



John Piser, Jr.

Born: 1/12/1935

Died: 4/29/2013

John Piser, Jr. died suddenly at home on Monday, April, 29, 2013.

Born in 1935 in Wilmington as the oldest son of the late Jack Piser and Harriet Spencer, John grew up in Middletown on a family farm with his brothers, Ronald, Eric, and Kurt. As a child, he often visited the lighthouse at Bayview kept by his grandfather, Harry Spencer. He attended Middletown High School, where he competed in track and field, was first inspired by teachers to take an interest in literature and theater, and graduated in 1953. After a brief stint at the University of Delaware in mechanical engineering, John enlisted in the United States Army. He served from 1955 to 1958, including a tour in Germany as a combat engineer.

John then entered Boston University on the GI Bill to be close to his fiancée, Phyllis Allegretti. After John graduated with a bachelor's degree in English Literature, he and Phyllis were married in 1962, and moved to New York City. John worked as a publishing representative for Ronald Press, while Phyllis nursed her ailing mother. John also taught English in Harlem as part of post-graduate studies at Hunter College. The births of their sons—John, Tim, and Pete—and a chance to teach full-time at Brandywine High School brought the family back to Wilmington in 1970.

As an English teacher at Brandywine, John was faculty director of the Brandywine Line student newspaper and the cycling club, and coached track

and field. School district consolidation in 1976 led John into a 22-year career in real estate with Patterson-Schwartz. He served as Deerhurst Civic Association treasurer, vice-president, and president from 1978-81. After the death of his father, Jack, in 1980, John was devoted in his care for Jack's second wife, Pauline, until her death at age 90 in 2008. In 1995, after 32 years of marriage, John and Phyllis parted ways as friends and remained collaborators in the lives of their children and grandchildren. In 1998, John started 15 years of service as a shuttle-driver and filing clerk at Mercedes-Benz of Wilmington. During these years, Carolyn James was John's closest companion.

John delighted in his grandchildren, and is survived by eight, Tahra, Brooke, Travis, Ben, Nate, Eli, Cole, and Faith; his sons; his daughters-in-law, Terri and Allison; his brothers and their wives, Betty and Ann-Marie; his uncle, Harry Spencer Jr.; his beloved Carolyn, and her son, Herschel.

John was a dedicated cyclist, and in 2004 at the age of 69, he pedaled across the United States. He was an avid reader, bowler, and theater enthusiast. Most importantly, John was genuinely interested in people, and placed great value on the authentic and lasting connections he made with them. In addition to his children and grandchildren, these connections are his greatest legacy. A celebration of John's life in words, pictures, and music will be held at 1 pm on Saturday, May 18th, at the Mendenhall Inn, 323 Kennett Pike (Rt. 52) Mendenhall, PA 19357. Receiving will begin at noon.

In lieu of flowers, please send contributions to public radio at WHY Y, Independence Mall West, 150 N. 6th St., Philadelphia PA 19106 (215-351-0511; why.org); or to Sojourner's Place Homeless Services, 2901 Northeast Blvd., Wilmington, DE 19802 (302-764-4713; www.sojournersplace.org).