



## John James Stadler

June 16, 1928 - February 23, 2025

John James Stadler passed away peacefully on February 23, 2025 at St. Anthony Hospital in Gig Harbor, Washington. He was 96 years old.

John was born on June 16, 1928 in Manteca, California to Robert and Juliana Dunst Stadler. The date coincided with his father's 36th birthday. John was the fourth of eleven children. His siblings were: Robert, Joseph, Elizabeth, Marianne, Josephine, Caroline, Rosemarie, Carl, Barbara, and Catherine.

John's parents ran a dairy farm, with the help of a few hired hands. When John was 8 years old, he learned how to milk a cow. By the age of 9, he was spelling his older sister Elizabeth raking hay with a team of horses.

John attended Rustic School, a two-room school house, from 1st Grade to halfway through 3rd Grade. He walked a mile to and from school, traveling through the family farm's alfalfa fields, across several irrigation ditches, and through adjoining neighbor's fields.

When John was 10 years old, the family moved to a dairy farm outside of Oakdale, California, where he attended the Joint Oakdale Union School District grammar schools. John considered himself and his peers "middle-class." Years later, his sister Elizabeth corrected him, "We were not middle-class. We were poor, but we were proud!"

When John was 12, he began "serious work." He was assigned several cows to milk before and after school, hay to shock, and a derrick horse to teamster during haying season. That summer, he worked for a neighbor, driving a team of horses for twelve days. He earned \$1.50. Back in those days, a pair of

Levi's cost about \$3. John considered this the low point in his work history. When John was 14, his fortunes improved when he began working for neighbor Angelo Marchetti, a native of Italy, weeding acres of onions on his hands and knees. Marchetti paid John \$0.35 an hour. One day, Marchetti told John's father, "John is a much better hand than those fellows from out of town, that I have to pay \$0.50 an hour." John worked for Marchetti frequently. During World War II, John's older brother Joe was drafted into the Army; he served in Saipan, and Okinawa. Recognizing that their father needed more help on the family farm, John stepped up to assist, which necessitated him dropping out of high school halfway through his Sophomore year. Joe was discharged from the 11th Airborne Division in the summer of 1946, and returned to work on the family farm. At this point, John had the option of returning to high school and eventually being drafted, or enlisting. Like many young men his age, John felt a sense of patriotism, and chose to enlist. In October 1946, John enlisted in the Army. He chose the Airborne branch. Following entrance exams, the interviewing officer declared John was mechanically inclined and assigned him to the Infantry. John chose the 11th Airborne Division, which was on occupation duty in Northern Japan. The U.S. Congress declared World War II as officially ended on December 31, 1946, making John a World War II Veteran.

Following a troop train ride from Camp Beale in California, John did Basic Training at Fort Bragg in North Carolina, John attended Jump School at Fort Benning in Georgia. To instill a sense of confidence, potential paratroopers packed their own parachutes for their first five qualification jumps off of 34-foot towers.

John shipped out from Fort Lawton in Seattle, Washington on a troop ship, landing in Yokohama, Japan in May 1947. He was assigned to the 187th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR) at Camp Crawford, near Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido Prefecture. He eventually ended up in the Intelligence and Reconnaissance (I&R) platoon of Headquarters Company of the 187th. The 11th Airborne Division returned to the United States in the spring of 1949.

John was honorably discharged that August from Camp Campbell in Kentucky. In 1950, John used the G.I. Bill to further his education by attending a year long course in Diesel, Automotive, and Allied Mechanics at National Schools in Los Angeles, California, followed by a Diesel course at Adcox Auto and Aviation School in Portland, Oregon.

In 1952, John began working for Morrison-Knudsen, an American civil engineering and construction company headquartered in Boise, Idaho. With the exception of two years with Green Construction, John's career with MK spanned 36 years, ending with his retirement in 1990.

John's first job with Morrison-Knudsen was working on the Yale Dam, located on the Lewis River near Amboy, Washington. He began as a shovel oiler, working his way up to Mechanic's Helper, Heavy Duty Mechanic, and Mechanic Welder. By the time he was 27, he was promoted to MK Shop Foreman, running a crew of up to 24 men. Within 15 months, he was promoted to Mechanic Foreman.

In 1960, John was sent to Morrison-Knudsen's headquarters in Boise, Idaho, as their youngest ever traveling Master Mechanic. At that time, he was the youngest traveling Soon after, he went to work on hydro projects on the North Umpqua River in Oregon, and the Klamath River in southern Oregon and northern California.

While working on the Iron Gate Dam near Hornbrook, California, John met the love of his life, Raylyn Kinney. John first caught a glimpse of Raylyn at a diner in Yreka, California. The couple met two days later, on January 30, 1961. Following a short courtship, John and Raylyn were married at the Yreka United Methodist Church on May 5, 1961.

John and Raylyn's daughter Julianne "Juli" was born in Boise, Idaho on January 30, 1963, two years to the day they first met. Their son Robert "Bob" was born in Boise, Idaho on June 12, 1965.

In 1965, John was assigned to his first overseas position for Morrison-Knudsen, erecting a walking Monaghan dragline in West Pakistan.

In 1966, John was assigned to RMK-BRJ, a consortium of four of the largest American construction companies, put together by the United States Navy, for the purpose of building infrastructure in South Vietnam. John served as Manager of Construction Equipment until contract completion in 1972. During that time, RMK-BRJ built most of the military bases, ports for deep sea vessels, runways, airbase facilities, as well as many roads and bridges. John's wife and children joined him in Saigon for 4.5 years of the 6.5 years he was there.

From June 1972 to 1974, John worked for Morrison-Knudsen in Hardin, Montana, before returning to work at company headquarters in Boise. It was while living in Montana that the family got their first pet, a male Siamese cat named "Piewacket." Like John's children, Piewacket became a world traveler, and shared many adventures with the family.

From early 1974 to 1978, John worked for Morrison-Knudsen in Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) building the Inga-Shaba Transmission Line. John's family joined him.

In 1978, John and his family returned to Boise, Idaho, where he worked for the next 12 years in the capacity of a Corporate General Equipment Superintendent. The last few years, the prefix of "Senior" was attached to his title. John's travels and assignments during those years were primarily for the purpose of monitoring equipment and maintenance programs on projects east of the Mississippi, as well as Zaire, Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, and New Guinea.

In 1990, John retired from Morrison-Knudsen. Soon after, he and Raylyn moved to Fox Island, Washington. John kept busy tending to his tree farm near Elma, Washington, and writing his memoirs.

In 1992, John visited Poland at the request of International Executive Service Corps to lend his expertise. While there, he visited Auschwitz. It was a powerful experience.

John's wife Raylyn died in 2015. During the last few years of her life, she suffered from dementia. Though there were resources available, John chose to

be her sole caregiver John chose to be her sole caregiver. Raylyn was buried next to her parents in the Etna, California Cemetery. While there, John noticed the lawn was dry, which he was told was due to the high cost of water. John organized and funded the drilling of a well for the Etna Cemetery District, which he dedicated in honor of Raylyn, and her mother Josephine Parker Kinney, who he held in high regard.

John credited "Mom and Dad, a few good teachers with paddle handy, and an early work ethic" as the guiding forces in his life. He was intellectually curious and a lifelong learner, with a special interest in history. Family vacations to the Philippines, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and Hawaii, included visits to historical sites. John was a good natured optimist, who always saw the best in others. He did what he could to help those in need. John was a devoted husband and father. He was a good son, a loving brother, and a kind neighbor. John lived an interesting and fulfilling life, one that was filled with purpose. He wrote three volumes of work-related memoirs, which are stored in the Morrison Knudsen Archives at Boise State University. His daughter hopes to have them published one day. John was a prime example of the Greatest Generation. May the good Lord love him. I surely did...

John is survived by his children, Julianne and Robert Stadler. He is also survived by his siblings: Elizabeth Brichetto, Rosemarie Swain, Carl Stadler (Margaret), Barbara Gookin (Ed), Catherine "Kate" Leiva, and a large extended family of nieces and nephews. John was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, and five siblings: Rev. Robert Stadler, Joseph Stadler, Marianne Orvis, Caroline Baley, and Josephine Stadler. There were also a number of wonderful cats: Piewacket, Mij, Sassy, Petey, and Alex.

The family would like to extend a special thank you to the doctors and nurses who cared for John at St. Anthony Hospital. The family also wishes to express their deep appreciation and gratitude to John's neighbors for their years of support and friendship.

A private graveside service will be held at the Etna Cemetery on April 24, 2025.



# Tribute Wall

TO

“ *Uncle John and Uncle Carl - the family adventurers! Cherish his memoirs and our time we could meet with he and his beloved Aunt Raylyn. I remember calling him when my son (his Great Nephew earned his Airborne wings. I believe it was his 87th birthday and he was glad their was another paratrooper in the family! Rest easy Uncle Johnny and please say hello to Mom and all my aunts and uncles and welcome Aunt Liz to heaven as well.*

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**Tom Orvis** - April 26, 2025 at 12:00 AM

AS

“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Girdner Funeral Chapel*

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**A Memorial Tree was planted for John James Stadler** - April 23, 2025 at 12:00 AM