

A photo from the 2015 Snow Goose Festival in Chico, California, shows Tom Richardson, his daughter, Suzy (right), and Suzy's daughters — Jill (left) and Amy — between them.

PASSING ALONG THE PASSION

Family's interest in duck stamps in third generation

(The following is a tribute to the legacy of Tom Richardson, by Cliff Feldheim, with help from Tom's wife, Nancy, and daughter, Suzy.)

I bought my first duck stamps and duck stamp prints from Tom Richardson in 2003. Tom's excitement to show me the world of duck stamps progressed as he started to show me old hunting and fishing licenses.

Tom continued to reach out to me for years. Sometimes, it was simply an email or phone call, other times an unsolicited envelope would show up in the mail with a stamp or old fishing license. When I purchased a California Native Species stamp and print from him, he included a second one from the next year that he thought I might like. Of course, that resulted in another phone call, and he continued to develop the passion in me to collect duck stamps, and other hunting and fishing collectibles.

Unfortunately, Tom passed away December 18, 2022, and he didn't get the opportunity to work with me in my role as the president of the National Ducks Stamp Collectors Society, but I would like to take some space here in Duck Tracks to share his story and how his daughter is carrying on the tradition.

The first duck stamps Thomas H. Richardson (born February 25, 1937) ever saw belonged to his father, an avid sportsman. They hunted ducks together on ponds along the San Francisco Bay. Tom knew you had to have one of these fine stamps to hunt, but he didn't know he would someday become a collector and dealer known to many people in the world of duck stamps.

Tom's father delivered mail for U.S. Post Office Department from 1941 to 1971 on a rural route near San Leandro, California, where the family lived. Tom graduated from Humboldt State College in Arcata, California with a bachelor of science degree in wildlife management.

In 1959, Tom and his wife, Nancy, moved to Kodiak, Alaska, where he had accepted a job as a fisheries biologist with the newly formed Alaska State Department of Fish and Game. While living in Wrangell, his son, Alan, was born, followed by



A first day cover for the Golden Gate Exposition stamp addressed to Tom when he was only 2 years old.

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daughter, Suzy.

From 1959 to 1970 the demands of family life didn't leave much time for stamp collecting, but in 1970 the family moved to the small city of Red Bluff, in northern California. There, Tom introduced the kids to the local stamp club, for which he eventually became president.

In 1971, California issued its first duck stamp, and Tom began his passion for duck stamps. For decades, he frequented Northern California bait shops to gather used hunting and fishing licenses they had saved for him.

While living in Sacramento from 1977 to 2002, Tom sold stamps at numerous wildlife shows around Northern California. His primary and favorite show was Sacapex (run by the Sacramento Stamp Club), where his table was positioned at the entrance. There, he made many friends, acquaintances, and customers – relationships that lasted decades.

With retirement in 1995, Tom's stamps and collectibles kept him busy and gave him a great deal of enjoyment. After moving to Chico in 2003, he developed an online business buying and selling duck stamps and prints, U.S. stamps, licenses, Indian Reservation stamps, postcards, old photos, and other paper collectibles (including first day covers, first flight covers, space covers, revenue stamps, and old stamps from Hong Kong).

One fun quirk of Tom's business model was that he refused to accept orders through his website. That's because he preferred to talk to his customers on the phone!

Suzy collected stamps as a kid and sometimes helped her dad set up the booth at shows. Tom also let Suzy help him with his website and organize his Indian Reservation stamps.

As Tom got older and once Suzy's kids were grown and she retired, she told him she wanted to continue with his business one day, but Tom didn't believe her. He worried about what would happen to his collection. When he became ill in 2022, Suzy says she was able to tell him once and for all that "I'm gonna do your stamps" and she said, "I think he finally accepted it and found peace in that."

Following his passing in December 2022, Suzy brought carloads of albums, boxes, binders, folders, envelopes, reference books, prints, catalogs, and more back to her house. Besides in his office, Tom had material in closets, drawers, shelves, under the beds, in the shed, file cabinets, in safes, everywhere.

"I still can't fathom where and how he got so much," Suzy said.

Since January 2023, Suzy has been sorting, organizing, researching, and learning. Fortunately, Tom graded, identified, and labeled almost everything. She now devotes four to five hours a day in her "stamp room," learning the lingo: average through superb, disturbed gum, no gum, original gum, regum, perf seps, nibbled perfs, signed, unsigned, artist-signed. She said she still has her work cut out for her trying to identify duck species, but she's getting there.

"I had no idea how much I'd enjoy talking to dad's customers as well as new customers," Suzy said. "There's a fair amount of email and texts, but it's the phone conversations that affect me the most. I'm lucky my husband, Nick, doesn't get jealous when he finds talking to other men on the phone."

Suzy is maintaining the website trducks.com and selling through eBay.

Thank you, Suzy, maybe you will light the passion in some young person, just as your dad did with me 20 years ago. Thank you for carrying on the stamp collecting traditions!