



John R. Davies

June 14, 1926 - October 2, 2025

John R. Davies, age 99, of Elk Rapids, passed away peacefully on October 2, 2025. Born June 14, 1926, in Grandville, Michigan, to Lydia and Willard (Jim) Davies, John lived a long and remarkable life devoted to family, service, engineering, and adventure.

John graduated from Grandville High School, where his father was the superintendent. At age 17, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy during World War II and served honorably until his discharge in 1946. He then attended the University of Michigan, graduating in 1950 with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

That same year, John married Mary Baldwin. They moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he worked as an engineer for Reliance Electric and welcomed their first son, Raymond. Later, John was invited to join the Baldwin's family business, Oliver Machinery Company, in Grand Rapids. He accepted, and he and Mary raised their family there, adding daughters Anne and Julie. John spent 40 years with Oliver, designing and installing packaging and industrial machinery worldwide. His expertise in control systems and engineering took him across the globe, supervising installations in Mexico, China, Japan, and beyond, and he retired after a distinguished 38-year career as Chief Engineer and Corporate Secretary.

Mary passed away suddenly at the age of 58, while John was installing new equipment in Mexico. Several years later, he married Keitha Weykamp, who also died unexpectedly after just five years together. In 1993, John married Edith “Edy” Heller, a ski instructor and ski school manager who introduced him to skiing in his mid-60’s. Together they skied at locations around the world and spent every winter skiing in Jackson Hole, Wyoming for the full season. In 2007 they built a home together on Elk Lake near Traverse City which was their base for enjoying golf, boating and more summer travel. Together they enjoyed 28 wonderful years until Edy’s passing in 2020.

John’s whole life was filled with adventure. He was an avid sailor, raising his children on the water, often aboard his 25-foot sailboat, Bluebird, and he continued to be an avid skier into his late 90’s. He was actively involved in the Maritime Heritage Alliance in Traverse City, MI as a volunteer spending many happy days maintaining and sailing on the schooner, Madeline. John’s engineering and mathematical skills were in play throughout his life, from teaching navigation by the stars through the Grand Rapids, MI Power Squadron to creating the first full map of the ski traverses at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort. John also enjoyed making ceramics and music, once choosing the flute when asked to pick an instrument as a boy in Grandville and continuing to play it his whole life.

Family and friends were always at the center of John’s life. He leaves behind his son Raymond (Susan) of Mt. Pleasant, MI, daughters Anne Heyns (Dan) of Port Sheldon, MI, and Julie Leach (Brock) of Sarasota, FL. He was a proud grandfather of five and great-grandfather of ten, and he often said that his family was his greatest and most meaningful accomplishment. He was also close to Edy’s sons, Steve and Todd, and her daughters, Karen and Chris, whom he embraced as his own.

John was deeply reflective about his long life. Having lived through the

Depression and served in WWII, he carried a strong sense of resilience, faith in his country, and devotion to those around him. In a recent interview he said: “I lived through the Depression and knew first-hand how it affected families, communities and the nation. I also served in the Navy in WWII and again felt the pain and sacrifice of war. But I can truly say I never doubted or was concerned about my country—I knew it would survive. Today I am concerned. In this world of business, politics and social unrest, you are constantly dealing with people, often with people you may disagree with, but I always tried my best to honor and respect others.”

In accordance with his wishes, cremation has taken place, and the family is planning a private celebration of life for a later date. John’s family will carry forward his legacy of curiosity, adventure, kindness, and love, and is very grateful to his end-of-life caregivers. John left generous legacy gifts to support the environmental beauty of Michigan and scholarships for youth. Gifts in his honor may be made to the Maritime Heritage Alliance in Traverse City, MI, the Community Foundation of Jackson Hole WY, the Ottawa County Parks Foundation in Holland, MI, or Hospice of Holland, MI.

John’s affairs are being handled by Langeland- Sterenberg Funeral Home in Holland Michigan. You can leave a message for John’s family or share a memory, by contacting them on their website.

Tribute Wall

LP

“ John and I painted trim together on Madeline...sailing with him was always a joy...such a wise, kind man. My life is enriched by having known him.

linda posler - October 09, 2025 at 08:11 PM

JB

“ John was always so kind and welcoming when we visited. I admire how he kept his sense of adventure as he aged! His love for his family & the environment was apparent in his stories about sailing and mapping the stars, hiking and skiing. May you find comfort in your memories of his well lived life!
- Jodi (niece through Edy) & Frank Baron

Jodi Baron - October 06, 2025 at 08:17 PM

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“ Thank you for your service Sir



 V. Scott - October 06, 2025 at 04:15 PM