

Tremendous influence

Area veterinarian remembered as prankster with big heart, love for environmental endeavors

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When Kimberly Moore and her sister Kelly Warshel think back on their childhood, they recall a loving home with a lot of animals roaming the apartment above the Richland Veterinary Hospital on Eisenhower Boulevard, and later their home beside the business.

They also remember a caring father, Thomas Dick, whose love for animals was connected to nearly everything they did.

"It was the coolest childhood in the entire world," Warshel said.

Unfortunately, the sisters lost the patriarch of their family in late July after a brief fight with COVID-19. He died at the family's vacation home in Chincoteague Island, Virginia, where he'd spent the past three years living with his wife, Sally.

Dick was 80 years old.

Although almost a month has passed since they last saw their father, he's never far from their thoughts.

They remember him as the guy who was expelled from Ferndale Area School District when his father was the president of the school board, the man who brought boa constrictors home to roam the house, loved bird-watching and helped nurture avian of all kinds, such as red tail hawks back to health.

Moore, now the Windber Area High School principal, said, with a laugh, that one hawk, after release, later tried to land on Warshel's head at the bus stop when they were children.

Warshel said there was little concern. Her parents just gave her a motorcycle helmet to wear for protection until they could capture it again.



Thomas Dick is pictured with his daughters Kimberly Moore and Kelly Warshel.

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But that was the kind of carefree, animal-filled environment the pair grew up in, according to the sisters.

The prankster's favorite holiday was Halloween, his children said, and his love for the environment led to the development of the Dunnings Creek Wetlands near New Paris, Bedford County; the Allegheny Plateau Automobile Society chapter; and the Allegheny Front Hawk Watch, near Schellsburg, Bedford County.

He also founded the Richland vet clinic in 1968 when he was 26 years old, and worked there until retirement in 2006.

Warshel, now a medical doctor like her mother, said her father had a child-like sense of wonder, with everything from each morning's sunrise to ants and spiders that roamed near the house.

"I will never forget that," she said. "That was so unique."

His curiosity and love for nature is what drew him to the wildlife refuge of Chincoteague Island.

The women fondly recalled many family vacations to Virginia, several of which included animals in tow, such as opossum joeys.

They said there was a particular hotel there that was aware of their dad's work and welcomed the creatures as much as the guests.

Dick shared his love for the natural world with his son, Chris, as well.

"I think in large part my dad exposed me to nature and that I could pursue that professionally," he said.

Chris Dick earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Hampshire College in Massachusetts and his doctorate in ecology and evolutionary biology from Harvard University.

Now a professor in the field, he studied for his doctorate at the University

of Michigan.

Chris Dick said his father created a free rehabilitation clinic for wild animals with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and served as the president of the American Littoral Society, a group that "promotes the study and conservation of marine life and habitat, protects the coast from harm, and empowers others to do the same."

As part of the Audubon Society, Thomas Dick helped clean up Stackhouse Park, plant native wetland vegetation and remove industrial drainage ponds.

"Whenever there was some sort of activism, they would get together, put their minds together and work on it," Chris Dick said.

He added that one of his dad's talents was "to get other people excited about environmental things."

An example Chris Dick gave was the Dunnings Creek Wetlands.

He said Thomas Dick purchased the former wetland turned lacking farmland at an auction.

Afterward, he partnered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to get grants and other funding to create a series of impoundments - lakes and ponds in which the water levels can be raised and lowered.

"They previously had not partnered with a private individual before," Chris Dick said.

There was some skepticism among the locals about the new wildlife refuge, but it turned out to attract more species of fowl than any other site, Chris Dick said.

The wetlands was also the first of its kind in the country to be developed into farmland and returned to nature again.

"He laughed and he lived in the moment, but he worked hard."

**KIMBERLY MOORE,
DAUGHTER OF THE LATE
THOMAS DICK**

Moore said fighting for environmental endeavors continued throughout Thomas Dick's life.

His last push involved keeping the windmills off Shaffer Mountain.

Moore said it wasn't that her father was against the construction of the turbines, but that the proposed location was directly in the flight path of migratory birds.

When the project was scrapped in 2012, it "was a huge win for dad," Warshel said.

All three siblings agreed that their father's outlook, morals, ethics and love for life influenced them tremendously.

Moore said his personality traits, such as his leadership skills, help her daily.

"He laughed and he lived in the moment, but he worked hard," Moore said.

They also agreed that their parents' focus on family and great relationship was a significant influence on them as well.

"I'm really, really proud of that," Warshel said.

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