



John Richard Potter

August 6, 1939 - November 5, 2022

John R. Potter passed away at home on November 5, 2022. He was born on August 6, 1939, in Washington, D.C., to Charles R. Potter and Mildred LeDuc Potter. He grew up in Falls Church, Virginia and graduated from George Mason H.S in 1957. During the summer of 1957 he worked for the Forest Service at Steamboat Ranger Station and this was the beginning of his love for Oregon mountains and trees. In 1961 he graduated from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI) with a BS in Forestry. John was commissioned as a 2nd Lt in the US Army after being in ROTC during college. During the summer of 1961 he worked in the White Mountains of California, taking cores of ancient bristlecone pines so that their age could be determined. In the fall of 1961, John began a MS degree in Watershed Management at the University of Arizona, finishing that degree in 1964. He went on active duty with tour of duty in Korea and at Ft. Benning, Georgia. In 1966 John returned to the University of Arizona for a PhD in Botany/Plant Physiology, completed in 1970. While he was a teaching assistant in a botany class, he met his “best student” Sandra (Sandy) Wadell. John and Sandy were married June 3, 1968. Together, they enjoyed many wonderful and sometimes harebrained adventures.

From 1970 to 1971 he held a post-doctoral position at the University of Illinois Botany Dept. In 1971 they moved to Mississippi where John was employed by U.S. Dept of Agriculture. Daughter Jennifer was born in 1971. 1976 saw a move to Corvallis when John transferred to the USDA Horticultural Crops

Laboratory. He also worked with many fine people in the Oregon State Horticulture Department.

John contracted non-Hodgkin lymphoma in 1980. He battled cancer for 10 years with a number of experimental protocols. In 1990 there was complete remission of the cancer. John was a survivor.

Cancer did not stop him from enjoying his favorite outdoor activities of hiking, backpacking, cross-country skiing and canoeing as much as possible, sometimes alone, sometimes with friends and often with Sandy and Jenny. There were several long trips from flat Mississippi to find mountains in the West. John was active in wilderness preservation and one project was completed with the formation of the Middle Santiam Wilderness Area.

In 1980 his dream of owning a forest property was fulfilled. He was active in the management of the property, planting five thousand trees in the first few years, doing pruning, thinning, and brush cutting and enjoying the forest in every way possible with the help of Jenny and Sandy. The Potters managed for ecological concerns as well as timber production. John got much help from the OSU Extension Forestry and from other tree farmer colleagues. John was unusual in that he both cut timber and worked to preserve the ecology of wild lands.

At the Church of the Good Samaritan, John was active in the Building and Grounds Committee, Men's Breakfast group, as an usher and helped wherever needed—made many pots of coffee!

John was preceded in death by his parents, and is survived by his wife Sandy, daughter Jenny (Irene Henjum), sister Judy Potter Brown (Jared), niece Lauren Brown Adams (Steve), nephew Ned Brown (Jennifer), great nephew Evan Adams and great niece Annika Brown.

Special thanks are given to nurse Jody and the staff of Lumina Hospice.

A memorial service will be held at Church of the Good Samaritan, at 2 pm on Saturday December 3. Donations in his memory may be made to OSU Foundation: Sandra and John Potter Scholarship Fund; Church of the Good Samaritan Foundation.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

DEC 3. 2:00 PM (PT)

Church of the Good Samaritan
333 NW 35th Street.
Corvallis, OR 97330

Tribute Wall



“ *Joanne Graham lit a candle in memory of John Richard Potter*



Joanne Graham - November 17, 2022 at 12:15 AM



With deepest sympathy on your loss.

Joanne Graham - November 17, 2022 at 12:16 AM