



John Hoehle Downs, age 98 of Detroit Lakes, died June 21, 2023. He was fortunate in that he was able to live out his final wish -- to die at his century farm home on the south shore of Buffalo Lake surrounded by members of his loving family.

John was born on May 18, 1925 in Duluth, MN to Edward Henry Downs Jr. and Dorothy Elizabeth (Hoehle) Downs. He grew up in nearby Proctor, MN and graduated in 1943 from Proctor High School where he was a four-sport athlete:

baseball, basketball, football and track. Post high school graduation, he was drafted into the US Army. He was selected for special officer training and spent time in school at Stanford University, but prior to completing his training, he was sent to the European theater where he served in the 71st infantry division of Patton's 3rd Army as a PFC. During his time in combat, his unit was strafed by an early German jet and he was exposed to the liberation of a concentration camp. He was honorably discharged in April 1946. His experiences in the war and living a rich but impoverished life during The Depression made him one of America's "Greatest Generation."

After his tour of duty, he went to the U of MN on the GI bill and earned his BS degree. (He later completed a Master's degree in Mathematics at Bemidji State and UMD). During the summers of 1949, 1950 and 1952, he worked with the USGS in Alaska surveying the north slope of the Brooks Range and searching for petroleum related geological formations. He also had interactions with native villages, most notably Anaktuvuk Pass. His 16 mm movies of his Alaskan experiences were donated to the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

John began his academic career in 1951 at Virginia, MN teaching math/science and coaching basketball/football. In 1953, he took a job as a math teacher and head basketball coach at Detroit Lakes. There he met the love of his life, Dorothy Danielson, a fellow teacher. They married August 22, 1954, and both continued to teach in Detroit Lakes. In 1955, he returned to the U of MN to earn his MS degree in Geological Engineering while Dorothy taught at Alexander Ramsey HS, St. Paul. In 1956, he began working as a geological engineer for Phillips Petroleum in Billings, MT and later in Bartlesville, OK. In 1962, Dorothy and he returned to Detroit Lakes to once again teach and to raise their children. While teaching he completed his MS in Mathematics at UMD and Bemidji State. In 1985, John retired from teaching high school math, primarily geometry. He loved the logic of mathematical proofs and the applicability of geometry in life.

With his wife, John raised six children, Jed, Ruth, and Dan Downs and Beth, Ann, and Bob Newgard, and served as a foster parent to a "Laotian" refugee, Sivirek Pathammavong who now resides in his homeland of Chang Mai, Thailand. In addition to teaching, John was a hobby farmer, working over 262 acres of small grains and hay and running a small cow/calf operation with a John Deere Model A and International H and M tractors. In 2008, his farm became a Century Farm. His kids think his farming efforts were all a ruse to teach them how to appreciate the land and develop a work ethic.

Following his retirement from teaching in 1985, John made many trips back to Alaska and traveled with extended family to Europe, New Zealand and Australia. In his mid 80's he rafted the Colorado River, at 90 he made his last trip with family to Alaska, a rafting and fishing trip on the Kongakut River, and at 92 he rode an elephant in Thailand.

John was involved within the Republican Party serving in a variety of positions. He was an active member of Lund Lutheran Church and served multiple years on church council. He volunteered as an AARP Tax-Aide for over 20 years. In 2008 he was recognized as the Becker County Outstanding Senior Citizen of the year.

In addition to his parents, John was preceded in death by his wife, Dorothy, his son, Bob, and his siblings, Edward (Ted) Downs, II and Nancy Fritz.

He is survived by his children, Beth (Craig) Oslin of Mora, Jed (John E) Downs (Robin) of Madison, WI, Ann Newgard-Larson (Robb) of Detroit Lakes, Ruth (Steve) Clark of Delano, and Dan Downs of Flagstaff, AZ. He is survived by 15 grandchildren, including Jennifer (Job) Barberg of Detroit Lakes, and 13 great grandchildren, including Micah, Hannah and Andrew Barberg, as well as many nieces and nephews by whom he was treasured.

A Life Well Lived



1925-2023

I farmed the land, I tramped the wood.
These are the things I understood.

No grand schemes, they passed me by;
I knew the lake, the hills, the sky.

To hunt a deer, to wet a line,
Gifts from God, So good and fine.

Friends and Kin, I loved them so
Altho I'm gone, I'm sure they know

I'm now at peace, life's battles done,
I've faced the foe and I have won.

John Hoehle Downs

May 18, 1925-Duluth, Minnesota
June 21, 2023-Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

Funeral Services

Monday, June 26, 2023-11:00 a.m.

Lund Lutheran Church
Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

Officiant Pastor Steve Bruer

Organist Jennifer Turnwall

Musicians Gus Downs, Owen Downs, & Dan Downs

Eulogist Jen Barberg

Readers: Katie Larson-Romans 8:31 38-39

Libby Larson-Psalms 23

Rudyard Kipling's "If" by

Matthew Clark

Walter Clark,

Abigail Downs

Isabel Downs

Memorial Folder Attendants

Keri Berg & Thea Vogel

Pallbearers

Daniel Clark Matthew Clark

Barry Oslin Brent Oslin

Job Barberg Kyle Vogel

Musical Selections

Battle Hymn Of The Republic

This Is My Father's World

Softly And Tenderly

I'll Fly Away

God Bless America

When The Roll Is Called Up Yonder

Military Honors by

Lake Regions Veteran's Color Guard

Interment

Lund Lutheran Cemetery

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

Arrangements by

West-Kjos Funeral Home

Detroit Lakes, Minnesota