

CROSSED THE BAR

John Benjamin McKinney, Sr.



John Benjamin McKinney, Sr., 87, of St. Louis, Ocean Ridge, Florida, and Charlevoix, Michigan, died peacefully on Friday, December 27, 2019. Born in St. Louis November 12, 1932, he was a son of Clifford Paul McKinney and Mary Adeline Myers McKinney. He is survived by his beloved wife of 66 years, Margaret Stickney Stark McKinney; daughter, Susan Mary McKinney Maune; sons, Jeffrey Stark McKinney (Lisa) and John Benjamin McKinney, Jr. (Stacey); granddaughters, Sarah Adeline McKinney Clarke (Henry) and Margaret Stark Maune; grandsons, John Benjamin McKinney III (Allison), Connor Stark McKinney (Meghan), James Lloyd McKinney, and Blake Fording Maune; great grandsons, John Benjamin McKinney IV, Thomas Henry Clarke VI, Charles Flynn McKinney, and Burwell Boykin Clarke; sister-in-law, Gabrielle Hodnett McKinney; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins. In addition to his parents, his brother, Clifford Paul McKinney, Jr., and son-in-law, Grant Fording Maune, predeceased him.

A 1950 graduate of St. Louis Country Day School, John excelled in sports and served as co-captain of the Varsity football team. He was a 1954 graduate of the University of Virginia, where he studied history, played football, lettered in soccer, joined the Reserve Officers' Training Corps, and pledged Beta Theta Pi fraternity. For two years John served in the United States Army in post-war Germany and was honorably discharged as a First Lieutenant.

St. Louis-based Laclede Steel Company hired John as a sales-trainee in 1956. He spent his entire 42-year career with Laclede, rising through the ranks in various sales-management positions before the company named him President and Chief Executive Officer in 1982, the role he held until his retirement in 1998. The St. Louis Business Journal named John Businessman of the Year for his innovation and transformation of Laclede Steel.

John conceived of and was an original investor in St. Louis Cold Drawn Co., now part of Nucor. He served on the boards of Laclede Steel, American Automobile Association of Missouri, American Automobile Association of California, St. Louis Union Trust, the American Iron and Steel Institute, Steel Producers Association, Ocean Drilling & Equipment Co., and Stark Bros. Nursery & Orchards Co. He also served on the non-profit boards of St. Louis Country Day School, Whitfield School, St. Louis University Advisory Board, Webster University, and the John Allan Love Charitable Foundation.

Though John was tough, disciplined, and hard-working in his career, to his grandchildren he was warm, loving, funny, and a dignified family leader. He interviewed them regularly and demonstrated a special interest in their education, travel, and careers. John was especially devoted to his wife Margie, with whom he had an extraordinary marriage. John was a wonderful father to his three children, always willing to listen and offer advice but only when requested.

John enjoyed many close friendships in St. Louis and also from his years at the University of Virginia and his retirement in Florida and Northern Michigan. He loved travel, hunting, tennis, and golf. John played golf until the end, shooting his age at 82 and making his second hole-in-one at age 85. John loved spending time with his many golden retrievers.

Burial will be private. The family will receive friends at the St. Louis Country Club on Saturday, January 25, 2020, from 4 to 6 pm. Memorials may be made to the John Allen Love Charitable Foundation, c/o Mr. Brad Landsbaum, Commerce Bank, 8000 Forsyth Boulevard, St. Louis, Missouri 63105 or to a charity of your choice.