



## Dennis Burton Leeper

May 3, 1941 - September 26, 2023

Dennis Burton Leeper, (May 3, 1941-September 26, 2023), was predeceased by his parents Lowell Leeper, Ruth Wells Smith and May K Leeper. He is survived by wife, Mardys Ulan Leeper, his children Kimberly Leeper Buss ( David Frankel), Lisa Evans, James Leeper (Joanne Corcoran), Laura English (Chuck), Richard K Leeper (Mary Gray), Lauren Brooke Yattaw (Demian), and Monica Brooke, eleven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He also is survived by siblings Suzanne Linenberger, Phyllis Morris (Ricky), and Steve Wells.

Dennis spent his childhood between California, Virginia and Iowa. He graduated with a BS in Zoology and PhD in Radiation Biology from the University of Iowa. After post doctoral research in Colorado, he came to Philadelphia as founding director of the Laboratory of Experimental Radiation Oncology at Thomas Jefferson University and Hospital. His role as researcher and professor contributed to the understanding of cancer at a cellular level and the development of cancer treatments. He was cofounder of the North American Hyperthermia Group, and initiated collaborative research in basic science both nationally and worldwide.

Dennis cherished the time he spent with his children and family. He loved holiday observances with family and friends, vacations at the family cottage in Maine, photography, travel, folk music festivals, and garage sales. He also

showed his love of children as youth group leader at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County.

Dennis was a strong supporter of racial justice, liberal politics, serving for some time as a Democratic Committee Person. He was a cheerful life-loving person who brought guidance and joy to many. He will be sorely missed.

Contributions in his memory may be made to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County, 145 W. Rose Tree Road, Media, PA 19063 or the Leeper Scholarship Fund, 1686 Cedar Rd., Lineville, IA 50147-8525 EIN 47-0818991

Memorial Service will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County on Saturday December 16th. at 11 AM, followed by a reception.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

DEC 16. 11:00 AM (ET)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County  
145 W Rose Tree Rd.  
Media, PA 19063

# Tribute Wall

RL

“Dennis is a first cousin, and I grew up with him in Southern Iowa. He was seven years older than I and he was more like an older brother. We both attended a one room school in Pleasanton, IA that had a population of about 200 people. As we moved on thru elementary and high school, we both shared a love for science. I remember many conversations with Dennis on topics in biology and chemistry. Dennis introduced me to the topic of biological evolution, and I remember how excited I was when I started understanding the fundamentals of that subject. He also introduced me to the fact that matter consists of atoms and molecules. Dennis helped me get started doing chemistry experiments as a very young boy. One topic that he explained to me was electrolysis. I remember going to the local drug store when I was ten years old and buying a paper bag full of copper sulfate complete with a skull and crossbones on the label. I got a battery, and I started electroplating copper on almost any metal object I could find in the house. I remember Dennis also encouraged me to understand the fundamental chemistry behind the experiments and what was really going on in the copper sulfate water solution. With help from Dennis, I learned about chemical oxidation-reduction reactions at a very young age. I also remember when I was in 6th grade impressing the local high school chemistry teacher with my knowledge of oxidation-reduction chemical reactions. This was all due to the encouragement and mentoring by Dennis. As I got into high school and college I became very interested in physics and the fundamental structure of atoms and elementary particles. This all cumulated in me going to graduate school and getting a PhD in elementary particle physics. I owe a great debt to Dennis in that his mentoring and encouragement led me to my lifetime career as a physicist.

*Dennis, please rest in peace and I dearly miss you.*

*Ramon Leeper  
Los Alamos National Laboratory  
Los Alamos, New Mexico*

**Ramon Leeper** - December 15, 2023 at 12:41 PM

LL

“ Personally, my research career has benefited tremendously from Dennis' teaching, support, and guidance. His NCI program project grants, with Dr. Jerry Glickson as one of the project leaders, jump-started my career in cancer imaging since I entered the field in the fall, 2004. I remember I would go with Jerry to attend his weekly program project meetings in Jefferson University. The optical redox imaging of melanoma xenografts data, obtained in collaboration with the group of Dr. Britton Chance at Penn, was first presented and discussed at one of these meetings and appreciated by Dennis very much. This data was later included as an essential component in my first first-authored PNAS paper and shaped my future research direction.

Denis had always been very kind, supportive, and gave junior researchers valuable advice on research with his wide research knowledge, expertise, and decades of research experiences. For example, during my early years before I published any papers in the field of cancer imaging, once Dennis told me: "the best research note is a paper published". His words motivated me to get research work published. In the recent several years, my group has been facing a serious grant challenge. Multiple grant proposals of mine repeatedly failed to score well with the review panels of NIH. Dennis always encouraged me to keep trying and lent his help by discussing the grant design and approaches and editing the proposals. A cancer metabolism grant proposal Dennis helped me to develop since 2016 had failed 10 times. I am sure Dennis would be very happy to hear the great news -- that this grant proposal finally made it at the 11th submission and has been awarded by NIH in the fall this year.

In short, Dennis impacted my research life as a great scientist and a dear mentor, which I will remember forever with gratitude.

May Dennis rest in peace in heaven.

Lin Z. Li

*Univ of Penn*

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**LIN Z LI** - December 12, 2023 at 04:48 PM

CB

“ *Dennis was the long-time Secretary-Treasurer of the Thomas Jefferson University Chapter of Sigma Xi. I worked with him for many years in the planning of our annual student research day. Dennis was both institutional memory and "let figure out how to do this". He was one of a kind and was always able to link seemingly unrelated scientific topics by asking one curious question. But on top of his intellect, he had a servant's heart. We will miss you, Dennis. Mardys, thank you for sharing him with us!*

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**Carol Beck** - October 02, 2023 at 06:12 PM



“ *I served for many years with Dennis on the Institutional Review Board of the American College of Radiology. A man of keen intellect, wide interests and a strong moral compass, he was a delight to work with. May he eternal reward be abundant.*  
*Patricia Talone*

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**Patricia Talone** - October 01, 2023 at 01:15 PM

EB

“ I think for the first time I'm at a loss for words. Dennis is an indescribable person. He married Mardys, my husband's aunt, side by side raised my husband's, basically sisters, with love and affection like they were his own children. He was amazing to my mother and father in law and was a true Uncle in every sense of the word to my husband Marc Brooke. He welcomed me immediately into the family and became such a big piece of my life. He visited my father in law when he was dying, one of the few and showed compassion to everyone. I will miss his hugs and attention but I'm happy he's with my father in law and brother in law in heaven. I will always love and remember him with a smile on my face because if you remember him any other way he'd be sad. Until we meet again just know that I'm blessed to have ever known you. I love you and will truly miss you and your amazing heart ❤️  
Elizabeth Brooke

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**Elizabeth Brooke** - October 01, 2023 at 12:15 AM

PS

“ Dennis was a great educator, research mentor, family man, and about the best colleague and/or close friend anyone could hope for. He worked tirelessly to help others succeed, and gave credit to everyone around him. We are all deeply saddened by the passing of this great man.

*If I can highlight just one facet of his character, I would applaud his persistence in recording and promoting the significance of people and activities around him. For instance, his dedication to the preservation of “future historically significant people and events”. From his four decades of leading the Society of Thermal Medicine History Committee, Dennis leaves behind an extensive photographic record of exceptional scientists - fully inclusive of Award winners, Young Investigators, and groups of collaborators of all age and discipline. His presence will be missed greatly, but at least we have a photographic record of his precious time among us.*

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**Paul Stauffer** - September 28, 2023 at 03:10 PM

SC

“ Sharon Carter lit a candle in memory of Dennis Burton Leeper



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**Sharon Carter** - September 28, 2023 at 01:50 PM