



John Hamilton McCracken

January 20, 1929 - January 4, 2025

John Hamilton McCracken, age 95, of Kankakee passed away Saturday, January 4, 2025 at Riverside Hospital in Kankakee. He died peacefully with his family present. He would have been 96 in two weeks.

John was born January 20, 1929 in Kankakee, the son of Howard & Marjorie (Hamilton) McCracken. He was a 1946 graduate of Kankakee High School and was a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University, where he was a member of Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity.

John married the former Nila Berry on November 23, 1957 at Asbury United Methodist Church. They were married 67 years. When Gould National Batteries began in Kankakee, John was their first purchasing agent. In 1960, he became a realtor and three years later he opened his own real estate office, continuing in that business for over forty years. Along with his real estate business, John had a building business and built over 50 homes in the area. He was a certified appraiser, and he served as a director and president of the Kankakee County Board of Realtors. In 1989 he was honored as their Realtor of the Year. Earlier, he had also been chosen Broker of the Year. "Start Packin', Call McCracken" was his popular slogan.

John dedicated much time and energy to civic organizations and volunteer programs, such as the United Way drive. He served on the Easter Seal board, was on the board of the Kankakee Library and was a past director and past president and member of the Kankakee Rotary Club for over 65 years. Also, he served on the board of Mound Grove Cemetery for over 40 years, 25

of those years as president. He was also a director of Kankakee Title and Trust Company, as well as a director of City National Bank, and later First of America Bank. John also served as a member of Riverside Hospital's first Foundation Board, which started the Riverside Samaritan Club.

As a life-long member of Asbury United Methodist Church, John often served on committees, including being chairman of the church's official board and several times as chairman of the church's budget drive. He also sang in the choir.

John and his wife loved dancing and were members of the Quadrille Dance Club for many years. He was a former president and 70-year member of the Round Table Club, the oldest couples' study club in Illinois. He loved to travel and after his retirement, he and Nila enjoyed many trips with their "Travel Group" of four other local couples, very dear friends.

Among his interests was music, especially jazz and Big Band and Swing Music. He loved singing and it was said that he knew the words to every song of that period, and he might burst into song at any time.

One of his greatest loves was water skiing on the Kankakee River, plus boating with family and friends. He was thought to be one of the very first people in the community to water ski, taking it up in the 1940's, and he taught many people to take part in the sport. He was the only person to have a ski-jump on the Kankakee River, which he and his good friend, Henry Ort, built. He loved his home along the Kankakee River, where he lived for 72 years, and he and his wife enjoyed entertaining friends on their pontoon boat.

John also collected antique cars and had as many as seven at different times. John was a "people person" and loved going out for coffee and visiting with the people there. He enjoyed his breakfast group of guys, who met every Wednesday morning for breakfast. After retirement he enjoyed his lunch bunch of guys who met at a different restaurant every Friday. They were known as the Romeos (Retired Old Men Meeting for Lunch). The expression, "He never met a stranger" could certainly apply to him.

Besides his wife, Nila, John is survived by his daughter, Jeri Lynn Klausen of

Lake Geneva, WI, and son, John Berry McCracken (Joanne) of Kankakee. Grandchildren include, Korbin, Blake, and Wade Klausen and step grandchildren, Kyle (Valerie) Smith, Maggie (Kevin) Prendergast, and Lucas (Amy) Smith, and four step great-grandchildren.

Besides his parents, he was preceded in death by his sister Marjorie Rose and brother Dax McCracken.

Visitation will be held from 10:00 a.m. until the Noon funeral service on Saturday, January 11, 2025 at Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home, Kankakee.

Inurnment will be held in Mound Grove Cemetery, Kankakee at a later date. Memorials may be made to Riverside Medical Center, Kankakee or Asbury United Methodist Church, Kankakee.

Cemetery Details

Mound Grove Gardens Cemetery

1000 N. Greenwood
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 933-6726

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 11. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Kankakee - Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home
1480 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-1214
cgfuneral@gmail.com

Funeral Service

JAN 11. 12:00 PM (CT)

Kankakee - Clancy-Gernon-Hertz Funeral Home
1480 W. Court St.
Kankakee, IL 60901
(815) 932-1214
cgfuneral@gmail.com

Tribute Wall

KR

“ *Condolences to his family.
Karen Jackson Riml*

Karen Jackson Riml - January 12 at 10:56 PM

GK

“ *John was a great guy. And he had a great sense of humor. You did a great job raising his children. My prayers are with his wife and family. So sorry we could not make it to the funeral. Roger has some health issues. But he's doing fine*

Glendal Kilbride - January 12, 2025 at 02:38 PM

JP

“ *Dearest Nila, Berry and Jeri, George and I send our great sorrow upon the death of your dear John. He is no doubt dancing and singing with the angels at this very moment!*

Jane & George Potter - January 10, 2025 at 12:20 AM



“ *My sincere condolences to you Berry!!!*

Hany Girgis - January 10, 2025 at 12:01 AM

JK



Jeri Klausen - January 19, 2025 at 01:59 PM

PH

“ Bruce and I send our sincere sympathy to you and your family. John lived the great life and will be remembered fondly by many friends. We feel it a privilege to have known John and called him a good friend. You are in our hearts and prayers.

Pat Huot - January 09, 2025 at 10:08 PM

JB

“ So sorry to hear! He was a total joy, always, and what a sense of humor! Please accept our sincere condolences. Paul and Jane

Jane and Paul Berry - January 09, 2025 at 03:43 PM

JL

“ Nila, so sorry for your loss. I enjoyed many years with John at our weekly Rotary meetings. John often remarked about his vacations in Arizona and being able to go out in the morning and pick a grapefruit for breakfast. Joe Lacaeyse

Joe Lacaeyse - January 08, 2025 at 11:00 AM

JK



Jeri Klausen - January 19, 2025 at 01:59 PM

CO

“ Mr. McCracken was a wonderful and kind man. Always had a smile and a gentle demeanor. After my mom Rita Bowsher passed we found a picture of him and mom as young children on tricycles together and that was just amazing that they had a friendship all those years. Mrs. McCracken, Jeri and Barry i hope you know i send my heartfelt sympathy at the loss of a truly wonderful man. Chris Orenbas (Bowsher)

Chris Orenbas - January 07, 2025 at 11:16 AM

ES

“ *Eric Sadler lit a candle in memory of John Hamilton McCracken*



Eric Sadler - January 07, 2025 at 07:14 AM

JK



Jeri Klausen - January 19, 2025 at 01:59 PM

CR

“ *Connie Rasmussen-Connors lit a candle in memory of John Hamilton McCracken*



Connie Rasmussen-Connors - January 07, 2025 at 06:12 AM

CW

“ *Cheryl Wilson lit a candle in memory of John Hamilton McCracken*



Cheryl Wilson - January 07, 2025 at 06:06 AM

AW

“ Ashley Webber lit a candle in memory of John Hamilton McCracken



Ashley Webber - January 06, 2025 at 11:46 PM

MT

“ We have lost a wonderful man. May God's peace n comfort be with you and may your wonderful memories bring smiles. Love, hugs n prayers are with you.



Mary Thomson - January 06, 2025 at 11:13 PM

JG

“ Joseph Giacchino lit a candle in memory of John Hamilton McCracken



Joseph Giacchino - January 06, 2025 at 04:30 PM

CB

Sorry to learn of the passing of Mister McCracken I used to work for him before I left for college. I always enjoyed him as a person and he was a wonderful boss. May he rest in peace and fly with the angels

Cyndi Bonnell - May 03, 2025 at 08:32 PM