



Richard Lewis Runyon

December 24, 1950 - May 7, 2015

Richard “Rich” Lewis Runyon, 64, of Cheney, WA died in an airplane crash on Thursday, May 7th, 2015 in Spokane, WA. Rich was born on his family farm near Hillsboro, Iowa on December 24th, 1950 to Billy and Ruth Runyon. He was the second oldest of four siblings: Doris, Daryl, Robert and Larry. Rich attended a one-room schoolhouse until high school and went on to attend Iowa State University where he was in ROTC and majored in aerospace engineering. After graduation he entered the Air Force in June of 1973 and went into pilot training at Laughlin Air Force Base near Del Rio, Texas. While at ISU, he met his wife, Karen Fagerhaug and they were married on June 1st, 1974 in Sioux City, Iowa. While stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base from 1978-1982 Rich completed a Masters Degree in Mathematics at Eastern Washington University. While serving in the Air Force, Rich was an instructor in the T-38, flew the UH-1N helicopter at Fairchild for Search and Rescue, and attended the Naval Test Pilot School in Patuxent River, Maryland where he graduated top of his class. He retired from Edwards Air Force Base in California with the rank of Lt. Colonel after 20 years of active service. Following his retirement in 1993, Rich and Karen plus their two daughters Erin and Jamie, returned to the Cheney area and spent a year building their new home, The Flying R Ranch. After a few years teaching at local colleges, he was hired as a test pilot and engineer at Rocket Engineering in 1997. He was a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association and enjoyed flying to Oshkosh, WI to attend their annual air show. Rich not only loved to fly but also

enjoyed building airplanes and taking friends for rides in his plane which he kept in his personal hanger on the ranch. He was physically active and ran several marathons and more than 20 Bloomsday races! On the ranch Rich was often found tending his herd of sheep, nurturing his home garden with help from his granddaughter and caring for all the animals that their family has collected over the years. A life-long devoted Christian and member of Cheney United Methodist Church, Rich lived his faith through service to others. Whether it was neighbors in need of help around their property or family projects or requests for volunteers at church, Rich was always eager and willing to lend a hand. Those who know him well remember him for his never-ending patience and non-anxious presence even when training novice pilots. Rich is survived by his wife, Karen and daughters Erin (Paul Jennings and grand-daughter Ava) and Jamie (Adam Weingart). Memorial services will be held Saturday, May 16th at 10:30am at Cheney United Methodist Church at 204 4th St. in Cheney (reception to follow) and Rocket Engineering at Felts Field at 5 p.m.

Tribute Wall

RW

“ *this is soo late. Ive thought of him often. My T-38 instructor. Great instructor. So sad that he has left us. I would have given anything to see and talk to him again. I flew safely for 50 years and thank Rich for all he patiently taught me. Rick Wasbotten*

rick wasbotten - October 09, 2025 at 11:07 PM

DH

“ *To Rich's family and friends -- I had the pleasure of working with Rich since 2009 at Rocket. His mind was brilliant, his demeanor gracious, and his honesty refreshing. I only knew Rich through working with the repair station, but had our paths crossed differently, I would be justifiably proud to have called him my good friend. God bless you all, and may you find comfort that Rich is still in your hearts, and standing with God.*

David Hartson - July 14, 2015 at 03:56 PM

SD

“ *What an amazing man and a model life lived to the fullest.*

Scott Dobbins - June 10, 2015 at 02:21 PM

SR

“ *Dear Karen and Family, my most heartfelt sympathy to you all. All my love and prayers are with you at this time.*

Scarlett Riebold - May 15, 2015 at 04:51 PM

BF

“ *So sorry for your loss.*

Brad & Gayle Foien - May 15, 2015 at 04:45 PM

JS

“ Karen and family, I will always remember Rich coming up to Loon Lake to rescue my horses when it was flooding. The look on his face when I was standing in thigh high water and him looking at his barn boots and saying, "I guess I should have worn my waders". But he helped me load three horses and took them to the ranch where Karen and Rich gracefully kept them for 6 months. Remember the good times and laughter. Love you all and you are in my thoughts and prayers, Jeri Schmidt

Jeri Schmidt - May 13, 2015 at 07:08 PM

TB

“ You are in our hearts, thoughts and prayers. We are so sorry for your loss.

Tom and Tomi Briggeman - May 11, 2015 at 10:08 PM