

# DONOR STORIES

## RICHARD & HELEN ZELLHOEFER “Richard and Helen Zellhoefer Family Fund”

Richard “Dick” Grant Zellhoefer was born on January 15, 1918, in Waterloo, Iowa, at Presbyterian Hospital. A few years later, on April 13, 1923, Helen Patricia Hospers was born in Waterloo to Gerrit Henry Hospers and Irene Berg Hospers.



RICHARD AND HELEN  
ZELLHOEFER

Dick, and his older sister, Virginia, were lovingly raised by their mother and father. Dick’s father worked as the treasurer and office manager for Altstadt and Langlas Baking Co. in Waterloo. Dick grew up in Waterloo’s Highland neighborhood and attended the Francis Grout Grade School. He later attended East Waterloo Schools and in his high school days was active in track, football, band (as a clarinetist) and the school newspaper until he graduated in 1935.

Helen’s father was a dentist in Waterloo and had his office in the Black Hawk Building. Her mother, who grew up in Webster City, was a teacher for the Waterloo School District. Helen’s parents built their home on Sunset Road where Helen and her younger brother, Jan, attended Whittier School. Helen attended West High School where she was a Swiss bell ringer in the band and held roles in the school’s drama productions. In high school, both Dick and Helen enjoyed attending football games as well as dances at Electric Park. Dick and Helen first met when they were both part of Dick’s cousin, Bill Langlas’, wedding. Helen was helping her mother coordinate the wedding reception and Dick was one of Bill’s attendants.

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After high school, Dick went on to attend the Iowa State Teachers College, in Cedar Falls, for two years, where he was a member of the track team and Lambda Gamma Nu Fraternity. He then transferred to the University of Iowa and graduated with a Bachelor’s degree from the College of Commerce in 1939. After graduating, he stayed at the University of Iowa where he was already a part of the Phi Kappa Psi Fraternity. He also joined the Phi Delta Phi Legal Fraternity. Dick remembers being involved in both fraternities and getting to know the Iowa Hawkeye football star, Nile Kinnick. In 1941, Dick took the bar exam, but

shortly after graduating from law school in March 1942 he was drafted into the military. After training as an infantryman at Fort Benning Infantry School in Georgia and completing several courses with the Navy and the Marines he was sent on a tour of duty throughout Europe, and later to the Philippines and Japan. Dick was sent home in February 1946, at which time he started his law practice.

Helen graduated from the University of Iowa in 1944. During college she majored in political science and literature and was a member of Kappa Kappa Gamma Sorority. Upon graduation, Helen traveled to

Tacoma, Washington, where she worked in an army hospital. She then moved to Columbia, Missouri, and became the assistant to the head of the Philosophy and Religion Department at Stephens College.

While in Columbia, Helen rekindled her friendship with Dick Zellhoefer. The two frequently exchanged letters and eventually began dating in 1946 when Helen returned to Waterloo for a job as a radio personality for KWWL. Dick and Helen often joked that they were the only two unmarried people in Waterloo, but they lost that distinction when they married on December 21, 1948. The couple eventually leased a duplex, and with Dick's law career growing they decided to begin their family. Their first child, Susan, was born in 1951, followed by Dave in 1953 and Anne in 1957.

In 1971, the couple began making annual trips overseas and enjoyed seeing the world together. They visited countless countries and among their favorite trips was a river cruise that took them from the Netherlands to Hungary, as well as through Egypt, the Greek Isles and Switzerland.

All three of Dick and Helen's children have followed in their father's footsteps and have become successful lawyers. Dick and Helen also have 3 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.

Dick learned from his parents' example just how important community involvement and philanthropy is for a person's growth and well-being. Dick's father was a member of the Waterloo Kiwanis, the Playground Commission and the Family Service League while his mother was the president of the YWCA, very involved in their church and was a member of the Waterloo Woman's Club. Dick became involved with a number of community organizations. He was a member of the Kiwanis Club, was involved with the Waterloo Recreation and Arts Center and helped many others groups fundraise. In 1956, he worked with Chuck Swisher to launch the Waterloo Civic Foundation, now the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.

Helen also believed that serving her community was an important duty. She was president of Kingsley PTA and a board member for the Waterloo Public Library, the Junior League of Waterloo and Cedar Falls and the Visiting Nurses Association. She was an active member of the American Cancer Society Reach to Recovery program and was a literacy instructor at the Jesse Cosby Center through Hawkeye Community College. Whenever Helen had spare time between her seemingly endless community service and board meetings, she enjoyed traveling, swimming and reading. Both Helen and Dick were very involved in the First Congregational Church, the same church where they had wed.

Helen's involvement with Reach to Recovery began after her own cancer diagnosis in 1968, which continued until February 2006. Helen visited and spoke to breast cancer patients in an effort to help them cope with their experiences. Helen passed away on Saturday, March 25, 2006, at Allen Hospital in Waterloo. Dick passed away in September 2007.

Dick and Helen shared a strong interest in their community, especially in the arts and literacy. They decided to share their passion by establishing the Richard and Helen Zellhoefer Fund to support the programs of the Waterloo Public Library and the Waterloo Center for the Arts in the hopes that others may have the opportunity to experience arts and culture like they did through their world travel.

*\*\*Historical vignette prepared by the Community Foundation of Northeast Iowa.*