



## John W. McCandless

March 17, 1953 - February 28, 2024

John Woolman McCandless, age 70, of Clarion, formerly of Erie, passed away Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at Allegheny General Hospital, leaving behind a legacy of love and laughter.

He was born in Bethlehem, PA on March 17, 1953, a son to the late John H. and Dorothy Mahle McCandless.

He grew up amidst the forests of Northeastern, PA, which fostered a lifelong love of walking in the woods with his dogs. His father was a printer, poet, and Quaker theologian, his mother was a children's librarian and homemaker. From them, John acquired a passion for building and making things, and strong Quaker values of justice and peace. He graduated from Westtown School in Chester, PA, and pursued his passion for acting at Beloit College in Wisconsin. Following his studies, John pursued a Juris Doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law, graduating in 1978. He practiced law in Pittsburgh before moving to Erie, PA, where he established his own practice helping injured individuals and families, and later served as a partner in the Quinn Law Firm.

In 1980, John married Patty Hamilton, and they were blessed with two sons, David and Daniel. After Patty's passing in 2014, John found love again with Beth Seidle, marrying her in 2016. Together, they shared a decade of happiness in Virginia and Clarion, PA, where John rediscovered his passion for theater and homesteading. He liked to stay busy in his retirement years, traveling to Belize, Greece, Ireland and Alaska, also engaging in numerous

home improvement projects at their new home. John was a devoted father to David and Daniel, and a cherished grandfather of James, Lydia, and McKenna McCandless, along with another baby girl on the way. His love for his family and friends was evident in every aspect of his life.

In addition to his children and grandchildren, he is survived by his wife, Beth McCandless and a brother, Christopher McCandless. He is further survived by many cousins, nieces, nephews and dear friends.

Known for his kind and genuine personality, John was a down-to-earth individual who always had a smile to share and a humorous anecdote to brighten the room. He took pride in his Quaker faith and enjoyed time spent with his Quaker Friends Meeting group.

John leaves behind a legacy of compassion, wisdom, and laughter that will live on in the hearts of all who knew him. In memory of John, let us celebrate the joy he brought into this world and the love he shared with all who knew him. Rest in peace, John, knowing that your spirit lives on in the hearts of those you touched.

Friends and family are invited to attend a memorial service at the Robert V. Burns Funeral Home, 638 Wood St., Clarion, PA 16214 on Saturday, March 9, 2024 at 2 pm. In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorials be made out to American Friends Service Committee [afsc.org], 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 or to Westtown Schools, 975 Westtown Road, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19382, or using the following link <http://www.westtown.edu/wfdonate> , please choose make a gift at the bottom of the page and include in memory of John McCandless.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAR 9. 2:00 PM (ET)

Robert V. Burns Funeral Home  
638 Wood Street  
Clarion, PA 16214  
(814) 226-6300  
<https://www.rvburnsfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall



“ My mother, Mary Avery, spent some of her happiest hours getting to know John and Pat and helping care for Dan and Dave as they were growing up. Their warmth and caring made her feel as though she was part of the family. We're so grateful for this wonderful set of friendships and the joy it gave my mother. We send our condolences to everyone for losing John and our gratitude for the time he and my mother, and the rest of the family, were able to share together.

*Ralph and Lesley Avery*

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**Ralph Avery** - March 10, 2024 at 11:53 AM

“ When I heard the news about John’s death I was stunned into a numb silence. This could not be. A man —my brother-in-law—whom I had known for 50 years was gone. The man my younger sister Patricia Lynnwood loved; the father of my two beloved nephews and grandfather to their children; the man who was a Quaker—raised to revere the outdoors, animals, and people; the man who remarried and found love again in Beth; the hugely successful attorney; the younger brother of his beloved Chris and uncle to Suzannah—this man was abruptly gone. I had no idea what to say, or feel, or do. Perhaps it was John’s exceptional vitality that made the news impossible. He was tall, healthy, and strong. He would not die—not for at least another decade or more. How could a simple fall take him from all of us? When I heard the news, I felt as though something was terribly wrong. Nature was turned upside down. What would Beth and her children do now? How would Dave and Dan and their families live the rest of their lives without him? I remember all too well John’s inexhaustible care of my sister Patty as she suffered through her aggressive and merciless cancer. We prayed together, cried together, and though dying inside himself, he remained hopeful and optimistic. His love and devotion were unshakable. The last decade of his life, he found love and happiness again with Beth and her family. They traveled together, worked on house projects, and encouraged each other’s interests. It is perhaps fitting that his last project was building a garden Beth wanted for both of them. John loved the outdoors, took delight in planting flowers and nurturing them to grow and flourish. He imaginatively looked for ways of improving their beautiful home. It was fun for him. When he and Beth moved to Clarion, John had returned to his roots, to a beautiful cabin in the woods of Pennsylvania. He was home again. John loved dogs. He and Patty, and then he and Beth, had several of them. John and I talked frequently about the nearly mystical joy dogs brought to our lives. Perhaps the picture accompanying this obituary reveals his true nature better than any words can. John smiled with his whole face, his whole spirit. So alive, so exuberant, and so happy in his “aliveness”. Which brings me back to being stunned at the news of

*his death. How, in the course of two days, does a man go from being so alive with love and plans for his and Beth's future, to being suddenly gone? Where does that vitality go? I will miss him. To Beth and Dave and Dan, and all of John's family, I send my deepest sympathies. Gone too soon. May he rest in peace.*

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**Rebecca Hamilton** - March 06, 2024 at 05:51 PM

RH

“ Rebecca H. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John W. McCandless.

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**Rebecca H.** - March 06, 2024 at 04:19 PM

KF

“ Kosenko family purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of John W. McCandless.



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**Kosenko family** - March 06, 2024 at 03:36 PM

SA

“ Dear Beth and family, I am so sorry for your loss. My deepest condolences. I knew John since about 1958, including as a classmate at Westtown School. He was always the kind, good, and thoughtful person that you remember him as in the obituary. And he was a fun playmate. We spent hours playing in the stream in his parents' woods. His dramatic performances at Westtown were absolutely amazing. I still attend regularly the Quaker Theological Discussion Group sessions that he frequently attended with his dad John. He leaves a wonderful legacy in so many areas. Much love, Steve Angell, Richmond, Indiana.

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**Stephen Angell** - March 05, 2024 at 10:38 AM

JS

“ *Our sympathy and condolences to Daniel and David and their families. We fondly recall our acquaintance your father. We know he will be missed. Chris and Jack Schaaf*

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**John Schaaf** - March 05, 2024 at 08:23 AM

DM

“ *This is a shock, and given what Dad has meant to me throughout my entire life there is hard to meaningfully capture it all right now. My Dad was a wonderful guy. He was a hard worker and a highly principled man at home and at work. Yet, there was nothing hard austere about him. At every age in my life, and those of my kids and cousins, he loved to play with us and talk to us. He was active and interested in our lives and in the lives of the people around him. The prior comments identify his love of building things, but in equal measure he loved to build people up with encouragement, kindness, and attention. I'm glad my kids got to experience some of what Dan and I had growing up. We love him and will miss him very much. Dave, Christy, James & Lydia McCandless*

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**David McCandless** - March 04, 2024 at 11:09 AM

LD

“ *I was so sorry to hear of John's passing. I worked with John at the Quinn Law Firm, and he was without a doubt one of my favorites. He always had a smile and his laugh was so infectious. I will always remember his kindness and his humor. Rest in peace, John. My sincere condolences to his family.*

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**Lori Duska** - March 04, 2024 at 11:01 AM

TR

“ I'm so sorry to learn of John's untimely passing. We were law school classmates and friends, and it was my pleasure to move his admission to the Erie County Court of Common Pleas when he and Patty relocated to Erie. David and Daniel, he was so proud of both of you, and we both enjoyed catching up on the activities of our boys when we were together. John was so happy to meet and later marry Beth after losing Patty at such a young age. Regrettably, I'm in CO and will be unable to return to PA to express my sympathies personally at calling hours or the funeral service. Please accept my sincere condolences on the passing of such a warm, interesting and talented soul.

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**Tim Riley** - March 04, 2024 at 08:38 AM

JS

“ Just as my niece, Kimberly said, John was always good to me. Even though he was a brother-in-law, he made me feel like I was his younger sister, who he encouraged, protected, and seemed to understand me, even when I didn't myself. We visited Pat and John so often in Pittsburgh when they lived there and so many times in Erie, we couldn't count them. Dinners out, games, boat rides, movies, amusement parks, ice cream trips, miniature golf, singing around her piano. The list goes on and on. We all had a blast together in his red car, as Kim mentioned, his boat (who my daughter, Becca said after her first ride, **THAT WAS MY WORST FUN**, I guess because John went too fast. She was 5.

*My kids, Michael, Rebecca and Patrick practically grew up with David and Dan, their pseudo older brothers.*

*John always encouraged my writing and told me even long after Patty had died, to send him anything new I'd written. I did. And it was his encouragement that made me apply for two writing jobs, one for a weekly newspaper, one for a more widespread magazine. I got them both and ended up writing hundreds of articles over the course of two to three years. I am grateful for his believing in me.*

*He, Pat and the boys were an extension of me, my John, and our kids. They were our go to couple.*

*John gave the best hugs, he'd just envelope you into his arms ( and being so much taller than I, I literally knew what a bear hug was). I felt safe with him.*

*And he cared for Patty almost constantly during her cancer. He was at every appointment, welcomed us all in their home so often, so we could be with her, tend to her and help distract her from her hellish disease and plight. We are grateful for his care during her ordeal.*

*Beth, we are so saddened for your loss, for the loss to your family and for the future you could have had in your lovely home. Such a*

*tragic, unexpected passing.  
Rest in peace, John and say hi to all you meet on your next journey.  
We will miss our meet ups at Cousin Basil's or The Nook. 💔*

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**Judith H Schardt** - March 04, 2024 at 01:41 AM

JF

“ *John F. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John W. McCandless.*

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**John F.** - March 03, 2024 at 11:07 PM

SF

“ I can't believe that John - a force of nature - is so suddenly gone. He was my dear brother-in-law, an attorney, a gardener, a Quaker, a talented craftsman, a model train enthusiast (his basement layout rivaled the Science Center's in Pittsburgh for detail), a loving grandfather despite the interruptions of Covid, a builder, and a lover of woods. He built a beautiful red sports car that ran like a top, and a model sailboat for all of us to enjoy that sank like a stone in Conneaut Lake. (No one laughed harder than he did at the great failed launching.) He put every saved dime into educating his sons for distinguished careers, which they have both achieved. He supported my sister Patty in her musical career, helping her set up many recitals and punch bowls. And later, he helped her endure the long, hard months of her battle with cancer. He got her through every night.



I will miss him. Just knowing that he and Beth were homesteading in their cabin in the woods made me happy. He grew up working in the woods with his fiercely principled father, who was a Quaker, political activist, and poet. As the title of his father's book of poetry affirms, despite all the ways we distort or forsake God's truth, and despite all the unforeseen fates that overtake us, "yet still we kneel."

Good bye, dear brother. Thanks for all you gave us. We will watch over your grandchildren and tell them about you. Love from "your crazy sister Sue."

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Suzanne Free - March 03, 2024 at 04:22 PM

MK

“ Mykola K. planted a grove of 3 [Memorial Trees](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John W. McCandless.

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Mykola K. - March 02, 2024 at 08:19 PM

KF

“ John was my uncle, my aunt Poon’s husband. I am grateful for all the years he supported her and gave her a beautiful life—with two wonderful sons who have grown into amazing men and fathers themselves.

*My happiest memories of John are from the mini summer vacations that my family spent with them in Erie—going to Waldameer, Presque Isle, driving around in John’s fun red car, or just playing in the basement or backyard. So many fun meals and happy talks about our lives and future plans.*

*Poon joked that when they retired, she would have John build a Comet roller coaster in the backyard for us just like our favorite ride at Waldameer. John said “Sure!”*

*It made him happy to facilitate her life and help make their home and yard beautiful.*

*I will miss John and am sorry that we haven’t been in touch for the past ten years. He was a wonderful uncle to me and my three children William, Carter, and Mary. I am SO grateful for how welcome he made us feel with every visit—and for all the happy memories we have of him from our time spent in his home in Erie.*

*He took pride in his family and took great care of them—and was wonderful with his entire extended family of in-laws for decades! We miss him.*

*Losing him like this feels like losing Poon all over again, since he was “half” the beloved duo. My condolences to David and Danny—and to John’s wife Beth. It makes me glad to know he shared the last decade of his life enjoying his well-earned retirement with a youthful and energetic companion who made him happy.*

*My sympathies to John’s brother as well. This unexpected and untimely departure has been a shock to all who knew and loved*

*John. I hope it makes everyone feel better, however, to remember what a force of Nature John was. He made no apologies for going after what he wanted—and nothing stopped him from pursuing his passions. He had a good life.*

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**Kimberly Free** - March 02, 2024 at 07:19 PM

DF

“ *Beth and family. I’m so sorry to hear of John’s passing haw such a fun and caring person and certainly enjoyed going to your mothers whether is was for us to get together and have a meal or just visiting. Again I’m so sorry to hear of his passing. Love Debbie*

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**Debbie Ferringer** - March 02, 2024 at 01:55 PM

KH

“ *Beth - so sorry for your loss. Praying for strength as you make the transition to life without John. May your memories carry you through. Karen Horstman*

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**Karen Horstman** - March 02, 2024 at 01:15 PM

SV

“ *McCandless family - my sincere sympathy - I knew John when I worked at the Erie County Court House*

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**Sandie VanVolkenburg** - March 02, 2024 at 12:43 PM



“ *I was surprised and saddened to hear of John's death. I had the privilege of working with John for Many years. I greatly respected his legal ability and cherished his friendship. My condolences to Beth, David and Daniel on your loss. John was truly a great guy and died way too young.*  
*Jack Quinn*

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**Jack Quinn** - March 01, 2024 at 07:16 PM