

Brigadier General (USAF, Ret.) Richard L. Hughes, Ph.D., passed away suddenly and unexpectedly on January 11, 2026, leaving behind a legacy defined by service, integrity, and family.

Born on January 11, 1946, he grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area surrounded by books, family, and the everyday adventures of mid-century America. He often told the story of being at Disneyland on its opening day in 1955—when the park was still scrappy and the trees newly planted—and of shaking Walt Disney's hand on his first walk down Main Street. From the beginning, Rich noticed details and remembered them, instincts that later shaped him into a gifted teacher and mentor.

A graduate of the United States Air Force Academy (Class of 1967) Rich was named Outstanding Graduate in Psychology and Leadership. He earned a master's degree in psychology from the University of Texas at Austin and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Wyoming. Over decades of service at USAFA, he served as instructor, department head, and the Academy's 50th Permanent Professor.

After retiring in 1995, Rich continued developing leaders through his work at the Center for Creative Leadership and as a co-author of leadership books that continue to influence leadership education nationwide. He later returned to USAFA as a civilian, serving as Transformation Chair, and was promoted to Brigadier General in 2010.

At home, Rich's life was anchored by his 53-year marriage to Georgeann and his deep love for family. He was the proud father of three daughters and delighted in his eleven grandchildren. He rarely missed an opportunity to take photos of them—always trying to capture just one more moment. In recent years, he took up stained glass, creating annual handmade gifts for his grandchildren. He cheered faithfully for the Denver Broncos, remained a sanguine Colorado Rockies fan, and loved to travel. Most of all, Rich found joy in simple, meaningful pursuits that included giving tours at Glen Eyrie, time with his book club friends, regular 9 holes of golf, weekly Bible Study, and daily walks with his faithful golden retrievers.

Rich is survived by his wife, Georgeann; his three daughters, Anne Farrell (Joe) of Colorado Springs, Amy Lacina (Ben) of Charlotte, North Carolina, and Sarah Sandifer (Lane) of Fort Bragg, North Carolina; and his eleven grandchildren: Gabe (21), Makenna (19), Ford (17), Orion (11) Farrell; Kinsley (19), Hallie (17), Caroline (15), Emma Scout (10) Lacina; Brynn (14), Ellie (12), Mae (10) Sandifer. He is also survived by his brother, Larry Hughes (Claudine) of Pinole, California.

Rich lived with humility, curiosity, and a steady sense of purpose. He led not by position but by example. His influence will be felt for generations—through the leaders he shaped, the values he lived, and the family he cherished.

He is deeply loved, profoundly missed, and forever remembered.

A funeral service celebrating Rich's life will be held on Thursday, February 12, at 1:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs.