

## *George M. Richards*

We are gathered this morning to bear witness to our faith in the resurrection, the resurrection of all who are buried in Jesus Christ the Lord and the resurrection of George Richards. George died this last Saturday after a brief illness. He was 88.

George Richards was born in Cypress, Illinois, January 9, 1922, the youngest of the six children of his parents Rose and Joseph. His father was a truck farmer in that small southern Illinois community near Vienna, Illinois, near the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Making a living was hard in those depression years, and by the time George was 6, his father moved the family to Chicago, in hopes of making a better living.

When he enrolled in Purdue University to study chemistry, George was the first of his family to attend college – and it took the efforts of his brothers as well as his father to see him through his undergraduate degree. George stayed on at Purdue during the Second World War, receiving his PhD in chemistry by war's end. As you would expect of a student who went on to earn his doctorate, George was an outstanding student. His awards in debating and public speaking foreshadowed his eventual vocation as a lawyer and litigator.

His first job out of graduate school was as a research chemist with Park Davis Company. He continued his education at night, studying law first at Loyola University in Chicago and then at Wayne State University in Detroit. After finishing law school George moved out of research and production and into patent management. By then Park Davis has been acquired by Warner Lambert Company. George advanced through the company from patent agent to patent attorney and then successively he held positions at Warner-Lambert as Counsel, Intellectual Property and Litigation, and Assistant Secretary. George was highly respected in his field and held in great esteem by his colleagues. He retired in 1985, and then moved to Richmond in 1987. Settling in the Brandermill community, George and Lois enjoyed golf and tennis and built social relationships there.

Through mutual friends, George and Lois Alva Romoser met on a blind date in Boston in 1946. Lois was studying social work at Boston University and George was working in nearby Springfield, Massachusetts. They dated for a year and married in 1947, as George used to say, "With a \$100 and a card table". In those early years the couple spent evenings solving algebra problems for entertainment. They enjoyed 57 years of marriage and had three children. Lois died in 2005 from Alzheimer's. George tenderly cared for Lois during the long progression of her illness.

George was profoundly impacted and changed by Lois' illness. During his working years, George worked hard while Lois was the "social director" of the family. George pretty much followed her lead. Her illness brought a deeper empathy to this quiet, gentle intellectual. With her passing, George came out of a shell he had comfortably lived in for the first 83 years of his life. He became active in a variety of social roles he had previously been content for his wife to play.

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George's children remember he ran a tight ship as a father. The children's television consumption was severely restricted and strictly monitored. Every opportunity for learning was seized. These traits, somewhat tempered by time, continued in his relations with grandchildren. George enjoyed presenting small gifts to his grandchildren – always with an accompanying story – and always with a lesson or piece of history. In recent years vacations at the beach with his children and their families was a favored annual event.

George loved the arts and was an ardent and generous supporter of them. Perhaps his artistic appreciation came from his mother, who was an award-winning quilter. His interest in music and the theatre was certainly developed by Lois, an accomplished musician. In recent years George was a patron of his church's concert series. And he was an activist for and benefactor of Public Television. He was a frequent visitor to the local studio, always ready with to share his ideas and generosity there.

George was a brilliant, but in some ways modest man. His humor was often self-deprecating and never mean spirited. During his working years his gentle persona masked his tenacity and perfectionism. His nickname at Warner Lambert was "Tiger" – an insider joke, because in the boardroom or courtroom he WAS a tiger, but most folks who interacted with him knew him to be gentle as a lamb.

George was raised and baptized a Midwestern Baptist, but for most of his adult life he attended the Lutheran Church with his Lutheran minister's daughter wife. When they settled here in Richmond they joined Bon Air Presbyterian Church, participating in the congregation's life and mission.

George Richards was predeceased by his wife of 57 years, Lois. He is survived by his three children, Martin of Richmond and his wife, Karrie; Barbara MacCluer of Charlottesville and her husband, Tom Kriete; and Donald of New Jersey and his wife, Melanie. He also is survived by four grandchildren, Sarah and Rachel Richards, Joshua MacCluer and David Kriete; and by many valued friends, including Rosemary, Jeannie and Molly. Having gathered for our mutual support and to hear the witness of the scriptures, let us worship God:

R. Charles Grant  
Pastor, Bon Air Presbyterian Church  
Richmond, Virginia  
February 11, 2010

## **George Richards service**

Preservice Music – classical selections, some with trumpet

Processional of the family

Personal words

Call to Worship

Prayer and Lord's Prayer (use debts and debtors)

Scripture lessons

    Psalm 100

    Psalm 84

    Psalm 23

    Matthew 6

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Organ Interlude or Trumpet solo

Sermon Texts:     Psalm 146:1-2, Colossians 3:12-17

Sermon

Prayer for Comfort

Benediction

Recessional