Richard “Richie” Hayward

Best known as the drummer for Little Feat, Richard “Richie” Hayward passed away at Victoria Jubilee Hospital (Victoria, British Columbia) on August 12, 2010, as the result of pneumonia and complications from chronic lung disease.

He was born on February 6, 1946, in Clear Lake, Iowa, and raised in Ames, Iowa. After graduating high school in Ames, he briefly heeded his parents’ wishes and attended an arts school to develop his very considerable artistic talents. But soon he dropped out and resolved to pursue his true passion, for rock and roll drumming. He flipped a coin to decide between heading for California or New York; the coin came up New York, so he flipped it again, and came to California in his early 20s.

Soon after his arrival in California, he read a newspaper ad which read, “Drummer wanted; must be freaky.” That felt right to him, and he soon found himself speaking with the musician who’d placed it, one Lowell George. That band’s name was The Factory. Not long afterward, Lowell joined Frank Zappa’s Mothers of Invention. Early on in his time with Zappa, George suggested that the Mothers do a country-western song he’d written called “Willin’.” Zappa quite correctly suggested he form his own band, and the result was Little Feat, of which Richie was the first and permanent drummer.

Beginning in 1971, the group released albums like Little Feat, Sailin’ Shoes, Dixie Chicken and Feats Don’t Fail Me Now, growing into one of the legendary rock bands in the country. Lowell George passed in 1979, and the band ceased touring. But their musical affinity was too strong to let go, and in 1986 they returned to the road, where they remain, brilliant to this day. Richie was the essential pulse and rhythm of the band until his health forced him to step down in August, 2009. This past July, although quite ill, he joined the band superbly for a couple of songs at a show on Vancouver Island.

Though his tenure in Little Feat was Richie's calling card, he was also an essential member of what came to be called the Topanga Canyon Sound – the Canyon was his home for 25 years – and he recorded and played with musicians like Emmylou Harris and Linda Ronstadt as part of that. In his breaks from Little Feat, he was also a session player par excellence, playing both live and in the studio with musicians like Eric Clapton, Ry Cooder, Van Dyke Parks, James Cotton, Bob Dylan, Buddy Guy, Robert Plant, Carly Simon, Tom Waits, Warren Zevon, Jimmy Buffett, and many, many more.

He was an enthusiastic fan of English motorcycles, and when a couple bad accidents hinted that he should perhaps give them up, he turned to fast cars.

But his most essential and memorable personal characteristic was his wit and sense of humor. No one who ever spent time with him would ever forget what friends and family came to call "Richieisms," and his wry jokes were still coming out as he came to his end.

In 2007, he moved to Vancouver Island, and soon declared it to be his true home. He became a Canadian citizen in June 2010.

He is survived by his soul mate Shauna Drayson-Hayward and his children Scott, Kalin, Briony, Sydney, Rachell, Daniel, Natalie, and Severn; his granddaughter Stella; his mother Beatrice, his stepfather Bob (Johnson), his sister Linda, and his brother Gary. As a friend, husband, and father, no more precious love could ever be felt.

His family asks that his memory be celebrated with donations to the Richie Hayward Fund at Sweet Relief – www.SweetRelief.org.

A celebration of his life will be announced at a later date.

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