



John Murdock Kenn

June 3, 1939 - August 10, 2023

John Murdock Kenn, age 84, of Sault Ste Marie Michigan passed away at McKinley Manor Assisted Living in Sault Ste Marie, Michigan on August 10, 2023. He was born in Port Huron, Michigan, on June 3, 1939, to Donald and Elizabeth (McLennan) Kenn.

John grew up in Port Huron as an only child, but with a best friend who was like a brother to him—Stephen Balmer. John graduated from Port Huron High School in 1957. He attended Port Huron Junior College for two years and then transferred to Central Michigan University to earn his bachelor degree. While at CMU, John met Barbara Hagle and they became engaged and later were married on June 27, 1964 in Drayton Plains, MI. John earned a Masters in Museum Curation from CMU and later a Masters in Library Science at Western Michigan University.

John is probably best remembered as the High School Librarian at Sault Area High School—a position which he held from 1968 until his retirement in 1994. Prior to his long career with Sault Area Public Schools, John was a history & civics teacher and drivers ed instructor at Shepherd High School and at Standish-Sterling High School in Lower Michigan. He originally came to Sault Ste Marie as a Librarian and classroom instructor for Lake Superior State College of MTU. Mr. Kenn found his niche with the high school students, and is fondly remembered by many students and especially the members in the

AV Club and Key Club at Sault High. Mr. Kenn dined on Coke or a McDonald's breakfast most days and was very appreciative when students would make the Coke and breakfast run for him.

Unable to sit still most of the time, Mr. Kenn could be found working in the sound booth of the Strahl Theater for many productions and ceremonies, organizing Homecoming activities and he also enjoyed attending Sault High athletic games where he helped with a myriad of tasks. Along with the library duties, you could find him in the AV room of the SAHS library fixing overhead projectors, film projectors, and other pieces of audio/visual equipment that were used by teachers at Sault High. John was also a long time member of the Sault Kiwanis Club where he held both local and state level offices. He brought his family to many Kiwanis state conventions and his kids were always very happy if there was a pool in the hotel.

John was a member of the First United Presbyterian Church and held many volunteer positions in the church from Sunday School superintendent to the guy who mopped the floor of the social hall. The job at the church he really liked best, though, was that of the guy who would duck out of the sanctuary during Sunday service and go to the social hall and make wateredown koolaid for the social hour that followed the service.

John and Barbara moved to Sault Ste Marie in 1967 and all four of their children were born in the Sault. The Kenns were actively involved in many organizations, committees, and boards throughout the Sault. John was one of the original masterminds of I-500 snowmobile race (although he never drove a snowmobile himself) and he spent many years in the press box at the I-500 track where you could hear him on WSOO/WSUE radio with his tagline of "John Kenn with an I-500 minute" several times a day in February each year. John kept statistics compiled for the races and he also kept a compilation of the history of the I-500 snowmobile race from the inaugural run until 2010

when his health was declining and he was no longer able to keep the long hours and dedication he had for so many years. John's extensive I-500 information and collection has been given to a current I-500 volunteer.

John Kenn was a very civic-minded individual and participation in his community was very important to him. During the late 1960s through 1980s, John was a board member of the Chippewa County Historical society. He was an avid reader and researcher of all things Sault Ste Marie and also the Great Lakes freighters. For many summers he taught courses at LSSC/LSSU for the Elder Hostel program with his focus on history of Michigan. He was hired to board tour busses that were in the Sault and he would narrate a history of Sault Ste Marie as the passengers listened and asked questions. John's personal library collection has been donated to the Chippewa County Historical Society. John became active in the local Boy Scouts Troop 105 when his son, Peter, started in Cub Scouts. He continued his service to the Boy Scouts Troop 105 and the Hiawathaland Council for many years. He was an integral part of the International Scout Rally (held in several different locations over the years), which continues to this day every fall. He continued his service with the Boy Scouts and the International Scout Rally until around 2014.

John is survived by his wife of 59 years, Barbara Kenn; his daughters, Deborah Tripp of Leesburg, Virginia, Susan (Bill) Schomberg of Dafter, MI, Peggy (Brian) Osborne of Brimley, MI; and son, Peter (Seija) Kenn of Negaunee, MI. He is also survived by his childhood best friend, Stephen Balmer of Port Huron, MI. John's grandchildren are Samuel (Morgan) Tripp and Julieanne (Evan) Tripp of Virginia, Sam (Luke Smith) Strahl of Saginaw, MI, Andrew (Marisa) Osborne of Great Lakes, IL, Miranda Schomberg of Wisconsin, Mark Osborne of Brimley, Aili Kenn and Alex Kenn of Negaunee, Michigan. John is also survived by one great grandchild, Sloane Smith, of Saginaw, Michigan.

John was predeceased by his parents, Donald Kenn, Elizabeth Kenn Learman, & Lowery Learman (step father), his father-in-law and mother-in-law Alton & Fidelia Hagle, his brother-in-law and sister-in-law, Bill and Sybil Landry and a son-in-law, William Tripp.

Condolences may be left to the family at www.galerfuneralhomes.com. John's wife, Barbara doesn't use the internet, so condolences to her can also be sent in the mail addressed to Barbara Kenn, McKinley Manor Assisted Living, 2023 W 4th Avenue, Apt W107, Sault Ste Marie MI 49783.

Special thanks to all of the visitors, staff and many health professionals that took care of John for the past decade as his health declined. John's family are especially thankful for the staff of McKinley Manor and Hospice of Sault Ste Marie.

Visitation for John will be Tuesday August 29, 2023 from 4:00pm until 7:00pm at Clark Hovie Galer Funeral Home, 113 Maple St. Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783. Another visitation will be Wednesday August 30, 2023 from 10:00am until the time of the funeral service at 11:00am at First United Presbyterian Church, 555 Bingham Ave. Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783, Rev. Mark Gabbard officiating.

Final resting place is Oaklawn Chapel Gardens. In lieu of flowers, gifts in John's memory may be left to the Boy Scout Troop 105 of Sault Ste Marie, the I-500 History and Hall of Fame project (PO Box 500, Sault Ste Marie MI), or the Chippewa County Historical Society (115 Ashmun St, Sault Ste Marie MI).

Clark Hovie Galer Funeral Home assisted the family with arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Oaklawn Chapel Gardens

15264 South M-129
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG **29**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Clark Hovie Galer Funeral Home
113 Maple St
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783

Visitation

AUG **30**. 10:00 AM (ET)

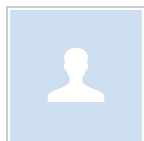
First United Presbyterian Church
555 Bingham Avenue
Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783

Funeral Service

AUG **30**. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (ET)

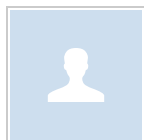
First United Presbyterian Church
555 Bingham Avenue
Sault Ste Marie, MI 49783

Tribute Wall



“ *John Murdock Kenn*

October 05, 2023 at 09:54 AM



“ *John Murdock Kenn*

October 02, 2023 at 10:14 PM



“ *Dear Family I was Peters Den Mother and worked with Barb and John for scouts. He was a remarkable man Condolences Linda [Hirt] Rogers*

Linda Rogers - August 25, 2023 at 05:34 PM



“ *Dear Barb and family,
Praying and thinking of you at this time of great loss.
I am so glad I got to see John and you in 2015 in HB. It meant so much reminiscing about the family of McLennans. He has done so much work and research on the family tree. His middle name Murdock...so wonderful.
I loved his humor it makes me smile even now.*

*God bless you,
Deanna Duggan-Carmody and family
(cousin Mary Jeans daughter)*

Deanna - August 20, 2023 at 09:08 AM

DJ

“ To Barb and the kids, John was a great Scouter who was fun to be around and made Scouting fun for the kids. He is missed. Dewey Jones, past Hiawathaland Council Scout Executive.

Dewey G Jones - August 16, 2023 at 05:45 PM

DA

“ John was the Superman without the cape , he truly knew something about everything. A true “ Ambassador of Sault Ste. Marie “
Rest in Peace my friend

Dave Allen - August 16, 2023 at 09:15 AM

TH

“ Saddened to learn of his passing and I had no idea Mr. Kenn was involved in so many things. What an amazing life! Mr. Kenn (and Mrs. Kenn) were both so very nice and encouraging to many generations of students at Sault High and Sault Junior High. I was fortunate to get to know them a bit outside of class through my friendship with their daughter, Susan and I was always made to feel welcome at their home. Condolences to Mrs. Kenn, to Susan and to her siblings.

Thomas Hill - August 15, 2023 at 02:35 PM

RK

“ I learned so much from Mr. Kenn. He always had a nugget of trivia or history and he always had a kind word, usually cleverly disguised in humorous sarcasm. He made high school a lot more bearable and always made me feel valued. He impacted so many lives and is definitely missed.

Rachel King-Marchio - August 15, 2023 at 08:37 AM

JB

“ I spent many a happy hour in the Soo High library with Mr Kenn and the eclectic crowd he attracted. He made it a welcoming place.

Jeff Brady - August 15, 2023 at 12:02 AM

KS

“ John will always be remembered as the skinny Santa Claus with the sly chuckle and a bag of candy canes at the Retired School Employees Christmas party.

Ken & Dianne Schmitigal - August 14, 2023 at 10:07 PM

RP

“ I knew John when he was “Mr. Kenn” at Sault High. He was a good and knowledgeable man and I am grateful for having known him. May he rest in peace. My prayerful sympathies to his family...

Rev. Ben Paris - August 14, 2023 at 01:25 PM