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Fred Herkenhoff



Fred Herkenhoff, internationally renowned geophysicist and beloved father and spouse, passed away on Sept. 8, 2021 while surrounded by his family. Fred is survived by his wife Linda, five sons, four grandchildren and one sister.

Fred and his family called Orinda home for 30+ years. He took full advantage of the trails in Lamorinda for hiking and running. Fred was always proud of winning his age group medal in the Lafayette Reservoir 5K each year. Through the years he coached Orinda T-ball, soccer and basketball youth teams. Neighbors loved to consult with him about soil movement and geologic concerns on their property. No matter where in the world Fred traveled he would always say how lucky we were to come home to a lovely place like Orinda.

Over his 40+ year career, Fred held the role of Chief Geophysicist for Chevron USA, Chevron Australia, Chevron Overseas Petroleum and CALTEX. Fred's technical leadership led to major oil and gas discoveries that affected the course of nations including the United States, Canada, Australia, West Africa, Indonesia, the Middle East, and China. In recognition of his outstanding contributions Fred was appointed as a Chevron Fellow in geophysics and his impact is still evidenced by numerous influential mentees, publications, patents, and awards throughout his extensive career.

Fred was born in Stamford, Conn., and grew up in Hibbing, Minn., and Mountain View, Calif. He graduated from Stanford with a master's in geophysics and was the Valedictorian for his class.

Fred was an extremely active, fit guy who had a passion for sports of all kinds. He was an avid golfer, daredevil skier, very competitive runner, and (of course) a big Warriors fan.

Fred loved adventure travel which he was able to share with his family on many occasions. He lived and/or worked in 51+ countries, and visited all the continents. His adventures took him from base camp at Mt. Everest to the summit of Mt. Kilimanjaro. He dipped into the Antarctic Ocean and ran races through the jungles of Thailand. He survived a cyclone in Tonga, riots in Columbia, flooding in Myanmar, a stampede of wildebeests in Zimbabwe and being held at knife point while on a field crew by a local chieftain in Sumatra.

Upon retirement in 2014 he accepted several roles: Docent at Mt. Diablo State Park, Visiting Scientist at Lawrence Berkeley Labs, Lecturer at UC Berkeley in Engineering / Geophysics, and Vice President of the Bay Area Geophysical Society.

Fred was a legend whose legacy will live on. Heaven became richer and we became poorer with the loss of a true servant leader, one whose excellence and enthusiasm encouraged many others to join him in his pursuits. We were better with him and his mark on our lives will remain with us always.

We will miss you.

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