



William Richard (Dick) Laidlaw, 93, of Greensboro, North Carolina, peacefully passed away on Saturday, June 1, 2013 at the Moses Cone Medical Center after a brief illness.

Dick was born on March 21, 1920, in Spokane, Washington, to William Henry and Ruth (McKowen) Laidlaw. He graduated from Highland Park High School in Dallas, Texas where he first discovered a lifelong love for bagpipes and then from Stanford University in 1941 where his swimming talents earned him a place on the college team. After graduation he worked briefly in the family publishing business, but when World War II broke out, Dick enlisted in the [Army](#).

He was trained in field artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma and then volunteered for the paratroops. He was assigned to the 456th Parachute Test Battery in Morocco, where he soon learned that local mules were much smaller than the Missouri mules for which the three-piece guns were designed. To improve the accuracy of unit artillery fire, he taught himself trigonometry from textbooks. In Italy, he was assigned as a replacement officer on the Anzio Beachhead in the 463rd Parachute Field Artillery unit, supporting the 1st Special Service Force (Devils Brigade) ultimately taking part in the liberation of Rome. The 463rd PFA parachuted into southern France in Operation Dragoon, participated in operations in the Italian Alps and ended up in bivouac in Mourmelon, France.

The German breakout in the Ardennes began just four days later. The 463rd volunteered and joined the 101st Airborne Division in the defense of Bastogne. His unit was one of many surrounded by advancing German troops at the Battle of the Bulge. The unit traveled on through Germany all the way to Bad Reichenhall and, years later, Dick remembered the concentration camp survivors whom they met on the road. By the end of the war, he had earned promotions to the rank of captain along with a [Bronze Star](#). Before returning home, Dick attended St. Andrews University where he continued his bagpipe studies.

After returning to the States he entered the Foreign Service where he served first in Ecuador and then later in Mexico City. There he met and married his wife, Alice Slater, in 1950. Their first child was born there. The State Department sent him to the University of California at Berkeley to study economics and he was then assigned to Oslo, Norway. Laidlaw's bagpipe skills came in handy when the British consulate in Oslo needed a piper for the coronation ceremonies for Queen Elizabeth. They were about to send all the way to Scotland for a piper when they discovered Richard.

Leaving the Foreign Service in 1953, Dick returned to the University of California at Berkeley where he completed a masters degree in Education. He then moved to Oxnard, California, where he taught civics and government to high school seniors and economics at Ventura College. In addition to teaching, he was also active in the community. He was President of the Ventura County Central Labor Council, coached the AAU swim program, served as President of the Oxnard Democratic Club and as chairman of the educational committee in charge of scholarships for the union and volunteered to help feed the homeless with his wife. He retired from teaching in 1978 to devote his time to gardening projects, swimming, bagpiping and travel. His wife, Alice, passed away in 1987.

In 1989 Dick moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, where he continued to swim, pipe and recreate a lush southern California garden. He enjoyed the company of his two local daughters (Ann and Jean Laidlaw) and their families as well as his out-of-town children and their families, neighbors and friends to whom he shared the joy and beauty of gardening, music, zoos, and life in the South. In 1992 he met and married Catherine (Monsees) Block, to whom he was married until her recent death in 2013. Throughout her lengthy final illness he was a devoted husband and caregiver.

Dick is survived by a brother, Kenneth Noblitt Laidlaw, and four children, Jean Slater Laidlaw, Sarah Laidlaw Tilevitz, Andrew McKowen Laidlaw and Ann Campbell Laidlaw, six wonderful grandchildren, Yael (Tilevitz) Lockerman, Chana Aliza Tilevitz, Julia Maria Sanchez Laidlaw, Timothy Andrew Laidlaw, Alice Laidlaw Williams, and Ryan Laidlaw Williams, and one exquisite great-grandchild, Meira Shoshana Lockerman. He was preceded in death by his first wife, Alice, and his second wife, Catherine.

Dick's life embodied the values of honor, education, love, and frugality. He and Alice educated four children on his teacher's salary, and imparted fundamental ideals of morality, kindness, lifelong learning and intellectual curiosity to them. Dick enjoyed two happy, consecutive, long-term marriages. As an Economist, he sought market discipline and as a Scot, he wanted the lowest price. Thrift guided every purchase decision.

A celebration of Dick Laidlaw's life will be held from 1:30 - 2:30 PM on Sunday, July 14, 2013, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greensboro, at 5603 Hilltop Road (at Guilford College Road) in Jamestown, NC 27282-9396. The Reverend F. Nelson Stover will be officiating.