Sossoman
Funeral Home & Crematory Center
5th Generation Family Owned & Operated Since 1949.



George Richard "Richard" Mode

Sept. 10, 1948 - Nov. 25, 2026

George Richard "Richard" Mode, 78, of Morganton, North Carolina, passed away on November 25, 2026.

Born on September 10, 1948, in Glen Alpine, North Carolina, Richard devoted his life to family, education, conservation, and public service. A lifelong resident of Burke County, he became one of North Carolina's most respected conservation leaders, working tirelessly to protect clean water, wildlife habitat, public lands, and outdoor traditions for future generations.

Richard was the son of George Marion Mode and Louise Dale Mode, both of whom preceded him in death.

After earning a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Technology from Appalachian State University, Richard began his career in the Burke County school system, teaching furniture manufacturing and drafting while coaching football and track. He later spent more than 30 years in the home furnishings industry, owning and managing Quaker Meadows Furniture and Mode Furniture Warehouse and building a successful career as a manufacturer's representative and sales leader with T.L. Bayne Company. He developed sales teams and territories across North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky and was known throughout the industry for his leadership and

mentorship.

While successful in business, Richard's greatest passion was conservation. He was the founding president of the Table Rock Chapter of Trout Unlimited and went on to serve as North Carolina Council Chairman, Southeast Vice President, First Vice President, President and Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Board of

National Trout Unlimited. He also served for two decades on the Board of the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, represented the organization to the National Wildlife Federation, worked as a National Wildlife Federation consultant and outreach coordinator, and served on the Board of Directors of the Resource Institute in Winston-Salem.

Throughout more than five decades of conservation leadership, Richard helped advance efforts to protect trout streams, fisheries, wildlife habitat, forests, rivers, and public lands. He was especially proud of bringing hunters, anglers, conservationists, business leaders, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies together to find practical solutions to conservation challenges.

His dedication earned numerous honors, including the 2017 National Wildlife Federation Conservation Leadership Award, the 2007 Budweiser/National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Conservationist of the Year Award, the 2007 American Fisheries Society North Carolina Chapter Fisheries Conservation Award, the 1990 Raleigh News & Observer Tar Heel of the Week Award, the 1989 North Carolina Wildlife Federation Governor's Conservationist of the Year Award, the 1984 North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission District Conservation Award, and the 1975 National Trout Unlimited Conservationist of the Year Award.

Richard is survived by his beloved wife, Julia Harris Mode; his son, William Richard Mode and wife Tara Saunders Mode; his daughter, Kathleen McKeithan and husband Paul Dee McKeithan of Apex, North Carolina; granddaughters Gracie Mode, Alison McKeithan and Samantha McKeithan.

Richard's life was defined by service, leadership, and a deep love for the natural resources of North Carolina and the people who shared them. He believed conservation succeeded when people came together around a common purpose, and he spent a lifetime building those partnerships. His legacy lives on in the waters,

forests, wildlife, organizations, and people he helped protect and inspire.

A casual Celebration of Life will be held at 2:00pm, Sunday, December 6, 2026 at the Morganton Community House, 120 N King St, Morganton, NC 28655.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that memorial contributions be made to the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, ncwf.org; Table Rock Chapter of Trout Unlimited Chapter #219 in Morganton; Casting for Hope, castingforhope.org. These organizations were close to Richard's heart and reflect the conservation, community service, and outdoor traditions he championed throughout his life.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.