



John P. Friedrich

February 19, 1941 - August 19, 2024

John Paul Friedrich, 83, a lifelong resident of Topeka, Illinois, passed away at his home on August 19, 2024. He was born to Paul and Charline Friedrich on February 19, 1941. John Paul grew up around the general store his parents ran and attended school at the schoolhouse in Topeka and Forman schools in Manito. He attended engineering school at Tri-State University in Indiana and has been known to say he quit “once he found out he couldn’t drive a train.”

John married Karen Hickman on November 2, 1943.

John is survived by his little flower, kumquat, and wife, Karen, of 60 years; brother, Perry (Vicki); daughters, Laura (John) McGahan and Shannan (Andrew) Karrick; grandchildren, Reid (Megan), Hadley, Lane (Alexa aka Axel), and Hayden; and great-grandchildren, Ari, Avery, Rhett, and Simon. He is preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Charline Friedrich, and sister, Mary Francis.

John worked in management positions at Crescent Forge and Shovel and Wagner Castings in

Havana before finding his passion as a blackjack dealer at the Par-A-Dice Casino in East

Peoria. In his spare time, he also served many terms as the mayor of Topeka and was a

renowned motorcycle and small engine mechanic for decades.

Although John was not necessarily an expert in anything, that never held him back. He knew

just enough to convince you he was the smartest man in the room. When it came to repairing

home appliances or small engines, he might have been. Besides being right, John Paul enjoyed

being a licensed pilot, collecting guns and knives, photography, flipping for sodas with a double-

headed coin, classic horror movies, westerns, chocolate, Camel stud cigarettes, Spam, Coke,

frogging, canoeing in jeans with a pink polo and velcro shoes, and stringing together words that

could make the burliest sailor blush.

While he was not affectionate, there was no doubt John Paul cared for his family. Between

getting his youngest ready for prom, teaching both girls how to properly drive through an s-curve

using centrifugal force, getting his girls special gifts (including a taser, blow gun, bow and

arrows, and brass knuckles), assembling Barbie houses into the wee hours of Christmas

morning, and waiting patiently for his oldest to finish doing her hair (only to put a hat on); John

Paul was the original "girl dad." His grandchildren fondly recall him teaching them how to play

cards, talk smack, cheat, and gloat in victory. With the whole family getting

these lessons, video

games, mini-golf and croquet were intense, brutal affairs that most looked forward to.

In his later years, his quick wit slowed, and good humor faded. It had to be that way, though,

because losing him when he was himself would have been too devastating.

A private burial is planned. Memorial contributions may be made to Central Christian Church in

Havana or the organization of your choice.

Hurley Funeral Home in Havana is in charge of arrangements.

Cemetery Details

Laurel Hill Cemetery

1105 E Laurel Ave
Havana, IL 62644
(309) 543-2986

Tribute Wall

GV

“ *Gregory and Steph Vaughn lit a candle in memory of John Friedrich*



Gregory and Steph Vaughn - August 21, 2024 at 10:50 PM

MC

“ *Marcia Ann Chaney lit a candle in memory of John Friedrich*



Marcia Ann Chaney - August 21, 2024 at 07:28 PM

JS

“ *Have lots of memories of him working on motorcycles and other things when parents would drive by and we would see him outside when we lived outside of town and after we moved to grandparents home along the lake.
He always made you smile and laugh with his quick wit. Always had smile on his face.
He will be missed by many.
Thoughts, prayers and hugs to Karen and the girls. ❤️*

Julie S. - August 21, 2024 at 06:10 PM

CK

“ Prayers to the family. Will never forget the repair job John did on my grandsons 4-wheeler. He was a great repair person. Looked new when he got done. Remember his folks very well. When I'd visit my cousin near Topeka it was a treat to come to there store.

Carol Fisk Kolves - August 21, 2024 at 05:15 PM

JW

“ John Paul was my motorcycle mentor,I still remember the first time he gave me a ride on his BSA,a Thunderbolt if I remember correctly! We headed towards the bridge and I was hooked,tears streaming from my eyes,no helmet or glasses! My first bike was a Honda XL250 and I was riding to Topeka to get a lesson on maintenance... I was on twin bridges road,hit some deep sand and went over the bars,tore my jeans but picked the bike up and made it to John's house and learned to adjust valves,set points etc! I will miss his wit and deep knowledge of all things mechanical!!!

James Walker - August 21, 2024 at 09:09 AM

LH

“ Larry and Mary Hundt sent a virtual gift in memory of John Friedrich



Larry and Mary Hundt - August 21, 2024 at 08:37 AM

CW

“ I’m another of the cousin clan that yep sums it up very well. I remember him with the extended family and three tables of card games going on too late nights and girl Dad. All the motorcycles 🏍️ and showing off his projects. Condolences to Karen and “his girls” you had a wonderful dad

Catherine W - August 20, 2024 at 04:09 PM

DW

“ Sorry for your loss Our thoughts and prayers are with you and your family ❤️🙏



Dan and Chris Wilson - August 20, 2024 at 03:28 PM