



# DUANE R

Left: Matt Rose with Duane at the Western Fuels 40th Anniversary Dinner



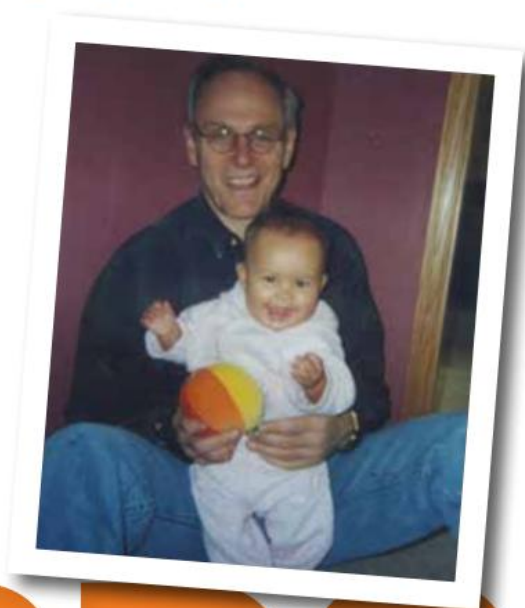
Top: First Day of Spring 1970. Donna and Duane posed for this picture for a local newspaper.

Left: With brother Bruce and sister Cathy in 1964. Styling with a clip-on tie and an itchy wool Christmas sweater!

BR: Playing with granddaughter in 2000.



Above: With daughter Kelly in Portland. Gotta love the 80s!



# RICHARDS



**D**uane Richards was born on April 18, 1952 in Mora, a small town in east central Minnesota. It was the closest hospital to the even smaller town of Isle where he grew up. He was the oldest of three children born to Raymond and Murrel (Tramm) Richards. Duane was six when his brother Bruce was born and eight when the family welcomed his sister Cathy. Both of his parents came from large families – his mother had 3 brothers and 6 sisters and his father had 5 brothers and a sister.

Duane can trace his family tree back several generations and how they came to settle in Minnesota. His great-great-grandfather was George Washington Richards who had spent part of his life in Northern West Virginia in the 1800's and was probably involved in coal mining to some degree. At some point he moved to Indiana where his son, Duane's great-grandfather grew up. Duane's paternal grandmother's father was born in Germany and was the only family member of that generation to immigrate to the US. Originating in eastern Germany, few of the remaining German family members survived WWI and WWII. Most were killed during the Russian occupation post WWII.

Duane's paternal great-grandparents planned to go to Oklahoma for the land rush shortly after getting married, but were unable to make it in time eventually ended up in South Dakota instead. His paternal grandparents, Cleveland and Alvina (Peters) Richards met there and were married in 1910 at in South Dakota's famous Corn Palace. They moved to a fairly remote area of Minnesota in 1915, traveling in a box car with all of the possession including their young children and farm animals. In Minnesota they became self-sufficient dairy farmers, surviving by selling milk, growing their own food, hunting and selling logs off the land. Duane never met his grandfather Cleveland as he died in 1935. Alvina and many of Duane's aunts and uncles on that side of the family moved to California prior to World War II. They found eking out a living from the rocky soil in Minnesota was too much work with too little reward and jobs were plentiful on the growing west coast.

As such, Duane was much closer to his maternal grandparents Walter and Hazel (Knutson) Tramm. He saw them most days in during his childhood. Their families both moved from the rich crop farming soil area in southwestern Minnesota to



Age 10 The famous B&W elementary photo of the times.



High School graduation complete with a full head of blonde hair!

central Minnesota when grain prices fell following World War I. They logged and for a time raised minks. His grandmother was Norwegian and his grandfather was about half German and half Irish. In the 1940 census, his grandfather was listed as a driller/shotfirer at a granite stone quarry, a job that cost him most of his hearing. That was about as close to mining as this side of the family got. While they were very self-sufficient, Duane's grandfather also worked outside the home for additional money. His grandmother did most of the chores like milking the cows by hand and feeding the animals as well as the cooking and cleaning for the family. "My Grandparents were absolutely the very best and I can't ever thank them enough for their contribution to my life. They never complained and loved each and every one in their family totally and unconditionally."

Duane's father joined the Army in 1946 and became a paratrooper in the 101st airborne division He was in the Japanese occupation forces until 1949 when he was discharged. Shortly after he returned to Minnesota, he met Duane's mother Murrel, still in high school, through mutual acquaintances.

Duane's father had many jobs over his lifetime and worked long hours for low pay. Duane often visited him at work just to see him. He remembers that his father operated a large coal-fired boiler that heated the buildings in town during the winter and having to shovel in the coal and shoveling out the clinkers and ashes. He retired as the chief custodian of the high school in town. His mother was a homemaker and spent much of her time with her mother and sisters. His father encouraged Duane to attend college and actually discouraged him from learning manual labor trades or skills that may have sidetracked him. He didn't want his life for his son. A college deferment

also meant no trip to Vietnam. The was heading to a stalemate anyway and Duane is the kind of guy that fights to win.

Growing up, Duane's life pretty much revolved around family and church. Sundays were always spent in church and the rest of the day was spent at his grandparent's house. Duane was an Acolyte and as such it was his job to light the candles in church at all services. He did this from 7th grade until he left for college. His grandmother never let an opportunity go





Checking out an interesting engineering project in March 2010.

by without begging him to become a minister as she knew he would be the first member of the family with the ability to attend college.

Like others profiled in the Coal Transporter that grew up in small towns in the late 50's and early 60's, childhoods then were lots of fun. Duane and his friends had the freedom to roam about town and not much money was required to have a good time. The one time he did ask his parents for a \$10 telescope, he felt so guilty that he never asked for anything again. Summers were spent waterskiing and swimming on Mille Lacs Lake, the second largest inland lake in Minnesota. When not at the lake in the summer riding horses and climbing trees with friends was an activity that kept him busy. Winters were spent playing hockey at the local skating rinks. Later, in high school, football, basketball and baseball kept at least the boys' busy year around.

After 6th grade he started working - mowing lawns, delivering newspapers and bagging groceries. As he got older, he worked at a printing shop, a gas station and for various farmers baling hay. Any money needed for school expenses had to come from working.

Starting with his 6th grade teacher Mrs. Faue, Duane was taught more advanced subjects separately from the other 40 or 50 members of his class. The high school math teacher, Mr. Robb, taught him calculus which was not part of the senior year curriculum. Duane credits his elderly neighbor Mrs. Kotz as the person who had the biggest impact on him getting into the mining industry. She showed him an article about a program at the University of Minnesota that provided \$1,500 per year to mining students

who then only had to pay half of it back interest free after graduation. She also had Duane do odd jobs around house as a way to provide him with some college savings. Mining sounded very interesting because he wanted to live out west and work outdoors. Throw in the big equipment moving lots of dirt and he was intrigued. However, Duane's original intent was to major in physics and mathematics.

Duane met his wife Donna in his junior year in high school. Her father was a disabled veteran of World War II and had moved his family to Isle where he planned to spend his retirement years fishing and hunting. Duane and Donna were married while Duane was still in college. Duane says, "I'm pretty sure that I wouldn't have been able to finish college without her working and supporting us at the time."

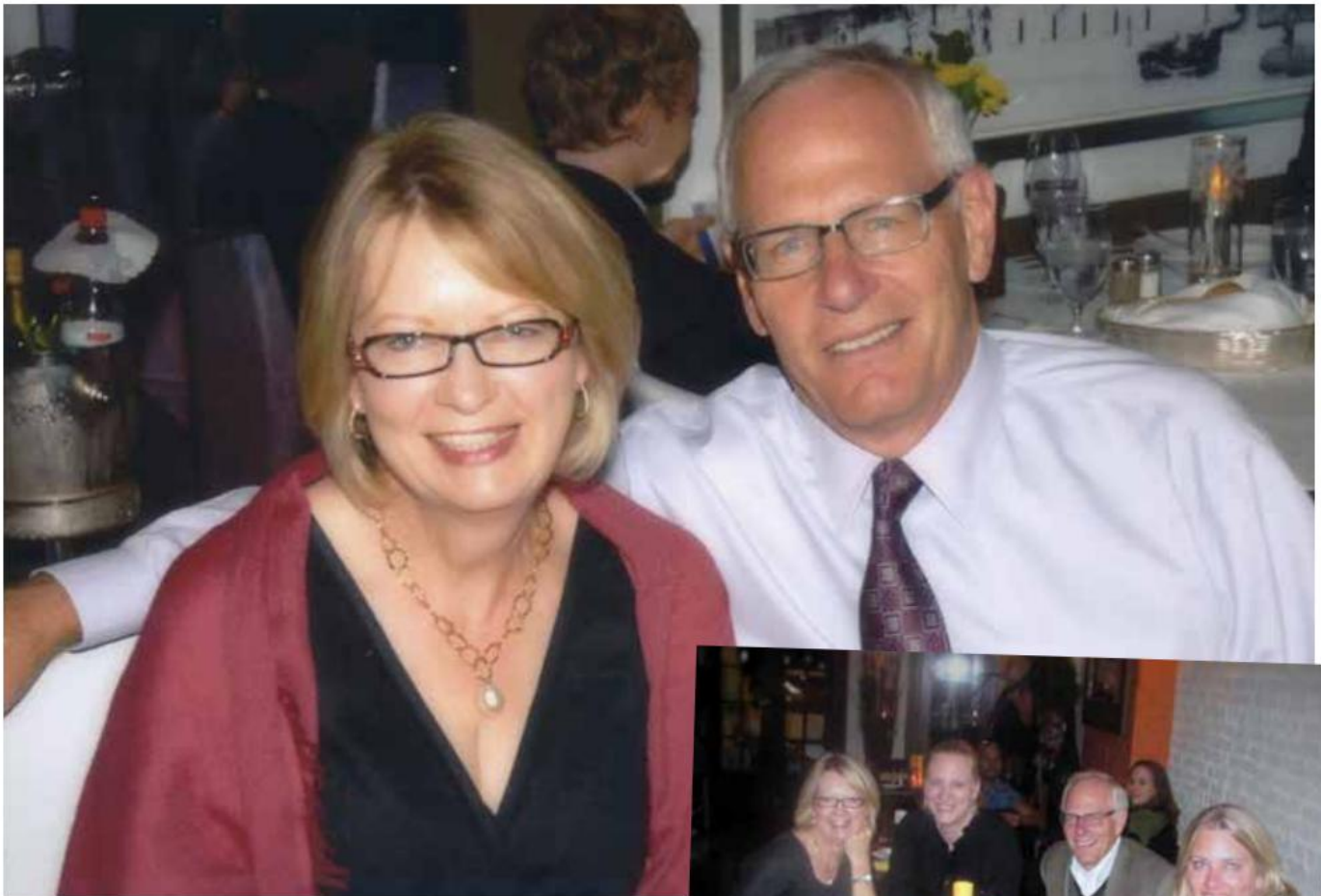
Donna worked for Victoria Elevator Company, a company owned by a Cargill family member, supporting the traders in the back office at the Grain Exchange in downtown Minneapolis. One day she let Duane know they were looking for help at the company's grain elevators. Duane reported the next day and spent his last two summers of college shoveling various grains, mostly corn, out of box cars. It was big money for hard work – muscle over brain and lots and lots of overtime. This was before the Stagger's Act and railroad operations were poor at best.

Many times he arrived at work and the empty cars hadn't been removed and the loaded boxcars had not been delivered. That meant spending the day cleaning up under the conveyor belts and in the dust collection system. After the cars were emptied, Duane and others rode the cars out of the elevator down a slight



Hiking around Echo Lake in Colorado with granddaughter Grace.





### Mediterranean Cruise for 40th Wedding Anniversary

incline to the end of the tracks. If the hand brake didn't work, they scrambled to crawl down and jump off before it hit another car or the end of the tracks.

If going to school and unloading boxcars wasn't enough, the Richards grew into a family of four during those college years, with daughters Amie born in 1971 and Kelly born in 1974.

### FROM THE MIDWEST TO THE ROCKIES

Duane graduated in 1974 with degree in Mineral Engineering. The country at that time was pretty much out of Vietnam and recovering from the Arab Oil Embargo. Jobs were plentiful in coal mining. After interviewing with eight companies, he had seven job offers. He accepted a job with the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company (ARCO) in the oil shale industry and moved to Rifle, Colorado. "Moving our two daughters away from both sets of grandparents and their great grandparents was very painful for them but we thought of ourselves as taking off on life's great journey. However, all of our vacations were spent returning to Minnesota so they could spend time with our kids – summers and winter holidays."

It didn't take long to see the oil shale project was too expensive to go forward. Not wanting to be the last one out the door, Duane contacted Shell Oil Company, Mining Ventures, another of the companies that had originally offered him a job.



### Dining out in NYC with daughters Kelly (left) and Amie (right).

He worked for Shell for several years on the initial development of coal mines in Montana and Wyoming. Duane and Klaus Mylotta were probably the first people to ever layout a mine plan for the Buckskin Mine.

Shell's projects either fell through or were going to take too long and he wanted to work at an operating mine, so he took an engineering job at PacifiCorp's Bridger Coal Mine in Rock Springs, Wyoming. He thinks Donna might have thought he had lost his mind at the time, but things happened quickly from there. In no time, he was moved into a production supervisory position. The next year he was asked to take the chief mining engineering position at the Dave Johnston (DJ) Mine near Casper, Wyoming. That's where he met Mike Stevermer, who was a summer intern student at the time. Donna was able to attend Casper College and got her business degree there.





Receiving the David Laffere Distinguished Service Award from the Western Coal Traffic League in February 2016.

## OFF TO THE WEST COAST

After several years at DJ, NERCO was formed as subsidiary of PacifiCorp and he was transferred to Portland, Oregon to be the project development manager for the Antelope Coal Mine. Probably one of his biggest accomplishments in his career was to lead the successful Antelope Mine development project. The original mine plan was designed to preserve the coal leases and service a one million ton per year contract with Platte River Power for their Rawhide Plant. Ken Brockway, one of NERCO's coal salesmen at the time, famously claimed that "we will never be able to sell another ton of coal from that mine." Luckily, that turned out not to be the case. John Hart, another face familiar to NCTA members, worked there as well.

## BACK HOME AGAIN

Duane worked his way out of a job at Antelope when it became operational in 1985. In 1986 after getting in contact with a former college classmate, he was offered a job with Northern States Power in Minneapolis. It was the perfect opportunity to move back home to family. Given that he was new to the utility industry and having to start a new career in a new industry it enabled him to learn all phases of the utility business. He worked alongside Dennis Wanless and Bob Kermes as well as many others.



Tom Canter, Duane, and Charlie McNeil at Duane's retirement party.

Duane and Dennis worked very closely with the power plants as they were just converting to PRB coal. The PRB coal was a bit dustier than Illinois coal the plants were used to, requiring major modifications to be made in the handling systems. There were many trips made to the PRB so the plants managers could see firsthand how to do it. Convincing the company to build rapid discharge coal cars was also a challenge, but Duane knew that having employees crawling under the cars provided by the railroads to shut the doors with their feet was a nonstarter.

Duane earned a MBA at The College of St Thomas in St Paul, Minnesota in 1990 while working for Northern States Power. While he thought that his lack of plant experience may limit his advancement opportunities at the utility, he was offered a job in NSP's economic evaluation group but was pulled back in the Fuels group by Lou Matis who wanted him to run the coal procurement business. This ultimately led to being responsible for procurement of all fuels including nuclear, wood, garbage, oil, and gas. Ordering 10 million gallons of #2 oil was pretty heady even if it could be burned in a day or two.

## THE FINAL MOVE

There were several attempts at mergers during the 1990's by NSP, and in 2000 Duane was part of a small group asked to work on the merger with New Century Energy which had resulted from an earlier merger of the Public Service of Colorado and Southwestern Public Service. The combined companies became Xcel Energy. In the process Duane met and had the pleasure to work with Karen Roberts, Barry Johnson, Gerry Zimmerman, Steve Reed, Steve Bush, and others. Duane was transferred to Denver to become Managing Director, Coal for the new company.

After several years at Xcel, it became clear that coal was not going to be the focus of the company in the future. Duane began seeking other opportunities in the industry and as good fortune would have it, he was offered the CEO position at Western Fuels Association (WFA). Back in Isle, the local dairy and utility





Coal industry professionals pretending to be fly fishermen.



Enjoying a round of golf at Pebble Beach this past Spring!

industries were co-ops so he had some familiarity with how they worked. It was a good fit for him. Everything he had done in his career was what was required at WFA.

Most people will remember Duane's tenure at WFA for the rate case involving WFA, Basin Electric and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway. After 10 years of litigation that included a favorable ruling from the STB in 2009, a settlement was finally reached in May of 2015. The result was a mutually beneficial contract that will ensure favorable railway transportation rates for WFA members for years to come.

### INDUSTRY INVOLVEMENT

Duane has always believed that the best results come from joining forces with others. It's true when a group needs more leverage to lobby for resources or equitable treatment. Educating each other is also a big benefit in working with others, as no one person has all of the knowledge and experience. He also believes that each of us must be engaged and provide leadership in an industry we believe in and that supports us. This is why he joined WCTA and its successor organization the NCTA.

He was honored to serve on the NCTA board with some very special people like Betsy Monseu, Dan Fleming, Steve Holloway, Dave Warneke and many more and will always miss



Relaxing with Mike Shaw after a hard day's "work".

those no longer with us like Dave Laffere, Rod Wolf, and Ron Boesen. His only regret was only seeing everyone twice a year at the conferences however even that was enough to make some lifelong friends.

Duane's first WCTA meeting was at the Westin Mission Hills Golf Resort in Rancho Mirage. There were many supplier sponsored events over the years that were great fun, from the Greek restaurant party sponsored by Peabody in Palm Springs, the night at Briarhurst Manor in Manitou Springs sponsored by Arch, in San Antonio at Howling at the Moon and the live band provided by Peabody the most recent outing in Tucson. Those were memorable events because they were spent having fun with great people, another great benefit of joining forces with others.

Duane was also very involved with other organizations throughout his career including the WCTL where he served as President for several years, the Colorado Mining Association where he served as Chairman in 2014, and the BNSF's Customer Advisory Board, at least until the Laramie River Rate case.

### DENVER IS HOME NOW

Duane Richards retired as CEO of WFA in June of 2015. He and Donna plan to stay in Denver with Amie and granddaughter Grace, who will be an Arapahoe High senior next year. There are still plenty of reasons to visit Minnesota though. All of Duane's siblings and family members still live there and Kelly and her husband, a Marine and National Guard veteran, live in small town in NW Minnesota where they own and operate several small businesses. Their daughter Michaelah attends St John's University in Queens New York majoring in Asian studies and languages.

As far as retirement goes, Duane's to-do list includes traveling and visiting with friends, golfing, skiing, bike riding, and playing slow pitch softball and neighborhood tennis. The past summer Duane traveled to St Louis to play golf with Mike Shaw and Jeff Maier, Paul Freund was invited but was unable to join the group. He may do some consulting if opportunity comes up but honestly he may have trouble finding the time! Duane claims, "I never really had any hobbies as all of my jobs required extensive traveling and long commutes." But now who knows he might take one up. ▲