

Dr. Henry Leopold Richter, 99, passed away on August 12, 2026, in Escondido, California. Dr. Richter was a pioneer in space exploration for the United States. Working for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) in Pasadena, California, he was part of the team which put the first US satellite, Explorer 1, successfully into orbit in January 1958.

Henry was born in Long Beach, California, on June 14, 1927, the eldest of Henry L. Richter, Sr., and Catherine Moore Richter's two children. Early on he showed an aptitude for the sciences. When he was seven years old, his parents turned their dining room into a chemistry lab for him. Growing up in Long Beach, Henry attended schools in the Long Beach public school system. When he was 12 years old, the family moved to Rolling Hills, California. As a teenager Henry had a strong singing voice and joined the St. Lukes Choristers, the men and boys choir of the St. Lukes's Episcopal Church in Long Beach. The choir did a lot of motion picture work and concerts, the most notable was in the movie "Mrs. Miniver" in 1942. Henry became an amateur ham radio operator, W6VZA, a hobby that became part of the foundation of his professional career. Henry graduated from Narbonne High School in 1945, with honors, receiving the first medal for science from Bausch & Lomb in the school's history.

After high school, Henry enlisted in the US Navy. He went to Chicago, Illinois for training and there met his first wife, Marilyn Wood. They were married in Chicago in 1947, and then settled in Pasadena, California. After they returned to California, Henry completed his higher education and graduated from California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena in 1956 with a PhD in Chemistry, Electrical Engineering and Physics. During this time Henry and Marilyn had five children, Gail, Norman, David, Steven and Jan.

After graduation from Caltech Henry went to work for JPL which was interested in his pre graduate work investigating nuclear magnetic resonance absorption. He soon became part of the committee working on the design and planning of the first US earth satellite. His responsibilities included the development of communications with the satellite. Prior to the successful launch and orbital flight of the Explorer 1, Henry had worked with the San Gabriel Valley Radio Club to set up satellite tracking stations throughout the US, which were operational during the launch of the Russian satellite, Sputnik 1.

Henry left JPL in 1960 and accepted a position at Electro Optical Systems (EOS) as a division manager of contracts with government agencies such as NASA, ARPA, and the Pentagon for projects involving spacecraft instrumentation, electro optical work, and information systems. He became vice president of marketing before leaving EOS to join a staff to develop a new campus for UCLA. That project was not successful and over the next several years Henry engaged in several short-term ventures. He joined the LA County Sherriff's Department in the mid 1970s as a result of his involvement with ham radio disaster communications with LA County. He worked his way to the position of Communications Engineer, where he learned a lot about public safety communications. When he left the Sheriff's Department Henry began telecommunications consulting work

specializing in radio communications for public service agencies throughout the US. He formed several consulting companies during this time, which became The Richter Group, a collaboration of independent telecommunications consultants. Henry continued this work well into his 80s, and was a highly regarded expert in radio telecommunications.

Henry married his second wife, Beverly Ott, who had been his secretary at EOS, in 1970. They moved to Arcadia, California, and then Palm Springs. He continued singing in church choirs throughout his life, including at the Lake Avenue Congregational Church in Pasadena where he and his family were very active for many years. Henry and Beverly moved to Escondido in 2010 to Meadowbrook Village Christian Retirement Community where they were very active and well respected. Henry served on the Village Council for many years. Henry was ever curious and always looked to expand his mind. As an example, in his early 90's he began to learn to paint with watercolors. Both his parents were well known and accomplished artists and were an inspiration to him.

The professional organizations Henry belonged to include the American Chemical Society, IEEE, American Geophysical Union, and he was a lifetime member of APCO/CPRA and Radio Club of America (RCA). He received many awards throughout his career including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the RCA in 2019. Throughout his life Henry wrote several books, from scientific documentation to his autobiography. His book America's Leap Into Space is a highly detailed account of the Explorer 1 and America's space program.

Henry is survived by his children, daughter Gail Richter Jacobs and son Steven Richter, four grandchildren, six great grandchildren, one great great grandchild and two nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife Beverly, three children, sons Norman and David, daughter Jan Richter Saunchegrow, and his sister Elsa Benguiat.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Dr. Henry L. Richter's name to Wounded Warrior Project, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and No Kid Hungry, or a charity of one's choice.