Richard "Rick" Williston

AUGUST 24, 2026

Richard “Rick” Williston

December 31, 1948 – August 24, 2026

Richard “Rick” Williston passed away peacefully in his own home on August 24, 2026, at the age of 77, having lived his life very much as he chose—freely, simply and, right to the end, on his own terms.

It is difficult to capture Rick in the conventional language of an obituary because his was a wonderfully colourful life, lived across many different chapters and shared with so many people along the way.

Born on New Year’s Eve in 1948, Rick came of age during an extraordinary time of social and cultural change. He carried much of the spirit of that generation throughout his life—a belief in freedom, a willingness to question convention, a curiosity about people and ideas, and an enduring interest in community and the possibility of creating a better world.

And back in the day, Rick knew how to have a good time.

Those who knew the younger Rick will remember someone who could be the life of the party. He was social and engaging, and there was music, laughter, adventure and undoubtedly more than a little mischief. Some of his friendships reached all the way back to his childhood and younger years in Kingston, while others were formed through the many chapters that followed.

Rick’s friendships mattered.

Over 77 years, people entered his life through different places, communities and interests. Some knew the young man who loved a party. Some knew the movie lover or the music lover. Some knew the idealist and free spirit. Some shared long conversations with him about the world and how it might be made better. Others simply knew him as a dear and longtime friend.

No one person was present for every chapter of Rick’s life. Each person who knew him carries a different piece of his story.

And there must be so many stories.

Music was woven throughout Rick’s life. The songs of his generation—and those that followed—spoke to many of the things that mattered to him: love, freedom, longing, rebellion, hope and the complicated business of being human.

Movies were another great love.

Film was far more than entertainment to Rick. It was art, storytelling, history and community. Movies and the people associated with that world were an important part of his life, and he held that community in very high regard. Going through the things he left behind has been a reminder to his family of just how much that world meant to him.

As the years passed, Rick’s life became simpler and more private, but he never stopped being Rick.

His independence was an important part of him, although perhaps independence is not quite the whole story. There was a gentleness and sensitivity to the way Rick moved through life. He loved people deeply while also needing the freedom to love them in his own way, and sometimes from a distance. He resisted obligation and many of the expectations we place on ourselves and one another.

One of his favourite expressions captured it perfectly:

“Don’t should on me, and I won’t should on you.”

It was funny when Rick said it, but there was also a philosophy underneath it. He believed people should have the freedom to be themselves.

Rick lived humbly and needed relatively little materially. Status and appearances were never particularly important to him. There was also a discipline beneath his free-spirited nature. In his younger years there was something of a work-hard, play-hard approach to life. In later years, that discipline became quieter.

He practiced meditation daily and found a deep sense of peace in the life he created for himself. As the years went by, his white hair grew longer, his blue eyes somehow seemed brighter, and there was a lightness about him that suited the person he had become.

Rick remained independent until the end, but independence did not mean an absence of love or connection. He cared deeply. He simply had his own way of carrying the people he loved with him.

There is something especially fitting that he was able to remain in his own home and live according to his own choices until the end.

Perhaps one of the strongest threads running through Rick’s life was family.

He spent countless hours researching his family tree, tracing branches through generations and searching for the people and stories that came before him. He preserved names, dates, relationships, photographs and histories so that future generations would know where they came from.

But Rick never wanted family members to simply become names on a piece of paper.

He wanted to know who they were.

What were they like? Who did they love? What did they believe in? What made them laugh? What did they experience? What stories did they leave behind?

For Rick, those were the things that transformed a family tree into a family.

His brother Danny held an especially important place in Rick’s heart. Danny died many years before him, and his loss remained with Rick throughout his life. That connection continued through Danny’s sons, Rick Blizzard and Jason Williston South, and through their children and the generations that followed. Those family bonds mattered deeply to Rick and were part of the larger family story he worked so hard to preserve.

Rick also carried a deep and enduring love for his sister, Carolyn. His own writings speak extensively of his love and care for her throughout the years. She remained an important part of the family story that meant so much to him, and it is especially meaningful that Carolyn will be among the family gathering together to celebrate Rick’s life and say farewell.

Rick was married to Sue Williston and was father to his daughters, Tamara and Marnie, and stepfather to Johnny Killick. He was a proud grandfather to Donovan, Jake and Katie. The family continued into the next generation through their children and through the children of Rick Blizzard and Jason Williston South as well—a growing family whose connections and stories mattered deeply to him.

To Rick, family was a long thread connecting those who came before with those living today and those still to come.

But Rick’s story was never made up of family alone.

His friends belong in this story too.

Some friendships lasted for decades, even reaching back to his childhood and younger years in Kingston. Others belonged to particular periods of his life. There

were people connected through movies and music, people with whom he shared ideas and interests, and people whose paths simply crossed his at the right time and who never forgot him.

All of those relationships are part of a life.

And that is why we would like this space to become more than an obituary.

Please feel free to share your stories and photographs here as we celebrate all the different pieces of Rick.

Whether you are family, a childhood friend from Kingston, someone who knew him back in the day, a friend from the film community, or someone who met him much later in life, your memories are welcome here.

Tell us about the Rick you knew.

Tell us about the parties and adventures, the friendships and conversations, the music and movies, the laughter and the mischief. Share the funny stories and the touching ones. Tell us something he once said that stayed with you, a place you went together, a moment you shared, or simply what it felt like to have Rick as part of your life.

There is no story too small, and no particular chapter of his life is more important than another.

In many ways, sharing these memories is exactly what Rick spent so much of his own life trying to do for the generations who came before us: making sure that people were remembered as people, rather than simply names and dates.

Now we have the opportunity to do the same for him.

Rick spent a lifetime tracing the stories of those who came before him because he understood something important:

A life is so much more than a name and two dates on a family tree.

Between those dates are the people we loved, the friendships we made, the places we called home, the music we listened to, the things we believed in, the mistakes and adventures, the laughter, the heartbreak, the parties, the ordinary days and the stories people continue telling after we’re gone.

Rick Williston had 77 years between his dates.

They were colourful ones.

And every person who knew him holds a piece of that story.

We hope you’ll help us remember all of it.

Family and friends are invited to come together to say farewell to Rick on Sunday, September 13, 2026, aboard the Star of Vancouver. It feels especially fitting that we will gather on the water beside Vancouver’s West End, a place that was such an important part of Rick’s life for so many years.

Messages of Condolence

I am so grateful dad lived as long as he did after surviving through so much including being shot (!)... i feel so fortunate to have known him all this time since 1991- the last years years were the absolute sweetest □□ !

— Marnie

Dad,There are so many things I could say about who you were, what you taught me, and how deeply I loved you, but perhaps the simplest is this: you made me make sense.You understood the parts of me that didn’t always fit neatly into the world. You gave me curiosity, a love of stories and history, a need to understand where we came from and why things matter. You taught me that a meaningful life doesn’t have to be a loud one. You showed me gentleness, humility, compassion, and the importance of remaining curious about people and the world.I will miss our conversations. I will miss your stories, your wonderfully complicated trails through history and family, your humour, and the way one question could take us somewhere completely unexpected.There is so much of you in me, and I understand that more clearly now than I ever did before.You once wrote, “Death seems such a heavy thing, but really it is not.” I’m still trying to believe that. Right now, losing you feels very heavy indeed.But I know this much: you will continue in the stories we tell, in the family you loved so deeply, in the questions you taught us to ask, and in all the pieces of you that live on in us.You made me make sense, Dad. And I will carry that gift—and you—with me for the rest of my days.Love always,Tammy

— Tammy

Rick was a truly beautiful human. Full of personality, sweet, fun and wise. We all looked so forward to when he would come home to Saint John to visit. And normally that would take place at the heart of our family, 252 Golden Grove Road.He told me many stories about our aunts and uncles. One stuck in my mind. Our uncle Elmer built his and Florence’s home from the ground up, and He remembered how fascinated he was at how Elmer had installed the kitchen sink with a sprayer for Florence to do dishes. He just thought that was the best. Or the story he told of my Mom, his aunt Nancy and her determination. He said he witnessed and watched as she debated with our grandmother, her mother Mary, about going camping with friends. Grammy Bond said a hard no, well as hard a no as Grammy ever would . And my mom just kept debating back and forth. She didn’t get her way but he was impressed at how well she tried. Memories such as these are so dear to me, I love hearing about Grammy, Florence, my mom, Stephen, Danny and everyone. He also had memories of holding our Grammys hand walking uptown where aunt Florence worked at a French pastry shop and Florence making sure he had a sweet before he left. Rick was just so much to many people I love him so much. He always had time to talk, listen and offer wise words. Sending lots of love, hugs and thoughts to Marnie, Tamara and families. LoveMary-Jane

— Mary-Jane McKay (Hoyt)

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https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/richard-rick-williston

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