



## Richard F. Davis

October 4, 1937 - July 24, 2024

Rye- Richard F. Davis, devoted husband, father, grandfather, and brother, faithful friend, and longtime teacher, rowing coach, and mentor of young people, died in Rye, New Hampshire, surrounded by family, on July 24, 2024. He was 86 years old.

Born on October 4, 1937, in Brooklyn, N.Y., Richard was the son of Virginia Vail Davis and Charles Fletcher Davis. He grew up in New York and New Jersey and attended River Edge Junior High School and Hackensack High School. He graduated from Rutgers University with honors in 1959, served as a captain in the United States Air Force, and in 1966 earned a master's degree from Harvard University.

On July 1, 1967, Rich married Margaret "Peg" Johnston, beginning a matrimonial love affair that lasted 57 years. They lived, worked, and raised their three children—Fletcher, Ellen, and Chip—at St. Paul's School in Concord, N.H. In 2003, when Rich retired, he and Peg moved to the New Hampshire seacoast where they had first met when Rich was serving in the Strategic Air Command at Portsmouth's Pease Air Force Base.

For 37 years, Rich taught, coached, and served in loco parentis to thousands of students at St. Paul's School. He created numerous courses, chaired the history department, and coached hundreds of rowers on Turkey Pond, 10 of

whom went on to row in the Olympics. Rich received many coaching awards, including “Rings of Gold” from The United States Olympic Committee in 2000.

While reviewing race strategy with a crew competing at Henley Royal Regatta, Coach Davis was asked by an athlete what they should do if anything went wrong during the race. His legendary reply: “Pull harder!” For 31 years, Rich shared his rowing wisdom as a contributor and board member of Rowing News, a magazine launched by his son, Chip.

At St. Paul’s, Rich counseled grieving students who had lost a parent. In retirement, he continued his service to youth in similar situations through the Hope Project, based in Kittery, Maine.

Rich was a kind and beloved member of many communities. He served as an overseer of Portsmouth’s outdoor history museum, Strawberry Banke; worked with the Rye Historical Society; and volunteered at St. John’s Church, where a conversation with the Rev. Tim Rich about the educational needs of the region led to the founding of Seacoast Academy, a private middle school now called Heronfield Academy.

A loving husband, father, brother, and son, Rich is survived by his wife Peg, son J. Fletcher Davis, daughter Ellen Parish (Dan), son Chip Davis (Alison), brother Walton Davis (Fran Drago), and four grandchildren—Margaret, Ian, Ella, and Charlie.

A funeral service will be held at St. John’s Church in Portsmouth, N.H. at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, August 19, 2024. Donations in memory of Rich may be made to St. John’s Episcopal Church by clicking here (<https://www.stjohnsnh.org/donate-online>) or to the Alzheimer’s Association by mail at 225 N. Michigan Ave., Fl. 17, Chicago, IL 60601 or by clicking here ([https://act.alz.org/site/Donation2?df\\_id=51079&51079.donation=form1&mfc\\_pref=T&utm\\_source=google](https://act.alz.org/site/Donation2?df_id=51079&51079.donation=form1&mfc_pref=T&utm_source=google))

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# Previous Events

## Funeral Service

AUG **19**. 10:00 AM (ET)

St. John's Episcopal Church  
100 Chapel Street  
Portsmouth, NH 03801

# Tribute Wall

JH

“ Rich and the entire Davis family were the most welcoming, kind, and loving people our family encountered there. From my very first baby shower hosted at their home, to belly laughs in Admissions, to important lessons about critical thinking, confronting history, speaking truth to power, and radical candor, I will always remember the Davises as the kind of honorable individuals who set a high standard and serve as guiding lights for us all. Rest in peace, Rich. Love, the Hebras.



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**Jada Hebra** - October 26, 2024 at 03:58 PM

JF

“ Jim & Charlotte Foley purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Richard F. Davis.



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**Jim & Charlotte Foley** - August 15, 2024 at 03:30 PM

D7

“ Mr. Davis was a wise and kind man with a great sense of humor. He was my teacher and our advisor for the student council officers in 1979 opening his home weekly for lively and wonderful conversations. His wonderful wife often joined us. My condolences to the Davis family.

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**Dave Ross. SPS 79** - August 06, 2024 at 09:49 PM

EC

“ *Rich Davis (and the other members of the Davis family) was for me the embodiment of what is best about St. Paul's School -- rigorous pursuit of excellence, humor, honor, dedication, and serving others. He was also a very great teacher. I know far more about World War I -- the context in which it happened and the literature that grew out of it -- than about any other period in history because of his course and way of teaching it. A great gift to me.*

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**Elisabeth Cassels-Brown** - August 06, 2024 at 09:18 PM

IR

“ *Ian, Ellen, Maryann, Tom, Roseann purchased the Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet for the family of Richard F. Davis.*



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**Ian, Ellen, Maryann, Tom, Roseann** - August 01, 2024 at 06:30 PM

KS

“ *Mr. Davis touched the lives of many N.H. public high school students through the Advanced Studies Program. Was lucky enough to study Soviet Russia with him the summer of 1989 and he got this newish sculler out on Turkey Pond in a single a few times as well. Thank you for sharing him with us all and sending much love to the Davis family.*

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**Kerry Swift** - July 30, 2024 at 05:37 PM

TB

“ I am one of the many people who were fortunate to encounter Richard Davis at an impressionable age. As a teacher of hundreds of adolescents, he taught us not only about history or sports techniques, but more broadly and profoundly about what kind of people we should try to be. He exhorted generations of young people to work incredibly hard to be excellent, to never quit, and to work together for the common good.

Rich also taught us about leadership and moral values. For example, in a politics class during Nixon’s presidency, he suggested that there was something worse than a leader being “out of the loop”—and that was being a decision-maker who put personal ends ahead of the public good.

Like so many others, I was privileged to know Rich Davis as my crew coach at St. Paul’s School for three years and at the Royal Regatta in Henley, England. Rich had a special impact on me at a tender age because I was a coxswain, as he had been in college. He helped me understand that there is a special challenge in being a coxswain: as a 100 pound adolescent, I was by far the smallest person in the boat and the only one not pulling an oar, hence deadweight that should be minimized. Years after being a coxswain, he taught through example that the coxswain needs to lead with inspiration, by encouraging teamwork, and by strategizing clearly, especially during races when everyone else is pulling their brains out.

For so many of us, Rich Davis personified charismatic, inspirational leadership. Most of all, he taught us always to try hard, to work together, and to do our best. He provided that leadership selflessly to young people for many decades.

He also showed how to have a loving family! Our condolences in this difficult time to Peg, Fletcher, Ellen, Chip, and others.

Thank you! May you rest in peace Rich Davis.

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Ted Bohlen - July 29, 2024 at 11:08 PM

AC

“ *Mr. Davis was the most wonderful man. Our boat won New England's and Henley under him and we all absolutely adored him. His belief in us changed all of our lives then and still now. How lucky we were to have him in our lives. Thank you Mr. Davis for your strength, guidance, humor, and integrity. A long, impactful life well lived.*

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**Anne Clare** - July 29, 2024 at 07:20 PM