

Dick Shadduck

As the editors of the newsletter for the Tired Iron of the Ozarks antique tractor and engine club, my wife and I have published about twenty-five biographies of our members. Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of interviewing Dick, who was a charter member of Tired Iron and the club chaplain. This account of his life today is an edited version of his life story which was published in our newsletter.

Died September 24, 2010

Richard D. Shadduck was born on January 27, 1937, in Hollywood, California, to Elmer and Vera (Good) Shadduck, parents who gave him his Scotch, Irish, and English heritage. His only brother Don currently lives in Palm Springs, California. The two boys' father was a freight and passenger conductor with the Southern Pacific Railroad. The train routes took their dad along the west coast from Portland, Oregon, through California. He served with the railroad from 1916 to 1970, fifty-four years in all. Dick and Don also became railroaders with Southern Pacific.

In Hollywood, Dick attended John Marshall High School. In high school, Dick followed a program in industrial arts with emphasis on woodworking and auto mechanics. He learned skills which would serve him well throughout his life. In school, Dick's athletic prowess was well utilized with his participation in gymnastics. He performed in rope climbing, on the parallel bars, and on rings, all of which required much strength and skill. An outside school interest for Dick was drag racing, a sport that was immensely popular in California in the 1950s. He was also an expert water skier.

While in school, Dick worked at several jobs, including at a grocery store and on paper routes. When asked if he actually delivered newspapers to famous stars on his route, he named Alan Ladd, Dennis Day, and Jack Dempsey. The recollection he had of Alan Ladd was that he was very short and that he had a beautiful, red, 1947 Chrysler woody convertible automobile. He remembered Jack Dempsey as a powerful man with huge, muscular arms.

A good friend of Dick's was Johnny Fine. He was the son of Larry Fine who played the role of "Larry" as one of the Three Stooges. Dick often swam in the pool at Johnny's home where he saw the movie star often. Dick remembered Larry as a really nice guy.

While still in high school a big change came for Dick. He was introduced to a girl by the name of Gail Lowdermilk by a mutual friend. The friend lived in Gail's neighborhood and grew up riding bicycles with her, and he saw to it that Dick and Gail met. They were married just outside Hollywood on May 11, 1953. Since they married very young, they celebrated their 57th anniversary this year. They have two daughters. Robin, the older daughter, is married to Hank Adkins, and they live in Har-Ber Meadows in Springdale, Arkansas. Sheri, the younger daughter, and her husband Sam Rhea live in Belton, Missouri. They are in the process of adopting a much loved three-year-old named Cedric, Dick and Gail's only grandchild.

Robin recounted many remembrances of her and her sister's youth. She stated proudly that her dad was very much a part of their lives. From the time Robin was about four years old until she and her sister graduated high school, he took them on backpacking hikes, took them camping, and arranged swim parties and many other activities with the family and with friends. The family traveled about the country on frequent vacations. A fond memory for Robin was rafting down the Rio Grande with the

family. Robin mentioned that her dad was an adventurer. On their travels, anytime he saw a sign along the way indicating something even remotely interesting, he would take the family on side trips to see what it was.

While being such a wonderful dad, he was strict. He was always the authority over Robin and her sister and even their friends too. In a fair way, he demanded and received obedience. Today, anyone who gets the opportunity to hear Robin and Sheri speak of their dad will immediately recognize their love for him which was built on his devoted attention to them through their lives.

Dick said, from an early age, he wanted to work in railroading. This was fueled by the fact that, as has been noted, his father was a railroader and by him being absorbed from a child in everything related to trains. When he graduated from high school in 1955, he immediately began seeking employment with Southern Pacific. He related that he went every day and talked with the master mechanic and the road foreman of engines, asking them for a job. His persistence paid off when he was hired as a fireman on a steam engine that same year.

His first route was a 150 mile trip from Los Angeles to Indio, California, on freight trains. He later served on a 300 mile route from Los Angeles to Yuma, Arizona, on passenger trains. Along with his main runs, Dick also worked the “extra board” and made trips into Mexico to deliver varied products, including long horn cows.

At other times with the SP, he served as a yard engineer moving locomotives from place to place in Los Angeles, Indio, Colton and El Centro, California. He also worked for a time on “helper” engines. A steep grade on a run from Colton to Beaumont, California, required extra engines to pull the grade and these helper engines were added. It is obvious that throughout his railroad career that Dick had the friendship and trust of his fellow workers since he served as the president of his local labor union. Just in a passing note, it was important and exciting that both daughters, while children, got to ride in the cab of locomotives. This is another example of how Dick gave his children full and meaningful lives.

The mid-1950s were a time of great change in railroad locomotives. The transition from steam to diesel engines was well begun by the time he was hired, but he spent his first five years on steam engines. This gave him an advantage a few years later when the company needed someone with steam expertise to operate the remaining steam engines on special occasions. Gail mentioned a time when the port of Los Angeles was flooded and Dick was called out at three in the morning to operate the steam locomotives in the high water. Dick had worked off and on with the Los Angeles Harbor Beltline, and he had the experience to handle the trains in this emergency. When asked if he liked steam or diesel better, he immediately said, “Steam.”

Another highlight for Dick took place in 1976 when he got to operate the American Freedom Train when it visited California. The twenty-six car train pulled by three restored steam engines was loaded with American memorabilia in celebration of the United States Bi-Centennial.

Anyone who ever heard Dick give his testimony during any of his ministries knows that big changes occurred in his life as he grew older and faced family responsibilities. He spoke frankly about his tendency as a young man to use profanity quite liberally. The “Irish” came out in him. Perhaps his first awakening came when Robin was about three years old, and she shocked the family by uttering an oath. When Dick asked her what she said, she repeated it. It was apparent that she was copying him; so he immediately stopped using such language at home.

The next big change came as a result of daughter Robin, at the age of eleven or twelve, attending the local Seventh-Day Adventist Church on Saturdays when the family lived in La Crescenta, California. A lady from the church, who picked Robin up each week, interested Dick and Gail by her ministry to them. Dick’s mother was Adventist; so he knew the tenets of the faith, but he did not

actively follow the beliefs. At Robin's urging and with the guidance of the lady, Dick and Gail, along with a couple who were close friends, began to attend the Saturday services more and more regularly until they all committed themselves to God through the Adventist faith. In 1967, Dick was baptized. Anyone who was fortunate to hear Dick give his testimony knows that he immediately ended his use of alcohol and his habit of profanity.

The next big step for Dick and Gail came when Dick realized he was not happy with railroading. It might have been the loss of the steam engines that disappointed him, but, through some aptitude testing he underwent, it was determined that he was such a people person that the solitary work he did with the engines did not fit his out-going personality. He would often complete a work shift without face-to-face communication with anyone. Over the next year, he began looking for the right work.

As the family grew more in the Adventist Church, it became apparent that Dick had a calling to minister to others. When he looked into the ministry, he was surprised to learn that he would need a college degree. In 1968, at the age of thirty-one, he began his study in theology at Pacific Union College near Napa, California. He graduated with a Bachelors Degree in Theology in 1972 and then, ten years later, obtained a Masters in Public Health, where he obtained knowledge in helping people make better health decisions in their lives, such as to stop smoking and to maintain better diets, etc., along with his main church ministry. Not so incidentally, Dick suffered his first heart attack in 1978.

As a minister, Dick and the Shadduck family traveled wherever he was called. In the first years, Dick pastored churches in Middletown, Rolling Hills, and Ridgecrest in northern and southern California. For a while he had a large church in Topeka, Kansas, and another in Lawrence. The next move was more permanent. Dick and Gail came to Siloam Springs, Arkansas, where Dick pastored the local Adventist Church for ten years, along with the church in Lincoln, Arkansas. Dick also utilized his educational background in health while serving at John Brown University's Wellness Center as a consultant for dealing with health problems. His ministry encompassed a total of 38 years, during which he also served as the president of several ministerial associations.

Two other important ministries which came about with Dick's help were the founding of Safe-TV and the organization of the Springtown Cowboy Church. Others today will speak of these great works by Dick Shadduck.

As has been mentioned, Dick, with Gail along, was an adventurer. Their travels took them on three cruises. The first was to Alaska. Their second cruise was a Princess Cruise to Jamaica. This was indeed an adventure. It happened to be when the cruise ship caught on fire, an event which made national and world news for days. Because of the fire, they were given another cruise, this time to Mexico. Their most inspirational trip was a tour of the Holy Land.

In 1987, Dick purchased a motorcycle to continue his and Gail's love of traveling about the country. Gail said she rode while hanging on tightly since biking was a new experience for her, but Dick had ridden bikes much of his life. Gail became quite comfortable with biking when, in 1991, Dick purchased a Honda Gold Wing motorcycle with the plush, extra seat for a passenger. Dick continued his ministry even with his biking interest by serving as chaplain and educator for his local Gold-Wing Chapter. Again, others today will speak of Dick's love of biking.

Another important interest for Dick over the years was model railroading. This hobby began when he was about thirteen or fourteen, and he, for Christmas, received a Lionel 027 model train layout with the train circling the Christmas tree. As an adult, he built other train layouts every Christmas with his girls. In the family home east of Siloam Springs, he completely filled one room with an N-gauge layout of track circling the room. He replicated much of his memories of the train yards and routes from his earlier railroading years within the layout.

As mentioned earlier, Dick was a charter member and chaplain of Tired Iron of the Ozarks antique tractor and engine club. His interest in farming and machines made him a natural for the club. When he joined, he had a small Allis Chalmers tractor and finally a 1948 Farmall H. We in the club, well remember an accident he suffered with the Farmall. He was pinned under his tractor but was providentially spared fatal injury. His "old iron" collection also included a classic Chevy pickup and several antique tools.

As we all well know and in spite of his athletic abilities, Dick's health was an issue for him for much of his life. He dealt with heart problems ever since the attack in 1978. In recent years, on several occasions at Tired Iron meetings, prayers were offered for his recovery from a serious setback and those prayers and prayers from all over the country were answered with his miraculous recoveries. Most recently, Dick suffered a stroke, which took him from the hospital to rehab to residence in the Culpepper Place Assisted Living facility in Springdale, Arkansas, where Dick and Gail lived in apartment. Dick's stroke and accompanying heart problems did not daunt his spirit. He believed God had more for him to do. He had lots of plans for the future. Dick knew prayers had worked before, and he firmly believed they would again. Until his final breath, he planned great things for himself, his family, and his church.

On this personal note, Tired Iron of the Ozarks is a better club for having been blessed by the friendship and support of Dick and Gail Shadduck. Thanks from your friends and admirers at Tired Iron. He will be fondly and greatly missed.