

Eulogy Sept. 4 2026

Who is Richard Gaustad?

Christine Ebstein with stories from Richard's kids Kelsie and Eric and Richard's sister Karen Merrill and best friend Kathy Beacham Williams

[I'm Rich's little sister Chris.] I've struggled to find the right words to share about my very complicated brother, whom I loved dearly. He was flawed, as aren't we all, and beloved by many. I'm going to share some stories from our childhood that probably none of you have heard and also included stories from others. So let's get started.

We grew up in Alaska. I was the youngest of three, Richard was my big brother, the middle child, whom I admired greatly. Richard and I played together a lot. I was a bit of a tomboy, wearing hand-me-downs from him and playing cowboys. I remember an incident in early childhood (I was maybe 5 and he 7) where he and I got up quite late (WAAAY after bedtime) – or maybe it was WAAY early. It was dark out and we started to march around the driveway chanting at the top of our lungs. Some neighbors called mom and dad to tell them they had children outside yelling and carrying on (how embarrassing for them – especially our mom).... Another time, I remember Richard showed me how to climb up on the shed roof with him and jump across to the garage roof, where we proceeded to scramble up one side and hid on the roof facing the same neighbors who had called before and, OF COURSE, they spotted us again. Mom was livid. Of course. I believe Dad's belt may have gotten some use that night, I couldn't say for sure (these were the days when spanking children was sometimes ok). Yes, we got up to some really naughty shenanigans – but it was so much fun... I don't recall Karen joining us in this. She has much more sense.

When we got older, we spent less time with each other, each of us developing our own sets of friends. But from about 7th grade on, I remember admiring that he always got straight A's on his report cards, and I strove to do the same; I never did, not even once. But looking back at his high school years, I realize he not *only* got straight A's, he was in at least 5 different genre bands at the same time. There was a Scottish bagpipe & drum corp, high school marching band, rock band, bluegrass band, jazz band, accompanist for Camerata singing group,



State Honor band. He loved all of it and loved being busy. But wait, that's not all - he also worked at (you guessed it) the very first McDonalds in Alaska; he learned how to play tennis and ski. AND he became best friends with a Mormon: Steve Clemmens, whom I believe is here today. If you know Richard you know he was *VERY persistent* – he talked our parents into letting the missionaries bring their lessons into our home at which time both my older siblings Karen and Richard joined the LDS Church.

After high school, Richard chose Utah State University where again, he excelled. Richard loved his college years. When he came home for summer break, he got a job as a Grayline tour bus driver, where he talked and drove at the same time. He not only earned wages, but his excellent tours garnered excellent tips as well that together were enough to pay for the next year's tuition.

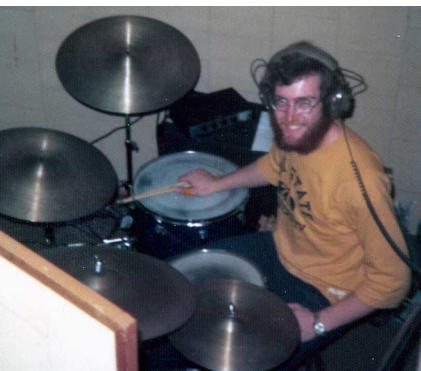


Kathy Beacham Williams, relates the following about their college years:

"Richard came from Anchorage to Logan to attend Utah State University because his friend, Wade Hulls, had an aunt and uncle in Preston Idaho who had offered to let them live there for free. Richard was always up for an adventure and prepared and planned for this one. Just a few days before they were to leave, Wade backed out to marry his high

school sweetheart. Richard left alone knowing absolutely no one in Logan, and then had to find another place to live. He was able to get into a dorm, but it was much more expensive than the free accommodations he had expected. Oh how grateful I am that he came to Logan!

Richard was a work horse! He was a top student at USU and took more than a full load of classes because it would be more cost effective. He also took LDS Institute classes. Richard paid out-of-state tuition out of his own pocket as well as books and living expenses. He taught piano and guitar lessons in the music department and also played in various bands. When he joined our band Thyme, we were busy enough that it gave him income to get by with just one band. We were a rock/concert/dance band and Richard fit right in. I learned only in recent years that he was quite bored with the slow songs we played at formal dances and wished we played more of the hard rock songs that require more challenging drumming.



The year we graduated, Richard suggested a beard growing contest to his dorm-mates. After several months Richard won the contest handsomely! His beard was spectacular...bright reddish, curly and very full! Richard was very proud to be from Alaska and loved to tell people that he was a true

Alaskan. He was asked occasionally if he lived in an igloo.”

(thank you Kathy)

It is no surprise that Richard graduated with a degree Music and Education, but after he put in a semester student teaching, he decided he did not want to be a teacher. He started a business that was fabulously successful for a time. During this time, I came down for a shortish visit that turned into a long-ish visit. I never returned to live in Alaska. I joined the church and married one of the band members. Our sister Karen had also moved to Logan, so all three of us were there for a few years.

Karen relates this story:

“All three of us have always been very proud of our Norwegian heritage. Here’s what happened: When Richard and I were in our mid-twenties, we attended a church dance in Logan where we met a fellow who had served his two year L.D.S. mission in Norway. Upon introducing ourselves, he immediately broke into hysterical laughter! Richard and I were bewildered. When he finally settled down enough, he explained that in Norway, because of the large mental institution located in the town of Gaustad, to apply the word Gaustad to a person is the same as saying they are “crazy” or otherwise insulting their intelligence. . . . Hearing this fellow’s explanation, I was dumbfounded, not knowing what to say or how to react. Should I be offended? Should I be amused? Should I protest? Should I change the subject and pretend I hadn’t heard what he had just said? Needless to say, Richard didn’t skip a beat before laughing it off with one of his characteristic sharp-witted comebacks, and then proceeded to befriend the guy in typical Richard fashion! Part of Richard’s genius was his uncanny ability to disarm and deflect negative messaging with his lightning-fast and spot-on wit and humor. That was a gift that relatively few people are granted, and he certainly used it to his advantage with ease.”

(thank you Karen.)

Well, time moved on and I moved to Massachusetts with my family, while Karen moved to Layton with her family, and Richard moved closer to Salt Lake City where he met his wife Lynell, got married and had two kids. Richard loved being a dad and loved his family fiercely. Another move took them to Arizona where they began home-schooling their kids – hey, Richard got to use his teaching degree after all!

Richard’s daughter Kelsey relates this story:

“At the young age of 7 or 8, my dad enrolled himself, my brother and I in karate. This was a fun hobby we shared for the next several years, and as we advanced in belt ranks, my demented 9 year old mind decided it would be a great idea to start hiding around corners and jumping out to gut-kick my dad and start random sparring. My dad settled on the nickname Cato (from Pink Panther) for me during those years, and always took my random corner attacks with a good sense of humor.” ***(thank you Kelsey)***

Richard's son Eric relates this story:

"Growing up, as far back as I can remember, my dad has loved technology and gadgets of every description. If something had lights, buttons, circuits, screens, speakers or anything electronic, he wanted it. And since before I can remember, he would attend numerous different electronics, tech and computer trade shows and he'd bring home souvenirs and stories. I always wanted to go with him and see what he'd seen, do what he'd done. In my second year of college, I got to do just that for the first time when we started a tradition of attending the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas every year. I can't recall specifically what kinds of tech we saw there and what happened each year at the show. But I do remember the drives there and back; the music we'd play and share with each other; the talks we'd have. And I also remember one year where, by some miracle of charisma and persuasion, he talked his way into getting us special access to some swanky executive lounge that we absolutely were not supposed to be in! But somehow they never kicked us out and we ended up getting free gourmet meals and a perfect resting spot for the entire week of the show."

(thank you Eric)

In the preparations for this service, we have seen from the massive collection of photos, that Richard took his family on many, many adventures including Disneyland, ocean visits, and later the Las Vegas Consumer Electronics Show and Comicon.

More recently, Richard and I have tried to plan a trip to Alaska that was still in our future. I hope to complete that trip, but without my expert tour guide.



I'll close with this list of characteristics that Kelsey and Eric feel define their father:

Outgoing	Spontaneous, mischievous
Talented musician	Brilliant
Eternally optimistic	Loving and supportive
Persistent and determined	Tireless
Great sense of humor	Free spirited, good spirited
Cheerful	Generous
Great conversationalist	Explorer
Tech obsessed	Sentimental
Nerdy, in a good way	Always willing to help friends and family
Inquiring mind	