

Tasker Funeral Home

Herbert McWilliams Pickett

165

(April 02, 1943 - August 03, 2018)

Rollinsford - Herbert McWilliams Pickett, 75, passed away on August 3, 2018, surrounded by his family. Born April 2, 1943, in Baltimore, MD, he was the son of the late Rev. Herbert E. Pickett, Jr., and his wife Sally (Geer) Pickett.



Herb was a celebrated Senior Research Scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL).

After graduating from Williams College in 1965, where he was an avid member of the swim team and outing club, Herb went on to earn his PhD in physical chemistry at the University of California, Berkeley in 1970. Subsequent academic appointments included Harvard University and University of Texas at Austin before joining JPL in Pasadena, CA, in 1978. Herb continued his intellectual journey even after his retirement as a Research Professor in Chemistry at Wesleyan University beginning in 2009.

During his illustrious three decades as a team leader and senior research scientist at JPL, Herb pioneered numerous advances in the field of molecular spectroscopy. He authored or co-authored over one hundred publications. His pathbreaking research was the focus of two dedicated issues of the *Journal of Molecular Spectroscopy*. Among other wide-reaching impacts, the measurement instruments he helped develop for atmospheric research satellites ultimately informed policy efforts to close the hole in the ozone layer, and a computer program for spectroscopy analysis he debuted in 1991 remains a critical tool for specialists to the present day. (More information about Herb's research is available at this link.)

Known for saying “My work is my hobby,” Herb taught his children to follow their passion while modeling the continued discipline and dedication that entails. He also enjoyed camping, hiking, ice cream, swimming, traveling, and was a leading member of the Church of the Lighted Window in La Canada, CA, and later an active participant in the choir and Men's Club at the First Parish Congregational Church in Dover. He retired to the New England cottage he'd always dreamed of, and spent his final years in the caring hands of Watson Fields Assisted Living.

This love of life – and a corresponding contrarian streak – defined his character nearly as much as his humor, kindness and curiosity. So when Herb was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2004, the path forward was immediately obvious: enroll in dancing lessons. And no matter how much his health deteriorated in the ensuing years, his determination and grace never did.

Herb is survived by his wife Nancy (Whitehead) Pickett of Rollinsford, NH; his children Tim Pickett and wife Mary of Flagstaff, AZ; Jennifer Daniels and husband Chad of Lee, NH; and James Pickett and wife Jessica of Pittsburgh, PA; four grandchildren Melanie, Clayton, Claire, and Luke; as well as his siblings Emily Grice of Bainbridge Island, WA, Alice Pickett-Hale of Concord, NH, David Pickett of Vineland, NJ, and Paul Pickett of Olympia, WA, and their respective families.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday August 18, 2018 at 11AM at the First Parish Congregational Church, 218 Central Avenue, Dover, NH 03820. In lieu of flowers, consider a gift to Parkinson's research at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center (www.d-h.org/parkinsons) in his honor.