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SPJ/LA Mourns the Passing of Richard "Dick" Hendrickson, 77

Richard D. "Dick" Hendrickson, a much-beloved journalism educator, former editor and reporter and board member of the Greater Los Angeles Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, passed away on July 29 at the age of 77, following a brief hospitalization due to heart disease.

The Society of Professional Journalists is the nation's largest and most broad-based journalism organization, dedicated to promoting high standards of ethical behavior and encouraging the free practice of journalism. Founded in 1909 as Sigma Delta Chi, SPJ works to inspire and educate the next generation of journalists and protects First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech and press. The Greater Los Angeles professional chapter celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2009.

In recent years, Hendrickson had served as treasurer and was actively involved in planning the chapter's monthly programs. Prior to relocating to Los Angeles nearly a decade ago, he worked for more than 30 years at the Morning Journal in Lorain, Ohio in a variety of capacities as reporter, bureau chief and editor, including eight years as editorial page editor. He was also active in his local SPJ chapter there, where he had served as chapter president.

Hendrickson began his journalism career in 1961, after a two-year hitch in the Navy, when he became a reporter for his hometown paper, the Syracuse Post-Standard. His work caught the attention of the Associated Press, which soon hired him for its bureau in Buffalo, New York. In 1966, he moved to Ohio to open a new bureau for the Morning Journal, where he remained for the next 35 years.

Hendrickson retired from daily newspaper journalism in 2001 to become a full-time journalism educator at John Carroll University, a Jesuit college outside Cleveland. Even before he started teaching, he was fondly known by young reporters as "Professor," both for his willingness to mentor and coach upcoming students, and for his dedication to furthering his own higher education. He held a bachelor's degree in journalism, a master's in political science, and at the age of 59, earned a doctorate in media studies, all from Bowling Green University.

At the time of his death, Hendrickson was a journalism instructor in reporting and media ethics with UCLA Extension, and had also taught journalism part-time at California State University, Northridge. He also continued to teach online for John Carroll University.

In 2010, SPJ honored Hendrickson with its annual Distinguished Teaching in Journalism Award, recognizing collegiate journalism educators who have made a significant contribution to journalism education and to the profession. Just three months ago, Hendrickson received his 50-year membership pin at the SPJ Regional 11 conference, which he helped to organize.

He is survived by his wife of 29 years, Carol; eight children, Cheryl (Kevin) Randleman of New London, Ohio; Judith (Len) Sennish of Cleveland; Amy (Noel) Bouchard of Bellbrook, Ohio; William (Jennifer) Hendrickson of Batavia, Ohio; Christine Hendrickson of Norwalk, Ohio; Laura Owens (Sohrab Mohebbi) of Los Angeles; Lisa Owens of Austin and Lincoln (Erin) Owens of New Orleans; 10 grandsons, eight granddaughters and one great-granddaughter.

A celebration of life service in Cleveland, Ohio, is being planned, with a possible memorial service later in Los Angeles, although details have not been determined. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Contributions in Hendrickson's memory can be made to a scholarship fund that will be established in his name, to be given out next year. Contributions can be sent to SPJ/LA, P.O. Box 572632, Tarzana, CA 91357.

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