



john w. eckner

15 Garden Street Ridgfield Park
League Leaders 4; Weightlifting 2, 3.

"Big Bad John" . . . salad tosser . . . "Wait till the curve comes out" . . . sticks up for the underdog (usually himself) . . . "Listen, son, if you don't want to sing, you can leave" . . . "just try it" . . . only 3-F'er not hit by a teacher with a senior ring . . .



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John Willard Eckner

John W. Eckner, husband, father, globetrotter, daydreamer, and avid coffee drinker, passed away on Tuesday, January 6 2015 at his home in Milton, Massachusetts.

John was born and raised in northern New Jersey, where he and his five siblings kept their devoted parents on their toes. John's father, George W. Eckner, worked at Bell Labs as a mechanical engineer, and his ingenuity was a source of wonder for John. He recounted watching his father, day-by-day, build the family's first television, piece-by-piece. John's memories of his mother were also dear to him—charged with cooking, cleaning, and laundry for a family of eight, she managed to infuse humor and fun into their lives. John also credited his mother for giving him his proclivity to daydream and get lost in periods of contemplation, which he enjoyed immensely, especially while drinking a cup of “caw-fee.”

After leaving home, John spent much time in New York City, and he recounted fabled anecdotes of his being surrounded by beat and hippie culture. John enjoyed the musical, literary, artistic, and philosophical influences from this period, which he carried with him throughout his life. One favorite story from this time was when he marched in a protest next to Allen Ginsberg, who chatted with him through the entire march.

John's draft number was drawn in the late 1960's, and so began the next chapter of profound influence on his life. John served in the Vietnam War for a short but intense time, completing terrifying rescue missions in search of survivors in Vietnamese villages that had already been ravaged by war. He witnessed and suffered tremendous loss and tragedy during his service, and he talked about how this period in his life opened his eyes to the privilege (both good and bad) that exists in the United States, which he would never take for granted again. This revelation drove his support of charities for the underprivileged, taking particular interest in the plight of Native Americans.

Following his time in Vietnam, John took advantage of the GI Bill and completed a Bachelor's Degree in English and Literature from Boston University. A few years later, after a move to Galveston, Texas, John met and eventually married his wife Jean (nee Moore), who says that John looked just like Errol Flynn, especially when he, donned in an all-white suit, picked her up for their first date.

Childless before meeting Jean, John had the privilege of helping to raise two teenagers, Holly and Craig, upon marrying Jean; and shortly thereafter, John and Jean had two more children, Meghan and Emily. Just as he kept his parents on their toes, now he had four children of his own to effectively keep him up at night. The family moved back to the Boston area in the mid- 1980's, settling into a beautiful old, white cape on Old Oaken Bucket Road in Norwell, Massachusetts, where his family would stay for the next 20 years. During this time, John began working for State Street Bank as a computer programmer, and there he would stay for the next few decades, meeting many of his dearest friends.

John is survived by his wife, Jean, and his children and grandchildren: Emily (partner Aidan Walsh, child Ronan John Walsh); Meghan (husband Zach Naylor, children Hunter and Lennon).

Family and friends are invited to attend John's service on Saturday, January 10 at 9 a.m. at Saint Agatha Church (440 Adams Street, Milton, MA). In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in John's memory to St. Joseph's Indian School (<http://www.stjo.org>) or to St. Peter's Preparatory School (http://www.stpetersprep.org/Giving_to_Prep).