



Richard Lee Wartenbe

April 15, 1949 - December 25, 2025

Richard “Dick” Lee Wartenbe, 76, of Fort Collins, CO, passed away on December 25, 2025, surrounded by family, having left a legacy of a life lived boldly, generously, and just a little bit on the edge. Born on April 15, 1949, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to Harry Wartenbe and Leoma Nichols, Dick’s early years were defined by steady determination and getting into an expected amount of mischief for a third child growing up in the 50’s and 60’s.

After graduating high school, Dick enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, where he served in Vietnam from 1970 to 1971. He was wounded twice in combat, earning two Purple Hearts, and was awarded a Bronze Star Medal for heroic actions in combat. After leaving active duty, he continued his military service in Army National Guard’s Special Forces units, followed by another decade of honorable service in the Marine Corps Reserves. He deployed during the Gulf War in 1991 with a Marine Reconnaissance unit, supporting Joint Task Force 6 operations for six months. Dick concluded his distinguished military career as a Chief Warrant Officer 4 (CWO-4), still physically outperforming younger Marines even while approaching the age of 50.

Dick loved competition. In his younger years, he ran cross country, played baseball/softball and ice hockey, and dedicated himself to fitness until the day he died. He also loved collecting cars, mainly Chevy trucks and Corvettes, because one American icon simply wasn’t enough. He loved 60’s music, even if dancing didn’t love him back. Dick was serious when it mattered, tough always, but also the first to smile, laugh, and remind everyone that life was

meant to be enjoyed, loudly and with good company. He loved a good party, a good story, and getting into just enough trouble to make the story better, but never enough to require bail money or police paperwork.

In 1975, Dick moved to Fort Collins, CO, where he met his wife, raised his sons, and spent the rest of his life building a community. In 1989, Dick founded his business, Traffic Masters Inc., building the company through the same hard work and stubborn refusal to quit that characterized his whole life. He eventually sold the business, because occasionally funding a Corvette or two was a perfectly reasonable business outcome.

Above all else, Dick was generous. He gave freely and mentored quietly. He guided countless people through difficult times, offering wisdom, opportunity, perspective, or sometimes just a cold beer and a reminder that tomorrow was worth showing up for. He was a beloved community figure who volunteered for 20 years as a hockey coach, shaping young athletes not just into better players, but into better humans. His involvement extended through the VFW and a long list of causes he supported without ever wanting recognition.

Dick is survived by his devoted wife of 45 years, Anida; his sons Zach and Matthew; his four cherished grandchildren; his sister Lois; his brother Robert; and a wide circle of friends.

A Celebration of Life will be held in his honor on January 3, 2026, from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM at Wellington Manor in Wellington, Colorado. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages acts of generosity, mentorship, or the playing of 60's music while driving your truck with the windows down.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

JAN 3. 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM (MT)

Wellington Manor
3922 Cleveland Ave
Wellington , CO 80549