

RICHARD "DICK" STRONG

November 5, 1931 – April 9, 2026



Poet • Painter • Musician

Cowboy • Rancher

Mountain Man • Soil Scientist



Wherever Dick went, he met the locals. He wrote poems, painted watercolor landscapes, played his harmonica, and climbed mountains. He charmed people; he made friends. He is sorely missed.

Dick Strong – His Story

Dick Strong, son of Edward and Gertrude Strong, was born in New York City, where his father was studying philosophy before moving to U.C. Berkeley to teach. Despite growing up in an academic family, Dick created a different path: cowboy and rancher trumped philosophy.

Dick daydreamed in regular school, but he read all of Will James' cowboy books and government publications about ranching. Age twelve, he met his future wife, Helen Coxhead, at the local park; each cared for a horse in the hills above the UC stadium. Dick watched rodeos at the Cow Palace, often sleeping overnight in the horse stables.

He started college at Fresno State and transferred to Berkeley. He was on the Cal ski team. He spent summers packing mules in the Sierra, bucking hay in Montana, and riding range as a cowboy on the ZX ranch out of Silver Lake, Oregon. In 1952, he married Helen and was drafted. He was sent to Orleans, France, was joined by Helen, learned some French, traveled, and skied.

Dick returned to California, now a father, and graduated from Davis. He worked briefly on a ranch, realized he needed expertise, and studied soil science for a year at Davis. He did soil survey work for the government in Nevada for three years and was ranch manager at Deep Springs College for six years, "Living out my dream of having a cattle ranch". But in 1968, there was a student rebellion, and he quit. His marriage came apart.

After two transition years, he worked at the Farm Bureau, likely 1971-1977. By 1975 he was pouring the footings for a hillside house in Orinda CA that he designed and built himself. He met Susan that year; they married in 1977.

After the Farm Bureau, Dick stitched together a portfolio of work. He was on governmental consultant teams in Peru, Africa, and the U.S. Because he had already been an attendee at Berkeley Meeting for many years, in the eighties it was natural for him to move on to work with American Friends Service Committee, helping to start the farmers market movement and a food buying club. He briefly taught a course called *The American Food Chain* at Stanford and Cal.

After Dick and Susan began attending Strawberry Creek Friends Meeting early in the new century, they both became members of the Society of Friends.



Dick began his consulting business, Voice of the Soil, based out of his home in Orinda. He conducted his own research project that took him to the U.S., Latin America, Africa, and Asia to get soil samples in his study of the effects of grazing on soil health.

His last three years Dick lived with Alzheimer's at Brookdale's Assisted Living. One of his daily joys was counting the cattle through his window as they grazed on the hills of San Ramon.

Dick is predeceased by his brother Doug, his son Devon and his granddaughter Janneke. He is survived by his wife Susan, his older sister Kate Pope, his son Craig, three grandsons: Will and Stephen, and Zachary van Buuren, and a great-granddaughter, Devin van Buuren.

On May 9, 2026, Dick's extremely large family held a quiet memorial for him at the home of his sister in Berkeley. Forty family members attended in person; many others were there on zoom.

