



John J. McGurk

December 24, 1931 - September 25, 2024

John J. McGurk, age 92 and longtime Springfield resident, died surrounded by family on September 25, 2024.

The youngest of four children, John was born three hours before Christmas on December 24, 1931, to his mother Catherine and father John at their Carpenter Street home in South Philadelphia. He attended St. Anthony's and Southeast Catholic High School, where he excelled at cross-country track. Within weeks of his graduation in 1950, the Korean War erupted, and the deeply patriotic John volunteered for the United States Navy.

Initially stationed in Norfolk, VA, where this city boy developed a passion for country music, John served on the destroyer USS Robert A. Owens and traveled the world extensively. One of his assignments was working in the kitchen, which likely sparked John's lifelong passion for feeding anyone and everyone to a comical excess. Even after military service, he never scaled down his meals and still cooked like he was expecting 300 sailors to drop by for dinner.

Upon honorable discharge in 1954, John returned to Philadelphia. A protector at heart, he joined the Philadelphia Police Department in 1956 and was stationed in the 6th district. He delivered multiple babies on emergency calls, including a set of twins whose mother offered to name one son in his honor. In

1961 he transferred to the Accident Investigation Division, where his daily job consisted of documenting the kind of awful things most people hope they'll never see. In a cruel irony, John's tenure with the police department was cut short by an on-the-job accident that left him with a bad back for life.

After the PPD, John made a living laying carpet and managing restaurants until he consulted page 4 of the East Coast Irish Catholic Handbook and became a bartender. (Pages 1-3: Catholic School, Military, Cop.) While bartending at the Poor Richard Club at 13th & Locust, he was introduced by a doctor with a hunch to a young nurse named Barbara O'Connell who had recently moved from Syracuse. At first glance – and probably second and third – John and Barbara weren't an obvious match. But as Barbara told her children, "He made me feel safe." They were married for over 51 years until her death from dementia in 2017.

It wasn't only Barbara who felt safe with John. He had a knack for making EVERYONE feel that way, not just because he was a beefy 6' 2" but because you always knew he had your back. He was a man of few words, but his loved ones knew they were exactly that – loved.

John needed few words because his actions spoke loudly. As a bartender who stood for 10 straight hours, he'd often arrive home past 3 a.m. And despite getting home dog-tired in the dead of night, his bad back on fire, John would revive on a few hours sleep – or sometimes none – to cheer his daughter at her horse shows, drive his son to his altar boy gigs, help run his kids' team practices, or shepherd his family to Sunday mass. And the reason he'd get home so late is that he tallied the registers and night-dropped the cash for the bar owner, who trusted him implicitly because John's integrity was NEVER in question.

To have John as a husband, father, neighbor, coworker, or friend was to know

with certainty that he would go to any length to support and help you, no matter the personal sacrifice to him. After his mother was attacked in South Philly in the 1960s, John bought a fixer-upper in Springfield, Delco, and spent over a year remodeling it himself so Mom would have a safe, beautiful home. And when he and Barbara married, they bought their own home in Springfield so he could be nearby to help.

With his relentless work ethic and desire to provide for his family, John probably would've worked until the day he died if the fates had allowed it. Unfortunately, a hit-and-run driver who T-boned his car and sped away exacerbated John's back problem to an almost unbearable pain. He still kept bartending until it proved physically impossible.

Instead of moping around in self-pity, John developed an interest in the lapidary arts (stone cutting, engraving and polishing) and making jewelry. He started teaching classes. He'd attend craft shows and sell some pieces, but he often gave away his work because he loved making people happy.

John had an amazing, gentle heart and incredible inner strength. He possessed an iron stomach both figuratively and literally. The man ingested spicy meals like they were baby food and never met a hot sauce he couldn't conquer. He once filed a complaint with the makers of Ass Kickin' Chili Fixin's when their product did not sufficiently kick his ass.

John was also a remarkably good judge of character. He'd rarely share his opinions on his own, but when prompted, he'd offer a politely frank assessment of the person in question – and was pretty much always right. And if you disagreed and were inevitably proven wrong, he'd never say "I told you so." It wasn't his style.

Having outlived practically all his peers, the last years of John's life were

sometimes lonely and hard. But one place ALWAYS brightened his spirits: the family shore house in Sea Isle City. He'd been going to that same house since the 1950s. Built in 1920 and sitting right on the bay, it was his refuge and his solace and his strongest link to loved ones long since departed. But it was also his link to the future, where he made precious memories with his own children and grandchildren who will carry those memories forever.

Those grandchildren, who are all in college now, had the chance to come home and say goodbye to John in his final days of life. He brought us all together one last time, giving us yet another gift even as he took leave of us. He couldn't speak by the end – but he didn't need to. He'd said everything he needed to say and done everything he needed to do by giving us all life and showing us the right way to live it, with honor, courage, loyalty, and love.

In addition to his wife Barbara, John was predeceased by his siblings Rita, Joseph, and Elizabeth. He is survived by his children Caitlin (Lawrence Yurow) Gardner and John (Maureen) McGurk; grandchildren Lianna and Kevin Gardner and Carlyne and Keenan McGurk; nephews John Patrick, Paul, Mark, Thomas, Joseph, and Brian Connolly; and many grand-nieces and -nephews.

Our family would like to thank Holisticare Hospice, Labelle Home Care, and dear friend Danielle Zapone for their compassion and assistance in making John's last days as dignified and comfortable as possible.

Family and friends are invited to celebrate John's life on Saturday, October 26 at Kovacs Lombardo Funeral Home, 530 West Woodland Avenue in Springfield, for 10 a.m. visitation and 11 a.m. services. In lieu of flowers, John would appreciate donations to the Philadelphia Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #5 Survivors Fund <https://fop5.org/DonateAmount> and condolences can be left here.

Rest in peace, John J. McGurk. You've earned it, and we will miss you.

The Service will be livestreamed at 11: 00 AM at Lombardo Funeral Homes Facebook page. You do not need to do anything but wait for the service to begin.

Cemetery Details

Private

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **26**. 10:00 AM (ET)

Kovacs Lombardo Funeral Home
530 W. Woodland Ave.
Springfield, PA 19064
(610) 544-3222

Service

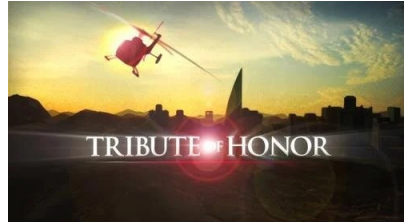
OCT **26**. 11:00 AM (ET)

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Tribute Wall



“ *Lombardo Funeral Homes created a Tribute Video in memory of John J. McGurk*



Lombardo Funeral Homes - October 15, 2024 at 08:52 PM

JS

“ *I was going through my father's (John Gooch) class of 1950 high school yearbook of southeast catholic. I noticed that John (Jack) McGurk signed my dad's yearbook. My condolences.*



John Stenger-Smith - March 18 at 02:36 PM

TF

“ *The Artymowicz Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of John J. McGurk.*



The Artymowicz Family - October 24, 2024 at 09:08 AM



“ 4 files added to the album Life Tributes



Lombardo Funeral Homes - October 15, 2024 at 04:39 PM



“ 131 files added to the album Life Tributes



Lombardo Funeral Homes - October 15, 2024 at 02:13 PM



“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Thomas Connolly - October 13, 2024 at 09:29 PM

JC

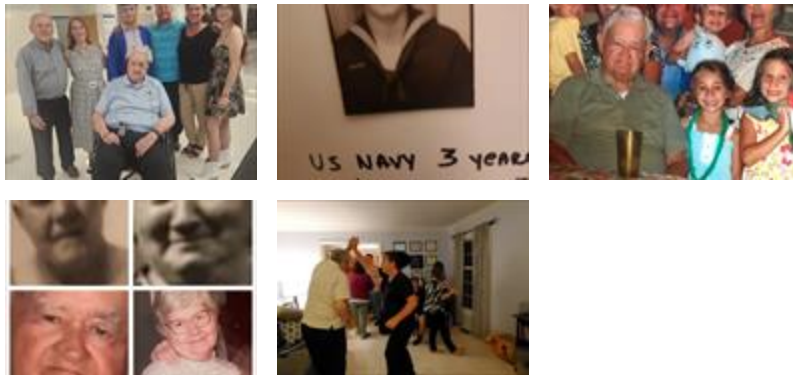
“ There was a country song by Jimmy Dean called Big John.

It was about a miner who saved his crew after the mine collapsed. He died saving others.

The last line was, " at the bottom of this mine lies a big, big man, Big John"

Whenever I heard that country song I think our Uncle Jack , Big John McGurk.

As I wrote to his bride shortly before she passed "when you wake up and open your eyes you will be in God's Kingdom."



Joe connolly - October 09, 2024 at 04:46 PM

AC

“ My Uncle Jack taught me to shave when I was 12. Always kind, always caring. Wonder he'd of me sporting facial hair now at age 30. Love you! -Andrew Connolly

Andrew Connolly - October 09, 2024 at 03:48 PM

MC

“ *Yellow gold, soft leather with a perfect deep pocket. A spaldings first basemens mit. A thing of beauty. Uncle Jack gave me my first baseball glove and it was the greatest baseball glove of all time. I was the envy of every kid in Levittown.*

Only thing wasI'm a lefty, glove was for a righthander. I didn't care, I worked that glove until I fit it for me. I never told him, but loved him more every time he asked about it.

That's My Uncle Jack

mark connolly - October 09, 2024 at 08:21 AM

TB

“ *What a beautiful tribute! I am proud to have been the recipient of one of those colossal meals and glad to have spent some time with this wonderful man. His memory will truly be a blessing.*

Tiffany Brown - October 09, 2024 at 07:09 AM

TC

“ My Uncle Jack was a kind and generous man, and he was very fond of his older sister, my mother, Rita. As a young kid, I never remember a time when he walked into our house without bringing something (cake, pie, gifts). He took my brothers and me to all kinds of places. I remember Jack taking us to see seeing Santa Claus in downtown Philly. I recall going with him on weekends to work on the Powell Road house in Springfield. I remember the night Jack and Barbara got engaged and their wedding day. When I was a teenager, he sold me his car. He gave me my first set of golf clubs. We watched the Beatles on the Ed Sullivan Show in 1964, and we watched Neil Armstrong Walk on the Moon in 1969 together. He came to my first Mass when I was an altar server in fourth grade. He and Aunt Barbara carried up the gifts at my wedding in 1988 in California. We traveled to England and Ireland together in 1994 to meet our Irish relatives. My daughter's middle name is McGurk. Jack McGurk was a major part of my life, and I will never forget our last conversation we had. Uncle Jack, may you rest in peace. Thanks for being my Uncle. Tom Connolly



Tom Connolly - October 09, 2024 at 01:12 AM