Richard L. (Dick) Van Kirk(1936 - 2018)

Richard L. (Dick) Van Kirk, Sr. was born on September 23, 1936 to Reo and Rose Van Kirk, and passed away peacefully on November 22, 2018. Dick was born in Omaha, NE, lived in Indiana as a child, and attended West High School in Phoenix, AZ. Dick received a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering from CalTech, where he formed lifelong friendships and enjoyed success in football, basketball, and track and field. He was named to the inaugural class of the CalTech Athletic Hall of Honor in 2014 and he still holds the school record in the long jump. At his graduation from CalTech, Dick received the Hinrichs Award, awarded to the senior who has contributed most to the welfare of the student body and whose qualities of character, leadership, and responsibility are outstanding. After college Dick was a national and world-ranked athlete, competing with the Southern California Striders while also working full-time and starting a family. Dick married his great love Janet Labory in July of 1959; they became engaged after only 6 weeks of dating and their union brought many years of joy to both of them and to their family. Dick and Janet lived most of their married life in Arcadia, where they raised their family, built cherished relationships, and were an important part of the community, including Dick's service to Church of the Good Shepherd and Arcadia Methodist Hospital. Dick had a long and successful career in manufacturing and management consulting and received a Master of Business Economics from Claremont Graduate University while working full-time. He was employed at Proctor & Gamble, CalTech, Riverside Cement, and Ernst & Young (formerly Arthur Young), where he spent 28 years, including 11 years as the West Region Director of Management Consulting. Dick also served as the Vice President of Technology for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, and his work over a 5 year period was instrumental to the success of the 1984 Games. In 1992, he co-wrote the book The Complete Guide to Special Event Management. In 1995, Dick became President and CEO of Special Olympics Southern California (SOSC). This role was a highlight for his career and for his life. He often said that Janet was his co-CEO; they found a second family at SOSC and were inspired by the community of athletes and their supporters. Dick helped grow the Special Olympics programs in Southern California and in 1999 SOSC established the Richard L. Van Kirk Outstanding Outreach Achievement Award, which is presented annually to a Special Olympics athlete and Global Messenger in recognition of their work advancing the cause. In 2011, Dick was awarded the Rafer Johnson Humanitarian Award for his contributions to Special Olympics. Following his time as CEO, Dick remained an active SOSC Board member until his death and he was a member of the 2015 Special Olympics World Games Board as well. His accessible leadership style allowed him to connect with and inspire athletes, their families, and the Special Olympics staff and volunteers. Since 2016, Dick has been a member of the MonteCedro retirement community in Altadena, where he found new friendships, including close friend Frances Runje. Dick made many contributions to the MonteCedro community, including his popular stints as MC for and singer in choir shows, and both comic and dramatic turns with the theater group. Dick brought a sense of humor and perspective to life that reflected his sharp mind and relentless optimism. His impact on family and community is immeasurable; he inspires us to persevere and excel and to remember that life is not a dress rehearsal. Dick is survived by his children Rick (Betty), Karen (Andy Anagnos), and Doug (Sharon) Van Kirk; his grandchildren Allison, Jackson, Greg, Tim, Abby, and Nick; and his brothers Mike and Chris. He is predeceased by his wife Janet (2015), his brothers Harley and Vernon, and his sister Nancye. A memorial service for Dick will be held after the holidays. In lieu of flowers, please consider a gift to Special Olympics Southern California in Dick's memory (www.sosc.org, 1600 Forbes Way, Suite 200, Long Beach, CA 90810).

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