



John Wesley Reed

December 11, 1918 - March 6, 2018

Age 99, died peacefully on Tuesday, March 6, 2018. He was born December 11, 1918, in Independence, MO, the only child of Novus Homo E. and Lilian (Houchens) Reed. John began his academic career at William Jewell College in Liberty, MO, continued at Cornell Law School, Ithaca, NY, and completed his studies at Columbia Law School in NY, NY. His professional career began in Kansas City, MO, as a practicing attorney. After acknowledging that teaching was his passion, he joined the faculty of the University of Oklahoma Law School. Thus began his brilliant and storied career in academia. In 1949, he moved to Ann Arbor, MI, to become a member of the University of Michigan Law School faculty. After a half century, he retired from teaching. Before his retirement, he was named as the Thomas M Cooley Professor of Law. His tenure at Michigan was interspersed with visiting professorships at Yale, Harvard, Princeton, Chicago, NYU and San Diego. He also served as dean of the University of Colorado and Wayne State University Law Schools and the director of the Institute for Continuing Legal Education at the University of Michigan. He was particularly proud to have received the Legacy Award from the Bar Association of Michigan, an exceptional honor bestowed by his peers in recognition of John's contributions to the legal profession and the values imbued in John's every breath. John believed that education must go beyond the classroom. With enthusiasm and quiet generosity, he devoted time, energy, and personal resources promoting, supporting and guiding many organizations such as the University Musical Society, Ministers & Missionaries

Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches, and the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. John loved great music and was a member and director of the First Baptist Church choirs, both in Boulder, CO and Ann Arbor, MI. In 1981, John became the Administrative Secretary of the International Society of Barristers. This group became the perfect forum for a man who was an eloquent and ardent advocate for justice and service through the legal profession. His speeches at the yearly meetings were renowned for serving as an ethical and moral compass for practicing lawyers worldwide. Beyond the barristers, those in John's audiences who were not schooled in the law were equally enthralled, and moved to greater social action and to a deeper conscience. While John's career was a focal point of his life, he was also a devoted and generous family man. In 1946, John married Ivy Vonada and they had three children, Alison, Mark and Randy. The marriage ended in divorce. For several years, John was a single parent, raising three young children, teaching at the U-M Law School, and directing the choir at his beloved First Baptist Church in Ann Arbor. To his children, he made it feel seamless. During Christmas of 1960, John met Dorothy Floyd Jodoin, a widow with two daughters, Suzanne and Victoria. On March 5, 1961, John, Dot and their five young children were united in marriage. With courage and faith, he and Dot undertook the daunting task of raising their children, the oldest of whom was ten. They unified the two families with wisdom and grace. Their marriage was a remarkable, strong and elegantly romantic partnership of 51 years, ending in 2012 with Dot's death. The sweetest and deepest legacy he leaves is as a devoted husband to Dot and the heart-wide-open father of five children, eight grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. John was a man of great faith. He was a soul-deep American Baptist who lived his faith daily by example and service. John is survived by 3 daughters, Alison Ann (Willard James, Jr) Robison of Saline, MI, Mary Victoria (Walter Paul III) Peter of Reston, VA, and Suzanne Michelle (Peter) Unger of Pinckney, MI; 8 grandchildren, Stephen Reed (Jamie Lynne Buckler) Robison, Emily Elizabeth (Kyle Dustin) Travis, Courtney Victoria (Pedro Miguel) Marques, Walter Paul

Peter IV, Christian Samuel (Lora Sherfey) Peter, Wesley Edgar Unger, Anna Elaine Unger, and Mark Fielding (Staci Lynn Williams) Reed; 9 great-grandchildren and counting, Olive Abrah Peter, Boaz Champion Peter, Reed Alexandra Marques, Sloane Emerson Marques, Kate Elizabeth Reed, Jack Fielding Reed, Grant William Reed, Madison Agnes Travis, Lukas John Robison and Ruby Ann Robison; his sister-in-law Esther Floyd of Ann Arbor; and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Dorothy, and his two sons, John Mark and Randolph Forbes. A Memorial Service celebrating John's life will be held at 1pm on Saturday, March 17, 2018 at First Baptist Church, 517 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor, MI with the Revs. Paul and Stacey Simpson Duke presiding. A reception will follow after the service. Memorial contributions may be made to The Residence at Arbor Hospice 2366 Oak Valley Drive Ann Arbor, MI 48103; Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (or MMBB) 475 Riverside Drive Suite 1700 New York, NY 10115-0049; The Innocence Project 40 Worth St Suite 701 New York, NY 10013. Arrangements entrusted to the Robison-Bahnmler Funeral Home Saline, MI To sign John's guestbook, to leave a memory, or for more information and directions, please visit www.rbfhsaline.com

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 17. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor
517 East Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
<http://www.fbca2.org/>

Tribute Wall



“ *John Wesley Reed*

October 23, 2023 at 01:07 PM



“ *John Reed was my evidence professor in law school, and I was thrilled to work with him in the profession years later, the beneficiary, with others, of his humor, humanity and expertise in the law. There will not be another like him for a long time, if ever. Condolences to the family, who will have some considerable comfort from what John contributed to the rest of us.*

*William J. Giovan
Retired Circuit Judge*

William J Giovan - March 20, 2018 at 07:36 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of John Wesley Reed.*



March 14, 2018 at 09:52 PM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of John Wesley Reed.*



March 14, 2018 at 01:07 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of John Wesley Reed.*



March 13, 2018 at 09:26 PM



“ *My goodness in reading these comments I was taken by Lori's and then Bonnie's. I joined the First Baptist Church as a single father. During my time as a member I not only met my wife (now of 24 years) but another who met was John Reed first up in the choir loft. When I think of John the smile (just like the picture I see now) was constant. We moved on to another church but I always missed John, his smile, love of life, love of music and so much more. 99 years old and one who is going to live on and on (we need more people like this). A few weeks ago I was at the Robison Bahnmler Funeral Home to visit another family. At the door I talked with John's grandson. We, naturally, talked about John and there was that smile already passed on. So a physical 'good bye', John, but you are going to live on in my life.*

Mark Hansen - March 12, 2018 at 10:27 PM



“ *Dear Alison, Mary & Suzanne, You All have my Heartfelt Sympathy for the Death of Your Beloved Precious Father John. Isaiah 25:8.*

James Saunders - March 12, 2018 at 06:03 PM

PC

“ *PRESTIGE WINE IMPORTS CORP* purchased the *Divine Peace Bouquet* for the family of John Wesley Reed.



PRESTIGE WINE IMPORTS CORP - March 12, 2018 at 10:21 AM

LB

“ I do not know where to begin... John was the choir director at the First Baptist Church. My Dad was a powerful bass singer... over the years, my Dad developed serious lung problems, but it was his respect for John that kept him going to choir practice and singing on Sundays even when he had to arrive 1/2 hour early to walk up those stairs and recover enough to sing. My Dad was my hero in so many ways... But John was the one man who my Dad respected enough to give more than he had left to get out there and do what meant so much to him. He was a successful engineer, but singing was what made his life.

That does not begin to explain it all though.. while we left Ann Arbor when I was young and moved to India, when we came back - while I do not consider myself a practicing Baptist in any way given what life has shown me, I am religious in my own way - I do know that the love, care and concern that John and Dot and all the Reeds showed and brought to me and my family are the things that make life worthwhile.

I moved to Africa and started a non profit to help elephants and the people who live with them. John ALWAYS made it to my events in Ann Arbor, even when he was well over 90 years old! I felt so much love from that and it gave me more than I can say.

I will always love all of you Reeds. Thank you for sharing your lives and love with me and my family. I am with you always. John, you will always be a big shining star of inspiration for me.

Lori Bergemann - March 11, 2018 at 03:18 PM

SH

“ I was fortunate enough to have Professor Reed for my evidence class in the early 70's at Michigan Law and enjoyed following his impressive career. A great man indeed.

Stephen Hopkins - March 10, 2018 at 01:12 PM

LP

“ We had the absolute privilege of meeting John in 2009 when we visited our AFS Exchange student son Wesley Unger and his family in Pinckney. Wesley lived with us in New Zealand on his student exchange in 2006. John is Wesley's Grandfather. John gave us a personal tour of his Uni at the age of 90 one afternoon and we were running to keep up with him through corridors, in and out of lecture theatres, up and down stairs. He also came with his wife one evening to share a meal and the evening with us at his daughter Sue and her husband Pete's house - Wesley's parents.

We were amazed at the energy, passion, enthusiasm and kindness of this beautiful man and feel so lucky we got the opportunity to meet him and share some time with him, his wife and the Unger family

We send our love and sincere condolences to the family at large.

Rest in Peace John.

Lindsay and Merrolee Penman

Lindsay Penman - March 10, 2018 at 06:57 AM

CW

“ *My deepest sympathy for your loss. I used to work for John Wesley Reed when he was Dean of Wayne State University Law School. He was the kindest man (second to my husband) and made it a pleasure to go to work each day. I cherish the privilege of knowing such a wonderful man and speak of him often. Again my sincere condolences to the family. Charlotte Wilson*

Charlotte Wilson - March 10, 2018 at 06:37 AM

WB

“ Nancy and I send our sincere condolences. What a great man, we are grateful to have met John.

Walt Byers - March 09, 2018 at 09:41 PM

EA

My deepest sympathy to Dean Reed and his family. He was called out of retirement to become Dean at Wayne Sate University. He was a truly blessed and beautiful person. He would refer the people in his office as his friends. But that was a style of his. He was a humble man. I will always have fond thoughts of him in my memory. This is what I loved about him. Elaine Andrews, Secretary to the Dean

Elaine Andrews - March 10, 2018 at 06:40 PM



Stephen
Selbst

“ I took evidence with Professor Reed in the spring of 1980, my third year. His teaching was excellent and clear; from my earliest days as a lawyer, I had a better understanding of the rules of evidence than many lawyers with far more experience. More importantly, in a law school filled with oversized egos and petty tyrants, he was modest, approachable and respectful of students. He will missed.

Stephen Selbst, Class of 1980.

Stephen Selbst - March 09, 2018 at 08:12 PM

BK

“ John Reed was my choir director, an amazing tenor in my choir, a man with a deep and abiding faith in God, someone who believed in and practiced unconditional love to all, but most of all he was my friend. I will miss him terribly! He and Dot were the first people at St. Joe's Hospital to see and hold my son Sam, who is now 22. He is now among the Saints in Heaven and reunited with his beloved Dot! Praise be to God!

Bonnie Kidd - March 09, 2018 at 05:15 PM

ET

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Emily Travis - March 09, 2018 at 10:03 AM

TV

“ I did not know him all that well, but I can tell you that this man moved faster at 95 yrs old than I do at 45. Amazing!

TRACY VINCENT - March 08, 2018 at 04:35 PM

LS

“ Lynn Marie Suits lit a candle in memory of John Wesley Reed



Lynn Marie Suits - March 08, 2018 at 02:20 PM

LS

To you all who took such good care of your dad, thank you. Too special for words. Who will tell me funny lawyer jokes now?

Lynn Marie Suits - March 08, 2018 at 02:22 PM

SF

“ *Have always loved and held the highest respect for both your mom and dad. Thinking back today on the time the ‘Three Sues’ entertained our parents at Geddes St. Apartments. Fond memories at their home and lounging poolside. Much love to all the family.
Love Sue and Jim (Arcari) Frye*

sue frye - March 08, 2018 at 11:01 AM