



## John Arthur Roberson

June 4, 1925 - February 2, 2023

### John Roberson's Wonderful Life

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John Roberson peacefully passed away in his sleep on February 2nd, dreaming of adding another “lifer” to his 500-strong bird list, traveling to yet another new country – he’d already visited 44, catching another kokanee on a hand-tied fly, and loving his wife Amy Jean for another 75 years.

John was born on a farm in Woodland, Washington, in 1925. After graduating from Woodland High in 1943 he joined the Navy and was shipped to Kansas for Officer Training. He was discharged in 1946 and earned his B.S. in Civil Engineering from Washington State University in 1948. He married Amy Jean Allen, his partner-for-life, in 1947. “John Loves Amy Jean” will be carved on a gatepost to heaven.

John earned his Master’s degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Wisconsin in 1950. His first son, Roger, was born in Wisconsin in 1950, and the twins, Janice and David, in Pullman in 1951. From 1950 to 1962, John, with family in tow, crisscrossed the country (Madison, Wisconsin; Iowa City, Iowa (twice); Panama City, Florida; Pullman and Richland, Washington) doing research, working on his Ph.D., and teaching engineering. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Iowa in 1961. Somehow throughout these years,

he always found time for his young family, reading books to his children, taking them on fishing trips, and sharing his love of adventure with them through travel and the outdoors. But Pullman was a magnet that always seemed to draw him back in – every “adventure” seemed to start and end in Pullman.

In 1963 he enthusiastically took a position at the Asia Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand, where he taught and did research for two years — a true highlight of his career. In 1965, after recuperating from a near-tragic fall off the Bridge Over the River Kwai, he returned to WSU where he resumed his teaching and research. He was the primary author of two Hydraulics and Fluid Mechanics engineering textbooks. Multiple subsequent editions have been used at colleges and universities around the world over the past 50 years, including translations into Spanish and Korean.

As a professor of civil engineering, John stressed quality and excellence in the work of his students. But he was always quick to give credit to his own teachers, professors, mentors, and students, who “challenged” him and contributed to his own success. He raised the bar in research at WSU and was known worldwide for his expertise in hydraulic engineering and fluid mechanics. After retirement in 1987, John continued to positively influence students and colleagues through his textbooks, and scholarships for students majoring in CE.

Outside of his career, John loved the outdoors and welcomed anyone who wanted to come along and share the experience. Later in life, one often heard, “Want to go birding?” directed at friends and family alike. He built one log cabin from scratch, mostly with hand tools, and reconstructed another. They were his special “off the grid” retreats in northern Idaho.

John was wonderfully lighthearted (not one cross word was known to have

passed his lips in 97 years) and quick to laugh (the contagious bust-your-gut-die-laughing-no-oxygen kind) at the various absurdities we encounter as humans. His mile-wide grin and laughter would bubble up uncontrollably and hilariously.

In retirement, John and Amy's adventures continued with 48 Elderhostel trips, which were invariably accompanied by the very best stories. He was an avid reader and relished learning in all its forms. Fishing transitioned into birding as his favorite activity, and he always had a notebook, well-worn walking stick, bird book, and binoculars with him as he and Amy traveled the world.

Exercise was a source of great enjoyment for John, who loved to swim laps at the Spokane Valley YMCA right up until the pandemic shuttered their doors. After that, he could often be seen walking up and down the street in front of his home as part of his routine. He attributed his longevity to great food (prepared by Amy), staying active, and a loving wife and family.

While in a nursing home during the last months of his life, he would often ask where he and Amy would be staying tomorrow as if this were just another stop in their ongoing adventures.

Your passport is stamped, Dad. You're free to go! Pack your fly rod because the fish are biting! And don't forget your bird book! Many exotic species, that in your wildest dreams you'd never thought possible, are waiting for you.

John is survived by Amy, his wife of 75 years, his sons Roger and David Roberson (Sally), his daughter Janice Paulsen (Thomas), granddaughter Kristine, and grandson Kirk (Erinne). The warmth of your smile, your kind, peaceful demeanor, and the sparkle in your eyes will be with us always.

Love you forever, John/Dad/Grandpop!

# Tribute Wall

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“ *In our senior years we were blessed to have spent time with John and Amy and are indeed saddened at the loss of John. Our heart goes out to Amy at her deep loss. I, Frank spent many hours going swimming and returning from swimming at the YMCA. Lots of laughs and fond memories. Keep on laughing my friend!*  
*Frank & Sue Street*

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**Frank & Sue Street** - February 14, 2023 at 10:44 AM