, and discovery of the production potential of hybrids with an additional set of genes. In the course of his career he wrote and published more than 100 scientific papers.

For his contributions to science in the course of his career, he was selected as a Fellow in the Crop Science Society of America and as a Fellow in the American Society of Agronomy. In recognition for his contributions to advances in sugar beet production he was awarded an Honorary Life Membership in the American Society of Sugar Beet Technologists.

He was a lifelong member of the Knights of Columbus and St. Joseph Catholic Church. He served in Boy Scout leadership and on educational advisory committees of St. Joseph School and the Poudre School District.

By far, his devotion as a husband and father was his greatest accomplishment. He was a dad who taught his kids how to prepare, solve, repair, achieve, persevere, contribute, appreciate, enjoy and love.

Survivors include his daughter Carol Walbye of Fort Collins, son John and wife Laura of Larkspur CO, daughter Ann Perricone and husband Mario of Littleton CO, and son Douglas of Steamboat Springs CO, as well as his grandchildren Jackson Walbye, and Morgan and Paige Perricone, sister-in-law Holly Thomas and numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his wife Diane, his father and mother, his sister Alice Love, brothers Francis, Vincent and Jerome, sisters-in-law Ruth Hecker and Frances Hecker, brother-in-law Melvin "Mac" Love, and sons-in-law

Michael Ragsdale and Jeffrey Walbye.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held on April 12, 2023, 2:00 pm, at Saint Joseph Catholic Parish. Interment will take place at 3:15 pm, Grandview Cemetery, followed by a reception back at Saint Joseph Catholic Parish for a funeral dinner to be served at Meredith Hall in the church basement. If you wish to join Dick's service virtually, please follow either streaming link provided below:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfTYqQ96sVNI3ED-UZFF0eA>

<https://www.facebook.com/StJosephChurchFC/>

Memorial contributions may be made to St. Joseph School, 101 N. Howes St, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

# Cemetery Details

## **Grandview Cemetery**

1900 West Mountain Avenue  
Fort Collins, CO 80521  
<http://www.fcgov.com/parks/grandview.php>

# Tribute Wall

KS

“ *Deepest Condolences*



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**Katherine Spendlove** - May 09, 2023 at 06:54 PM

CR

“ *While attending CSU, I worked for Dr. Hecker part time for approximately five years. He taught me so much about scientific research and professional commitment. After my spouse and I moved from the area, we stayed in contact through letters and lunch dates with Richard and Diane whenever we came to town. Through example and steady friendship, he proved to be an important life mentor for me. Fortunately for me, we remained in contact up until his passing. An example of Richard's friendship and generosity to us 'kids' is the time my little family moved back to Fort Collins for a temporary stay. Richard loaded his fishing van with family furniture he and Diane had in storage and he delivered it to our apartment, with his humorous quip something like, 'We've paid for this twice over, keeping it in storage. I'm glad to see it get some use!' Peter and I send our deepest condolences to Richard's strong and loving family. We will always remember and cherish his presence in our lives.*

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**Cynthia Soulis Reisen** - April 15, 2023 at 04:30 PM

LP

“ I followed Dick Hecker at ARS as a sugar beet geneticist. He was a good scientist and good man. He never pushed me to follow up any of his projects, but most were so well thought out and planned that I did. He became a friend and example, and after I retired we became even closer friends. He is missed. My sincerest sympathy to his family.

Lee Panella

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Lee Panella - April 11, 2023 at 06:08 PM

SH

“ I didn't know Richard (aka "Dr. Hecker") that well but my wife Janice worked for him (and Mary M) from roughly 1985 until 1990 or so. I recall one time when Janice and I needed to move, and we didn't have a moving truck or van, Richard loaned us his fishing van to get the move done. Richard was one of the nicest guys I ever met. A pleasure to talk to and, professionally, one of the "titans" of sugarbeet breeding and genetics. I extend my heartfelt sympathies to his family.

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Scott Haley - April 11, 2023 at 05:08 PM

MM

“ I worked for Richard at the Crops Research Laboratory from 1984 until his retirement, and then continued as friend for many years. Together we shared scientific, Narfe and history club meetings. He was one of the nicest people I have ever met and will miss him greatly.

Mary McClintock

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Mary McClintock - April 05, 2023 at 03:51 PM

BA

“ *My deepest condolences to your family. I was so proud to have Dr. Hecker in my last film. I will cherish that!*



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**Betty L Aragon-Mitotes** - April 05, 2023 at 11:14 AM

JE

“ *I am one of many who will miss Dick, especially his kindness and humor. He was my dear neighbor for over 30 years. How very lucky were we all who had the good fortune to know him. Thanks for being you, Dick. My thoughts are with all of your loved ones.*

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**Jody Eidsness** - April 04, 2023 at 12:23 PM

JW

“ *Dick will be missed greatly. He was a true friend, gentleman and scholar. My wife and I spent many joyful evenings around a bridge table with Dick and Diane. I know he is now with the love of his life. Godspeed old friend !!!!*

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**Jim Welsh** - March 31, 2023 at 05:29 PM