

Peter Dickson - Obituary



Peter Alastair Dickson was born in Grootfontein, Namibia, on Aug 23, 1949, to Alastair and Eileen Dickson. Peter died at home on May 24th, 2020 after a long battle with esophageal cancer. His father was a mining engineer and mother a nurse. Both were British but in WWII served in the US Army's North African Campaign and relief of Italy. After the war, they came back to Namibia (then called southwest Africa) to raise their two sons, moving to Turkey in 1954 where they lived until 1961, when they returned to the UK. Following his life-long interest in geology and life-sciences, Peter received his BSc degree in Geology in 1971 at Leeds University where he met his future wife, Louise (Lou) Ellen Dickson (née Van Vleck). They married Aug 12, 1972, in Topeka Kansas, but lived in Manchester, England, while they both completed their Master's degrees. They moved to Pittsburgh in Jan 1975 so that Pete could complete his PhD in Geology (1977) and conduct post-doctorate research and teaching.

In March 1978, Peter joined Harza Engineering Company, an employee-owned consulting company based in Chicago that specialized in water resource engineering and serving around the world, including in many developing nations. Taking after his linguist brother, Peter's aptitude with languages and ability to socialize in different world cultures contributed to his success in his overseas work. Lou and Peter have two children, Alison (proud mother of grandson, Alastair) and Hamish (married to Jenn Hann of Los Angeles). Peter's work in water resource engineering and management took him all around the world, serving in many remote, mountainous regions, where water scarcity and value is of extreme significance. Throughout his life, mountain life and scenery remained important and for this reason, Lou and Pete decided to buy a house in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, 21 years ago and have actively participated in Pagosa life whenever they could.

In addition to having spent a career on world class dam and hydro projects around the world, Peter was proud to have worked on the Panama Canal Expansion, participated on the world's largest hydro-pumped storage projects, and to have served on prestigious panels of experts including the Independent Forensic Team that investigated the Oroville Dam Spillway Incident.

Outside his professional life, Peter was an enthusiastic outdoorsman, artist, writer, skier, potter, and devoted family man. He was also well-known for his cooking, BBQ, and charcuterie. Because of his life and travels around the world, he could always bring to an evening's gathering an extra flair and taste in the menu.

Pete is survived by his wife of 47 years, Lou Dickson; their daughter, Alison; their son, Hamish, and his wife, Jenn Han; their grandchild, Alastair; his brother, Christopher (Sonia); sister-in-law Faye Spratley (Bill) and nieces and nephews, Marijke, Madeleine, Femke, Douglas, Alessandro, Bill and Bob and grandnieces/grandnephews; Lauren, Amy, Jade-Lynn, Taylor, Fellen, Skye, Neal. He will be sorely missed. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date. Donations can be made in his name to the charity of your choice.