

Dick Held in Memoriam  
By Bud Held with contributions from Ron Johnson

Richard Anthony Held passed away March 18, 2018 at age 91. Dick was my brother. We did not always agree on everything. We had a few squabbles and we were very competitive athletically during our childhood, but it is hard to imagine that there could ever be a better brother. Dick respected, supported and admired me throughout our entire lives.

In the roll of the genetic dice, Dick came out with a super abundance of intellectual ability along with a highly competitive spirit and an intense desire to succeed in athletics while I ended up with more academic persistence and the majority of the athletic ability. He could easily have pursued an outstanding career in science or engineering, but his passion led him in another direction. When his college baseball dreams did not materialize he became a successful electrician, and then, when the opportunity to build javelins arose he eagerly took it on. He soon discovered that not only could he make good javelins, he could make the best javelins in the world and compete successfully with major companies like Sandvik and Nordic. During a period of 25 years after Dick started making javelins every world record javelin throw was made with a "Dick Held" javelin. A further satisfying benefit from his javelin making was that he got to associate and work with the best javelin throwers in the world. During his javelin making years Dick so crafted the aerodynamic characteristics of his javelins that meet officials were concerned that they were flying so far that they were becoming dangerous. The IAAF rule makers tried for several years, without much success, to modify the javelin specifications so as to lessen the danger. Though Dick smiled with satisfaction at their failure, he eventually explained to them how to change the specifications to make the javelin a safer sport. The new specifications which resulted have been in effect since 1986.

Dick gave up javelin making for a time and moved to Cedar City Utah where he took up kayak making. There his competitive spirit dominated. He called his company "White Water" and made racing kayaks. Not only were his kayaks considered to be among the best in

the world and coveted by elite kayak racers, but Dick himself began racing them. An aging man in his mid 50's Dick competed head to head with younger men, often beating them.

Later in his life, Dick returned to Javelin making. In the late 1970's to 1982, the Dick Held javelin was produced in Jefferson Iowa, under AMF American. Dick did not like the way they were making the javelin with his name on it, so the manufacturing of the Dick Held javelin was moved to Carson City, NV where AMF Pacer was making the best track and field equipment in the world. Along with that, Dick and Betty moved to Carson City to bring the Dick Held javelin back to the quality of javelins Dick desired (#1 in the world). This is where Dick met and took Ron Johnson (19 yrs old) under his direction. In 1983 and 1984 the world record was broken by both Tom Petranoff (327'2") and Uwe Hohn (343' 9 3/4") The 1984 olympic gold medal was won throwing the Dick Held Custom III javelin. In 1987, AMF Pacer was sold to Gill Athletics where Dick stepped away once again, but not for long. In 1988-89, Dick returned to Javelin making where he worked with OTE, a track and field manufacturer in Eugene, Oregon. Ron joined Dick again and through the 1990's the OTE Competition Tailwind javelin was thrown for many world records by Jan Zelezny who still holds the 1986 rules record (323' 10"). In 1996 at the Atlanta Olympic games, the OTE Competition Tailwind Javelin was thrown for the gold medal. Dick not only perfected their "new spec." javelin, he also developed and introduced the "High Moment" discus. It took a few years, but the heavy rim weight discus eventually became the discus of choice among world class discus throwers. In the 1996 Atlanta Olympic games, the 2k OTE High Moment discus was thrown for the gold medal. Dick retired again in 1999 after OTE was sold to Gill Athletics.

Dick and Betty retired to Sun City Arizona where Dick still kept an interest in javelins and discuses. While Betty had a few failings, Dick never seemed to recognize them and he loved her dearly to the end. When Betty died about a decade ago Dick was considerably depressed.

Dick's friend Juris Terauds, who worked with Dick for many years perfecting javelin aerodynamics, was concerned about Dick's depression and he talked Dick into a new venture with a carbon fiber javelin. Dick and Juris put several of these new "high moment" javelins together and enthusiastically tested them with some

considerable success, but more work was needed. Dick was in his late 80's at the time and it soon became evident that dementia was setting in to the point where he would no longer be able to carry on with the project. Dick was diagnosed with Alzheimers during his 89th year and spent the rest of his life in secure care facilities. During the first year, while he still knew who he was, he deeply resented being locked in.

Dick was a brilliant, fiercely independent, intensely honest, highly competitively and stubbornly self confident man. He never took advantage of a friend, a worker or a competitor. He never cheated on his taxes or on his customers. His tax motto was "Pay what you think you owe and a little bit more" and his customer motto was "If your product is bad, give a full refund." His most troubling failing was that he sometimes let his competitive nature and stubborn self confidence get in the way of rationality. His most frequent failing was that he could not resist exaggerating the facts of the stories he told, and that exaggeration usually grew with the age of the story.

Dick was not afraid of death. After a stroke in his early 80's Dick said "I faced death and I was not afraid. It was actually a pleasant and comfortable experience."

Dick never made a lot of money. It was not in his life plan. He followed his heart and desires and adjusted to wherever that took him. He had a satisfying life.

I am proud of my brother. He is now gone, but am still here and proud of who he was, what he did and what he stood for.