



John Francis Paro

January 4, 1943 - August 20, 2021

John Francis Paro (78), resident of Kingsley, MI died August 20, 2021 at Munson Medical Center, Traverse City MI.

John was born January 4, 1943 to Ivan Clyde and Patricia Em (Dudley) in Mesa, AZ, and grew up in San Bernadino, CA. During his younger years, he was very involved in Boy Scouts, which helped him to discover his love of the great outdoors. During John's high school senior year, the family moved to Dayton, MT, where he met his future wife, Cleora (Cleo) Hawkins. They were married in Couer d'Alene, ID June 8, 1965.

John graduated from University of Montana with a Forestry Degree that prepared him for his 30+ year career with the National Park Service as a Park Ranger and Administrator. He lived and worked in places that many people only dream about and put on their bucket lists: Grand Canyon National Park (AZ), Glacier National Park (MT), Grand Teton National Park (WY), Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Park (MD), Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore (MI) and Gateway Arch National Park (MO). He enjoyed being outdoors in nature and had many memorable experiences that he shared through his stories with family and friends.

John and Cleora (Cleo) retired to Northern Michigan where he enjoyed many years of hunting, fishing and exploring the United States with friends and family. He was active in the local Lions Club and NARFE Chapter. There were many laughs with stories that had a few rum and cokes thrown in. John enjoyed music and one of his favorite road trip songs was "The Happy Wanderer" which was always sung in the car during numerous trips with family. John was very fortunate to be able to live this song throughout his life.

John was preceded in death by his mother, father, sister (Judy) and brother (Jerry). He is survived by his wife (Cleora), sister-in-law (Nora), son (Brian), daughter (Lynnette/Larry Shuman), grand daughter (Sydney/Patrick Shults) and grandson (Spenser).

Per John's request, there will be no funeral. Memorials to be determined at a later date. Kindly share thoughts and memories with John's family at www.reynolds-jonkhoff.com.

Tribute Wall

 Susan
Onan-
Swartz

“ John was a true friend and also a harsh critic. I could always depend on him to be completely honest and while that may be painful at times, I appreciated this rare quality. John would occasionally share stories and jokes with me which always found me laughing!

Over the years I grew to understand how many people depended on his strength, hard work and vast knowledge. His love and concern for his family and his sense of duty to them and his community, serving along with his wife Cleo, in caring for the BrickWays community, is not something that is easily found today. I was terribly saddened to hear that John has passed and my heart goes out to Cleo especially during this most difficult of times.

Susan Onan-Swartz

Susan Onan-Swartz - September 02, 2021 at 11:33 AM

CB

“ I just found out about John's passing and I am saddened by it. Just day prior my family and I had run into John and Cleo while out shopping. He was always one of the nicest people you could meet and it was an honor to know him. John always had a smile on his face often telling jokes. As a kid I can remember John and Cleo living kiddie corner to us and we would always visit with them. In the winter whenever the power would go out they would come over since we had a kerosene heater and we would sit by camp lights and play cards or visit while waiting it out. He will greatly be missed but never forgotten. Prayers and condolences to the family. Cleo if you get this my number is 231-645-3413. Call anytime.

Christopher J Bell - September 02, 2021 at 12:27 AM

“ Hello Cleo (and all); Dan Kirschner writing: Truly saddened about JP's departure from your [Cleo, Brian, Lynnette, Nora, Larry, Sydney, Patrick, Spenser) lives. I wish there were words that could ease the pain. I worked for JP from 1981 - 1984 @ SLBE. [Before I forget, hello to all of you posting tributes to JP - does not seem like very long ago that I worked with some of you at SLBE.] Thanks to all of you posting JP tributes. JP earned and deserves the highest of praise and commendation for his service and contributions to our lives and our national parks. When I ponder about SLBE, I always fondly recall the time I worked for/with JP. As a supervisor, JP was a supervisor you could rely on to be out front when HQ was letting the crap flow downhill. I always knew JP would be supportive of us and our actions - we trusted JP because he walked the talk. JP could be firm, but you always knew where he stood and what he expected. And when I screwed-up (which was more than I should have), I knew JP would be there not just with criticism, but always with constructive criticism. And, when JP messed-up - which was rare - he owned his mistake. And the best part of JP was his friendship and sense of humor - he always had a great quip/saying [like, "beats a sharp stick in the eye"] for any situation/event. This one story will, hopefully, illustrate how JP could take a mistake and turn it into a memorable and funny moment. A little background information is provided so the reader has context for this story. One of our core District SOP's was, at the end of your shift, you never parked a patrol vehicle with less than half a tank of gas. This was done so the next shift ranger had a response ready vehicle at the start of their shift. Now for the story: One Monday morning JP told me we had to drive to HQ (I don't recall the reason for the trip to HQ, but it isn't critical to this story). I gathered my gear and headed for the garage - as usual JP wanted to drive so I got into the passenger seat and off we went. As we headed for Frankfurt, where HQ was located in the old days, a few minutes into the trip, JP commented that he was going to have a serious talk with the ding-bat ranger who parked this patrol vehicle with less than a quarter tank of gas. Dang-it, I thought to myself, was I the last one to drive this vehicle? Had I failed to fill the tank up at the end of a shift? We sat there quietly and I did a memory rewind and tried to recall who was the last ranger to operate this vehicle. Being as this was early AM and the caffeine had not yet kicked-in, I had to clear the mental cobwebs to recall the weekend events/incidents. A few minutes passed - with, presumably, both of us pondering the past weekend - when I 100% concluded JP had been the last ranger to drive this particular vehicle. I looked over at JP and at about the same moment, he glanced over at me and before I said anything, he muttered these words, "yep, I'll be having a talk with myself...". Indeed, JP immediately owned it and had us both laughing. The fun wasn't just at work, JP joined us for poker nights and other after-hours gatherings. I'm sure there are many rangers who could write volumes about JP helping them in their career development. JP supported me in my career by enabling career development training opportunities and JP set a high bar, by example, for what an NPS ranger supervisor could and should be! More importantly, JP was a true friend. JP, I think of you often - I hope you know you made a positive impact and difference in many lives! JP - well done! DK

WM

“ I was a summer park ranger at Sleeping Bear Dunes during the 1981 and 1982 recreation seasons. John was my supervisor and was truly a people person. Working with his staff or the public, John maintained a friendly outgoing demeanor with that half smile he always showed. John was always willing to share his knowledge of resource management goals and visitor assistance technique to his staff. John kept me on duty into the fall to help with patrol duties during deer season. Thanksgiving Day, John and I had completed our patrol when John stopped at this residence. John wanted to introduce me to his family. Once inside, John invited me to have dinner with his family. Turkey with all the fixin's (Thanks Cleora). That was John. Thank you John, Rest in Peace.

Bill May

William A. May - August 26, 2021 at 03:20 PM

DT

“ Peace be with his soul as he will be missed by many here in Empire Dave and Diane Taghon and many, many more I am sure!!!

Dave Taghon - August 26, 2021 at 09:39 AM

GP

“ I found this Pic of John that was taken on our Elk Hunting trip to Colorado in 2007. His merry smile and quick humor that we all enjoyed are captured in this picture so well. He was in good spirits despite that we had just learned of a huge snowstorm headed our way and we just barely made it out of the area. I was fortunate to know John. I particularly enjoyed hunting and fishing trips, sharing tall tales and laughing until we ached. A Life well lived!



Gary Pardike - August 25, 2021 at 10:03 PM

JK

“ So many memories over the past 43 years. So many hunting camps whether at Sleeping Bear or Higgins Lake, that were a blast. Great times! We also travelled west a couple of times. The first was a northern loop and visited many National Parks of which he worked Glacier and the Tetons. We also did a southern loop and visited and remember fantastic parks and sites. We still remember Cortez Colorado and eating at a Mexican Restaurant.....the best! We will miss him dearly but have the memories he left for us. Rest In Peace, our friend.

Jon Kren - August 25, 2021 at 07:28 PM

CM

“ I am saddened to learn of the passing of John. My thoughts and prayers go to Cleo and his family. Your lives will be forever changed. I enjoyed working for John during his tenure at the Gateway Arch and keeping in touch with him after his retirement. One of my fondest memories is when I was able to visit John and Cleo a couple of years ago. I will always remember his sense of humor and joy for life.

Charlene Marsh - August 25, 2021 at 01:39 PM

MH

We have known John and Cleo for over 40 years. First when he was my district ranger at Sleeping Bear where they took us under their wings. Later when they were at the Arch when meet for meals when I was on a SET assignment. After we had both retired we would meet at Branson for meals and games. We will miss him. Our prayers for Cleo, Lynette and Brian. Mike and Barb Holmes

mike holmes - August 25, 2021 at 05:18 PM

CM

“ I think of John and these words come to me, (John was just a good guy). I knew john over 40 years. He was a true friend who always had a smile and good word. We shared many, many meals at restaurants. Over 130 restaurants around the state, he was always ready for a road trip to try a new place. I will miss you my friend, and I will keep up the road trips as I promised. Till we meet again.
Cal murphy



Calvin Murphy - August 25, 2021 at 12:06 PM

RD

John and I have been friends for many years. We always enjoyed visiting back and forth with he and Cleo visiting us in Florida and our visits to Michigan. When we worked together at the arch he was a good friend and confidant. I will miss him greatly.

Rod Danner - August 25, 2021 at 12:54 PM

NP

We always enjoyed John and Cleo's visits. Cleo and I were spectators to whatever Jerry and John got up to. Just listening to them swap stories was an evening's entertainment or playing board games until the wee hours lubricated with a bit of rum. John found humor in life. I miss him and the joy he shared.

Nora Paro

nora paro - August 25, 2021 at 01:29 PM

ST

I meet John and Cleo about 11 years ago through a good friend. We hit it off and to our surprise John and I shared the same birthday. A lot of good memories to treasure, countless road trips, sight seeing, laughter and good eats. The last time I seen John, he introduced me to one of the nurses as his baker. He was always ready to try something homemade. I am blessed to have had John as a friend. He will be greatly missed.

Starla Owens

Starla - August 25, 2021 at 01:34 PM

MM

*We knew John and Cleo through their involvement in the National Active and Retired Federal Employees (NARFE) organization. We always looked forward to seeing them at state meetings. Thoughts and prayers for Cleo and the family.
Clyde and Maggie Morgan
Negaunee MI*

Maggie Morgan - August 30, 2021 at 01:43 PM

LD

“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Lynnette Debien-Shuman - August 25, 2021 at 10:00 AM