

John Earl Brubaker

October 27, 1939 - October 12, 2024

John Earl Brubaker was born on October 27, 1939, in his grandmother's house, in Jonesboro, Indiana, to Mary Helen (Greene) Brubaker and Howard Dale Brubaker. As a child, his family moved around a lot, living in Chicago while his father completed seminary, and then North Manchester, Indiana; Pioneer, Ohio; and Muncie, Indiana, among other places, while his father preached at different Church of the Brethren parishes. Along the way, his brother, Curtis Dale, was born. The family settled in Daleville, in the Muncie, Indiana area, where John spent his teenage years. John's mother was a huge influence in his life. She was whip-smart and could always be found either reading her Bible or doing one of her many handicrafts, such as knitting, crocheting, or needle pointing. She was a church organist and worked for decades at Ball State University.

As a young man, John farmed with his extended family. If you knew John well, you likely heard about the time he managed to run over his own knee with the tractor. (No one ever said he was a good farmer.) Thank goodness he turned his attention to other endeavors. He moved on to the Ball Glass factory for a time, and until his death, had an extensive collection of their glassware. Upon graduation from high school, his father offered him a choice: a car or a college education. He chose the education and promptly enrolled in Manchester College, in North Manchester, Indiana, where he earned his Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Sociology, with a minor in Religion and Philosophy.

It's unclear whether John was a participant in hijinks at college, but he had some entertaining stories about undergraduates introducing livestock to the hallowed halls of the university and the fact that it's possible to get cows to go upstairs but much harder to get them to go down.

Having been offered a scholarship by the State of Indiana to attend graduate school, he enrolled in the social work program at Indiana University, Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI – pronounced Ooey Pooey), where he met Janet Gayle Stoughton. In 1965, between school years in their social work program, the two married. The country was soon to be embroiled in the conflict in Vietnam. Having been raised in the Brethren church, John was a conscientious objector and served his wartime duty at a placement at Fort Wayne State School. After receiving his graduate degree, he began his career with a stint at Beatty Hospital, in Westville, Indiana.

John and Janet moved around a bit. When they lived in Michigan City, Indiana, they took up sailing on Lake Michigan. On one notable occasion, they were sailing their catamaran when a storm blew up suddenly. The catamaran crested a steep wave and followed it all the way down, diving deep into the water and flipping upside down. John and Janet stayed afloat by riding the pontoons until the Coast Guard came to their rescue.

In 1972, while living in Marion, Indiana, Erin Aylene Brubaker was born, the first of two girls. Alyson Elaine followed in 1976. John and Janet made life-long friends in Marion. John was known to knock on his friend Ed Breen's door on a Saturday morning, two glasses in hand, and say "Want to drink?" This may surprise those of you who knew him as a teetotaler in later life, but he did his share of carousing as a young man. It was only when his daughters came on the scene, that he decided that baby bottles were serving him better than whiskey bottles and he quit cold turkey, something of which he was very proud.

While living in Marion, John built the Grant Blackford Mental Health Center from the ground up in a very literal sense. He fundraised for the center. Then he hired the contractors and oversaw the work on the building. While that was happening, he designed the programs, which would operate out of the building and hired the staff for those programs.

He worked for a brief stint in Ohio, before realizing how much he truly despised the cold winters of the Midwest. Thus began a job search. He got multiple offers in cold states, which he turned down. And then came the offer from a much warmer state, Texas. The whole family piled into the car and headed to Austin during an ice storm. John worked tirelessly, building programs and constructing more mental health facilities for the Austin-Travis County Mental Health Mental Retardation (MHMR) Center. He bought one building on the waterfront in downtown Austin, back when it was a small town, which years later would sell for many millions of dollars, all to the benefit of the mental health programs in Austin. In his spare time, he ferried his girls around to various school activities and jogged. He participated in many a Capitol 10K in downtown Austin, with his wife and daughters cheering him on from the crowds.

John went on to work in San Angelo, Texas, where he and Janet moved after his girls had flown the coop. Unfortunately, both John's daughters had moved themselves to a different snowy state, Colorado, so John and Janet followed, moving to Fort Collins. Running around after his grandchildren, Elijah and Rachel Price, kept him warm. And after Alyson moved back to Texas, producing more grandchildren, Abigail, Elijah, Riley, and Caleb Johnson, he was really able to get warm again, if only during his visits.

While living in Colorado, John joined Foothills Unitarian Church. This is

notable, because John was not a religious man. After being called out by his father as a young child for talking in church on multiple occasions and other indignities, which come with being a preacher's kid, John had a beef with organized religion. But he was willing to try the Unitarians, and soon found many like-minded people. He and Janet participated in the Dinners in the Home program, where they made many wonderful friends. They also joined the adult discussion group, where he found many intellectuals with whom he could argue about politics and the state of the world. Basically, heaven for John, who loved that sort of thing.

John and Janet also joined the Poudre Golden K Kiwanis club, where they formed close friendships, learned a lot about the community from the various speakers at club meetings, and did a whole lot of good works. They raised money by selling packets of peanuts outside grocery stores. They put together backpacks full of school supplies for low-income kids. They hosted pancake breakfasts for veterans. And they helped to fund many worthwhile community programs to help disadvantaged children.

No man is perfect, and John had his challenges. He battled major depression his entire life. But it is a credit to him that he used his experience to fuel his commitment to building mental health resources for others. In his final years, John was diagnosed with dementia. The disease stole his intellect and his drive, but it never took his sense of humor. At the end, his daughters would ask if they could give him a hand with something, and instead of replying, he would just clap, twinkle in his eye.

John died at Pathways Hospice, in Fort Collins, Colorado, on Saturday, October 12, 2024, just shy of his 85th birthday, surrounded by his loved ones. Thank you to the staff and volunteers at Pathways for the tremendous care they provided John in his final days. He is survived by his loving wife, Janet, and their daughter, Erin Price, her husband Stefan, and their kids, Elijah and

Rachel, and their daughter, Alyson Johnson, her husband, Brad, and their kids, Abigail, Elijah, Riley, and Caleb. He is also survived by his brother, Curtis Brubaker, his wife Debbie, and their kids, Curtis Jr., Christie, and Stephanie, and their children and grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, please do two things: make a donation to one of John's favorite charities, Heifer International, and have a bowl of ice cream. Blue Bell was John's favorite.

A Celebration of Life is planned for Saturday, November 23, 2024, at 1:00pm at Foothills Unitarian Church, 1815 Yorktown Ave., Fort Collins, CO 80526.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

NOV **23**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (MT)

Foothills Unitarian Church
1815 Yorktown Ave.
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Tribute Wall

JA

“ Oh, my. Many thanks to whoever wrote this amazing obituary! I smiled, and laughed, and cried. I dearly love Janet as one of my UU Sisters, but I hadn't known John at all, until now. I loved reading about cows going up stairs but not down, and other fun things, but most of all I loved hearing about how much good he did for the mental health communities. Having survived severe depression myself, I feel somewhat connected to John through his steadfast determination to building a good life for his family, and for his devotion to others who deal with what he had to endure as well. Hallelujah! Hooray for a wonderful man, John Brubaker! Your love and goodness live on!

Julia Ambrose - October 18, 2024 at 04:27 PM

EP

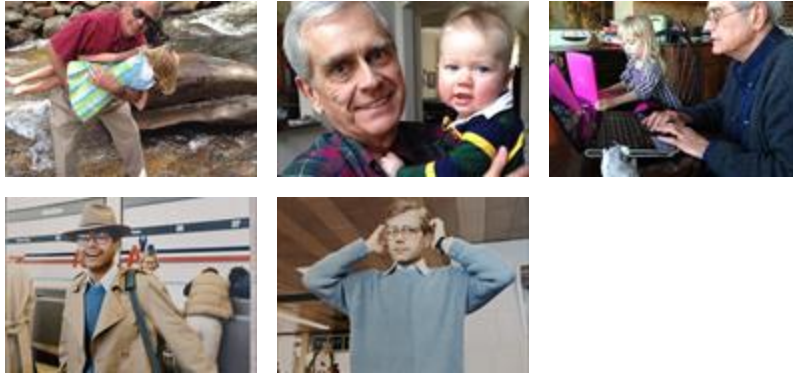
“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Erin B Price - October 18, 2024 at 09:35 AM

AJ

“ 9 files added to the tribute wall



Alyson Brubaker Johnson - October 18, 2024 at 01:44 AM

EB

“ Especially for Janet at this time, thank you for allowing John and me to have our playtime in our misspent youth. The capers live on in memories. John, Brother Vincent and me. The evening we needed flaming crepes and darn near burned the house. Or the Cooties game enhanced by adult beverage. I trust John and Vincent have reunited on the other side and the stories are being retold. We miss you and love you.

Ed Breen - October 17, 2024 at 01:23 PM

MD

“ Sending love and strength and peace during this time. What a beautiful obituary. Bailey has such fond memories of time spent with your dad and I wish I had the chance to meet him, Erin. His goodness certainly shines through in you. Xoxo Monica and Bailey

Monica Dragoman - October 16, 2024 at 06:44 PM

NB

“ Janet, I just sent you a note on Monday asking about John. Kent first saw John's obituary on Facebook earlier today. Then I opened Erin's email. Thank you so much for sharing. We are both impressed with John's incredible life. When I last visited you, John remembered our grandson, Ian. John always cared about others and greeted everyone with his generous smile. It is really captured in this photo. With deepest sympathy to you and your wonderful family. Take care of yourselves and may each of you walk down the road of grief and find peace.
Nancy and Kent Brown

Nancy Brown - October 16, 2024 at 04:39 PM

JJ

Aly,
I am so glad I got to meet your sweet dad.
He was a lovely man and I know your heart is broken.
Thoughts and prayers are with you,
I love you,
Jeanette

Jeanette Johnson - October 17, 2024 at 09:38 AM

GW

“ I'm so sorry for your loss. Thank you for sharing the obituary; it's good to read more about John's life. I served on the Foothills Unitarian Board of Trustees with him and enjoyed getting to know him then. Ever after, John would greet me with a warm hello and handshake. I hadn't known about his passionate commitment to social services; he left the world a better place for it. John was fortunate to have his loving family surrounding him at the end of his life. Holding you all in love, Gale Whitman

Gale Whitman - October 16, 2024 at 03:31 PM

AU

“ *Sending hugs and wishing you comfort.*

April U - October 16, 2024 at 01:55 PM

CM

“ *Dear Janet and Erin and all of the Brubaker clan, Such a lovely tribute, was nice to read about John and your family. I send my deepest sympathy for your loss. John was always so kind to me at Foothills. With love, Carolyn Myers*

Carolyn Myers - October 16, 2024 at 12:08 PM

CH

What a beautiful tribute to John.

I remember him as forthright and so very kind. During a difficult time in our church's history that we were navigating, he lost his temper in a small group, then returned with such a genuine heartfelt apology. His intellectual and compassion during this time will always stay with me. My deep condolences to Janet, Erin and the rest of your family. I am sure you have many dear memories of John to carry with you. In love., Cheryl Hazlitt

Cheryl Hazlitt - October 16, 2024 at 07:07 PM