



John Smeltzer Sr

December 21, 1926 - January 9, 2016

Heaven welcomed an educator this week. John F. Smeltzer, born December 21, 1926, in Redfield, Dallas County, Iowa, son of Paul Ora Smeltzer and Orpha May McGrew, passed away the evening of January 9, 2016, at the age of 89 years, 19 days following a life-time filled with great family times, a wonderful career, superb stories, the joys of a fisherman's life and some marvelous gardens. He was "Mr. Smeltzer" to many students and faculty over a career spanning nearly 40 years starting as a football coach in 1950 in Pella, Iowa, to serving as Superintendent of Schools from 1975 to 1987 in Bode, Iowa as part of the Twin Rivers School District, with stops at Essex, Napier, Madrid and Meriden-Cleghorn schools in various capacities in between.

John was a World War II veteran. He joined the U.S. Navy with the permission of his father at the age of 17 in early 1944. He was a "Plank Owner", part of the first crew, of the U.S.S. Chevalier, DD-805 launched 29 October 1944 at Norfolk, Virginia. After a few months at sea in the North Atlantic, where he always said he only got seasick onceon the first day....and then got over it 3 months later....he was assigned as a Supply Manager and gained some of his initial administrative and personnel skills at the Naval Station, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he remained until his discharge in 1946. He was a member of Livermore American Legion Post 415. He was a 50 year member of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, Speculative Lodge No. 307, Cherokee,

Iowa.

Following his discharge from the U.S. Navy, he attended school on the G.I. Bill at Central College in Pella, where he played football until he injured his knee and then helped coach as a student assistant. He received his Master's Degree in Education from Drake University in Des Moines in late 1952.

He was married May 25, 1952, in the Congregational Church in Stuart, Guthrie County, Iowa, to Patricia Anne Lyddon and they lived a wonderful life together raising two somewhat gregarious boys. His wife "Trish" passed in 2009. John made the transition to life after her passing with the help of family and friends in the Bode, Rutland, and Humboldt area. And to those communities the family is forever grateful. John and Trish decided to reside in Rutland during their retirement, which began in 1987, to be near some of the best catfishing Iowa has to offer at times. He was officially a teacher for 40 years but he was most definitely an angler all his life. They lived and fished in Humboldt County for over 30 years. But, John and Trish had resided and raised their family in the Meriden, Iowa area for almost 20 years prior to that and the banks of the Little Sioux River and Mill Creek hold many wonderful angling days, family tales, and times with friends as well.

His was a life dedicated to listening and assisting with the education of others no matter the venue, age, gender or national origin. In 1955, he took a girls basketball team from Napier, Iowa, to the Iowa State Girls High School Tournament in the opening year of the, then new, Veteran's Auditorium in Des Moines. Those were the "six on six" days and he was hard pressed to pull together a full team of high school girls at Napier and resorted to working into the team a very talented group of junior-high girls to compete against the best Iowa girls basketball had to offer. They came up just a little short in that first round against Goldfield, a team that went on to win that coveted crown in 1955. But his ability to build teams seldom wavered in the years that followed.

John was inducted into the Iowa Athletic Association Hall of Fame in 1994 for his long-term, strong support for Iowa High School Athletics. He retired a Superintendent, but he always had a teacher and coach's flame in his heart. When questioned at the time of his retirement about what he would miss most he replied from his heart "I'll miss the kids the most. As an administrator there is a stigma attached and kids are reluctant to get close. As a former coach and teacher, it was difficult to get used to and I guess I have never gotten used to it."

And through all of those years he was an agrarian as well. His gardens were always grand, seldom simple, and ranged in size from a "smallish" 900 square feet as he reached the 85 years mark to as much as 20,000 square feet in the early years. And, in most years, it was difficult to find a single healthy weed anywhere. Tomatoes, watermelons and cantaloupe were his specialties, but he loved the "canned sunshine" of the green beans and frozen corn in the winter.

He remained to the end a teacher in one way or another. He combined his love for students, teaching, and angling together as he brought his two sons, his two grandchildren and many interested Rutland area youth into the fishing fraternity, teaching them how to catch, clean and prepare Iowa channel catfish with his tricks to make them taste "as good as walleye". But he never did reveal his deepest held secrets on how to make that "perfect" catfish bait. And few knew that he held four U.S. patents on items to aid in both gardening efforts and to serve as aids in fishing. He did bemoan that they cost him more than he ever made however. He was a charter member of the Little Sioux Wildlife Association in Cherokee County and helped lead the early efforts of the West Fork of the Des Moines River Restoration "Three-Rivers" Committee in Humboldt County during his retirement.

John was also the very first member, in 2005, of the Smelser - Smeltzer Family Y-DNA project, a genetic genealogy project for the family started by his son John Jr., now with over 100 participants across North America. His interest in his colonial 1600's, Revolutionary War era and deeper Native American ancestry intrigued him until his last days. His willingness to participate in these early genetic genealogical efforts makes him truly a pioneer in his own right.

He and Trish were the parents of two sons, John F. (Marsha) Smeltzer of Fort Collins, Colorado and Spirit Lake, Iowa, and Michael S. (Carrie) Smeltzer of Cleghorn, Iowa, who survive him. He is also survived by two grandchildren, David Smeltzer of Fort Collins, and Katie O'Day (Kyle) of Davenport, his brother, Bob from West Des Moines, many nieces and nephews, and a host of friends.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, Trish, brothers, James and Richard and sisters, Dorothy Rummans (Chuck) and Betty Chance (Harvey), several nieces and nephews, and very recently his sister-in-law, Sandra Christensen Smeltzer, wife of brother Bob.

The Schuchert-Lentz Funeral Home of Spirit Lake is in charge of arrangements.

A visitation will be held Friday, January 15, 2016 from 4 to 6 pm at the Schuchert-Lentz Funeral Home in Spirit Lake, Iowa.

A weather shortened grave-side service will be held at 1:00 Saturday, January 16, 2016 at the Liberty Township Cemetery, about 4 miles north of the town of Meriden, Cherokee County, Iowa. A reception will immediately follow at the Evangelical Free Church in Meriden.

Tribute Wall

CR

“ *My sincerest condolences to the Smeltzer family. I remember Mr. Smeltzer when he was Superintendent of Meriden-Cleghorn Schools. I was an elementary student there from 1968 to 1976.*
Charles H. Rieper

Charles H. Rieper - September 09, 2017 at 09:02 PM

VT

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Valerie Mary Thorne - March 20, 2016 at 10:22 AM

PH

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Patrick Hagan - February 15, 2016 at 08:41 PM

MG

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Mary Lynn Mogensen Glasser - January 20, 2016 at 08:02 AM

KP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Krys Phillips - January 18, 2016 at 09:15 AM

KP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Krys Phillips - January 18, 2016 at 09:15 AM

SK

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Shirley (Puhrmann) Korleski - January 15, 2016 at 02:33 PM

VH

“ *Many favorite memories of Coach Smeltzer and as Teacher. One is that we meant enough to him that he and Trish came to our 25th class reunion. He was proud to stand with his girls BB team and guys FB teams for us to all have pictures with him for our memories of him. He played an important part in our young lives while at Madrid. Class of '57 (Vera Grow Hick , former BB player for him)*

Vera Grow Hick - January 15, 2016 at 12:36 PM

TR

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Trina(Fisher)Pederson - January 14, 2016 at 10:16 PM

BF

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Bobby Pederson student and friend. - January 14, 2016 at 10:15 PM

CP

“ *Dear John, Marsha and family, I sadly, only had the good fortune of meeting John Sr. briefly in 1976. In that brief meeting it was obvious that he was truly a grand gentleman. I have seen many of these same qualities in John Jr. Sorry for your loss. Howard & Carole*

Carole & Howard Payne - January 14, 2016 at 04:46 PM

MJ

“ *Mr. Smeltzer was a very special man. He was there for me when I needed help in school and he was a good friend to me and our family. We have good memories of him as our friend. We were honored to be his friends. I was honored when he came to my graduation reception at our house. When my husband and I visited him at the home in Milford he played his harmonica for us and the little boy we had with us. We will always treasure that visit. John and Mike and families you have our deepest sympathies.*

Margaret (Medick) Jellings - January 13, 2016 at 06:30 PM

TS

“ *John Sorry to hear about your dad, even though we never knew him, seeing the photos and video, we can see how much the two of you were alike in a lot of ways. God Bless*

Tom and Linda Snyder - January 13, 2016 at 05:38 PM

JP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Janice Pflibsen Parker - January 13, 2016 at 05:19 PM

PE

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Paul Erdmann - January 13, 2016 at 12:43 PM

GN

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Glenda Norton - January 13, 2016 at 07:23 AM

LP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Larry Pedersen - January 12, 2016 at 11:49 PM

NM

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Neal McIntosh - January 12, 2016 at 08:49 PM

JS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

JoLynn Carris Sitzmann - January 12, 2016 at 08:14 PM

MP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Marcella Polle' - January 12, 2016 at 08:11 PM

SL

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Sue (Gottsche) Lindgren - January 12, 2016 at 07:39 PM

JK

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Jane Kruger - January 12, 2016 at 07:23 PM

TO

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Tim ohlson - January 12, 2016 at 07:01 PM

K(

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Karen Walters Crammond (Goodrich) - January 12, 2016 at 06:32 PM

DR

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Darrell and Sandra Rehder - January 12, 2016 at 06:23 PM

KH

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Karen Holst - January 12, 2016 at 06:15 PM

MW

“ Big John was our superintendent and as I recall, every year in high school, there would be an assembly to start the school year. He would talk in this deep, gravelly voice and I remember he would use the term, "Nards"... Nards were something he would not tolerate and he told us so. I quizzed the class of '71 a few years back if anyone remembered what a "nard" was. Grant Mugge was there and he remembered. Nard was an acronym for non-academic rinky-dinks. I'll never forget that and thank Heaven I never had to stand before him in his office!!!

Mark Wilcox - January 12, 2016 at 05:57 PM

BF

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Bruce French - January 12, 2016 at 05:52 PM

SS

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Scott and Teresa Smith - January 12, 2016 at 05:49 PM

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CS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Chad Schuchert - January 12, 2016 at 04:16 PM

JP

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Judy FREDRICKSON Plews - January 12, 2016 at 12:43 PM

DB

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Dan Betz - January 12, 2016 at 07:03 AM

BL

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Brian Lanning - January 11, 2016 at 10:38 PM

A(

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

April (Anderson)Knight - January 11, 2016 at 07:29 PM

JK

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Jenn Kathrens - January 11, 2016 at 06:50 PM

GM

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Gloria McCoy(Scott) - January 11, 2016 at 05:33 PM

GS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Glenda Scott - January 11, 2016 at 05:31 PM

DH

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Darin Hendricks - January 11, 2016 at 04:53 PM

DH

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“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Darin Hendricks - January 11, 2016 at 04:52 PM

HL

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Holly Lyons - January 11, 2016 at 04:39 PM

CW

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Carol (Pritts) Woltman - January 11, 2016 at 03:31 PM

MS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Melissa Searce - January 11, 2016 at 02:47 PM

JB

“ *John was a wonderful superintendent at Twin Rivers. He always had time for the students. Our kids thought the world of him as did my husband John. Our thoughts and prayers are with your family.*
Janine Berte

Janine Berte - January 11, 2016 at 12:49 PM

JS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Jolene and Shawn - January 11, 2016 at 12:16 PM

NB

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Nena Biezuns Buckley - January 11, 2016 at 12:12 PM

LB

“ My dad, Everett Johnson, lived at Stonebridge and a dining room table mate with John. My dad enjoyed conversation with John, as we all did. My 6 year old grandson was interested in music, so John played the harmonica for him & took time to show him how he did that. He was such a patient and kind man. Our sympathies to the family.

Linda Johnson Bronson - January 11, 2016 at 10:47 AM

PJ

“ It has been many many years since I've seen Mr. Smeltzer. He was a wonderful man, human being and Superintendent. I am sorry to hear of his passing. These pictures tell a true story!!!!

Pat Joiner - January 11, 2016 at 09:53 AM

S(

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Sharon (Puhmann)Johnson - January 10, 2016 at 09:28 PM

SJ

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Sharon(Puhmann) Johnson - January 10, 2016 at 09:22 PM

TM

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Tim and Jacquie Mason - January 10, 2016 at 07:57 PM

RP

“ John Smeltzer Sr

Randy and Sandy Pritts - January 10, 2016 at 07:30 PM

SF

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Shirley (French) Foerster - January 10, 2016 at 07:25 PM

KK

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Kevin and Barb Kuhnes - January 10, 2016 at 06:42 PM

GM

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Guy Mendt - January 10, 2016 at 05:40 PM

BB

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Bob Brown - January 10, 2016 at 05:13 PM

JM

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Jake McLouth - January 10, 2016 at 04:02 PM

RO

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Roger Olson - January 10, 2016 at 03:46 PM

LJ

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Larry/Mary Ann Jansen - January 10, 2016 at 02:57 PM

PR

“ *John and Marsha,
So sorry to hear of your father (in-law)'s passing. Thoughts and prayers are with you both and your family.*

Peggy Rick - January 10, 2016 at 02:37 PM

LJ

“ *John and Marsha-- Sorry for your loss as your Dad was a very special Dad and Grandfather to your family. I remember your Dad getting loving care from both of you when he lived with you in Orleans before moving to the Care Center. You had a great mentor, John.*

Larry/Mary Ann Jansen - January 10, 2016 at 02:02 PM

BM

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Becky Marshall - January 10, 2016 at 01:52 PM

DR

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Darrell Rehder - January 10, 2016 at 01:51 PM

BS

“ *John Smeltzer Sr*

Bob and Kate Shaw - January 10, 2016 at 09:18 AM