



John R. Davis

December 19, 1927 - April 25, 2014

John Rowland (Jack) Davis, 86, of Corvallis, died Friday April 25, 2014, at Samaritan Evergreen Hospice in Albany. He was born December 19, 1927 in Minneapolis, MN, the first child of Roland Owen and Dorothy Norman Davis. Roland was a Marine veteran of WWI and was Head of the Baking Department at Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis. Dorothy was a former grade school teacher. Jack's brother Trevor came 18 months later and sister Elaine six years later. Jack's father died of complications of polio in 1934, but a stouthearted mother and a close family kept this young family going even in the depths of the depression.

Jack and Trev were inseparable as young boys, playing all the neighborhood games and enjoying family fishing trips to Northern Minnesota and Wisconsin, leaving plenty of fish in those lakes for the next generation. Their wise Mother arranged for her two lively boys to spend four summers working on a cousin's farm near Stratford, Iowa, where Jack learned all those values associated with agriculture. He worked on one of the last threshing crews of that era.

Jack attended South High School in Minneapolis, where he met his future wife, Lois, in an English class. He ran track, played football, and played trombone in the band—all of which is hardly worth mentioning. His musical career ended abruptly a few years later, to the relief of musicians everywhere, when he sold the trombone in order to buy a water heater for the house.

Immediately after graduation from high school in January 1945, he enlisted in the US Navy, where the closest he came to water was Lake Michigan.

After an Honorable Discharge in 1946 from the Navy, Jack enrolled at the University of Minnesota in Engineering, using the G.I Bill. He and Lois married a year later, with Lois earning her PHT degree and Jack earning his BS degree in Agricultural Engineering in December 1949. Jobs were scarce then, but Jack was offered a position with the US Geological Survey in Lincoln, NE, where he worked on projects dealing with sedimentation in the Missouri Valley.

Jack started his career in education in 1951 by accepting an Instructorship at Michigan State University, after receiving his MS degree earlier. The first course Jack taught at MSU was “Explosives in Agriculture”. He had never worked with explosives, but soon gained a reputation as a dynamite instructor. Jack taught courses in irrigation and water resources while starting work toward a PhD. In 1955 he was offered a position at Purdue University as Assistant Professor of Agricultural Engineering, again in water resource studies. In 1957 he joined the faculty in the Department of Irrigation at Davis, California, and completed the PhD in 1959, from Michigan State. This was a great time for Jack and Lois, for then they had four little children and were flat broke, but life was good. Also during that time, Jack earned a private pilot license, and was a member of the Davis Flying Club.

In 1962 Jack accepted a position with Stanford Research Institute in South Pasadena, CA, in charge of a new water resources research program. His last project was a study in South Vietnam for the US Navy dealing with off-road mobility in the Mekong Delta, when he realized that he much preferred domestic water issues. He then accepted a position at the University of Nebraska in 1964 as Professor of Agricultural Engineering, was named Head of the Department six months later, and was named Dean of the College of

Engineering and Architecture six months later, when he admitted that he just couldn't hold a job.

While serving as Dean of the College, Jack assisted in the establishment of a program in Industrial Engineering and in Computer Engineering. He was instrumental in the first state funding for engineering research, and established the Engineering Research Center in the College. Partly as a result of that, the University was awarded a National Science Foundation Grant for the construction of a new engineering research facility. Davis also encouraged new faculty to explore their research potential, and one year the new faculty in the College received more NSF New Engineering Faculty grants than any other school in the US. During his last two years at Nebraska, Jack also served as the University's Faculty Athletic Representative to the Big Eight Conference and the NCAA. The fact that Nebraska won the National Football Championship in 1971 was purely coincidental.

Having played out his luck in administration, Jack decided to return to his agricultural roots and accepted a position as Head of the Department of Agricultural Engineering at Oregon State University in 1971. During his stint as Head, he recalls meeting Gov. Tom McCall, who commented that "he had two heart attacks already today and hadn't had time to call the doctor". Jack was appointed as Associate Dean of Agriculture and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station in 1975, and served in that position for ten years. One of his proudest moments came when he obtained a grant from the Fleischmann Foundation for almost a million dollars, which allowed the completion of the new Crop Science Building on campus.

During his time at Oregon State, Jack was appointed as the University's Faculty Athletic Representative to the Pacific-8 Conference and the NCAA. Jack enjoyed his contacts with student-athletes and coaches, and was

eventually elected to the NCAA Council in 1979. He was then elected as Secretary-Treasurer in 1983 and after being granted a leave of absence from OSU, as President of the NCAA for a two year term in 1985-87, After serving his two-year term as President, he continued as Chairman of the NCAA Honors Committee, during which time he met many outstanding athletes and public figures, including personally meeting Vice-President George H.W. Bush and former President Ronald Reagan.

Upon his return to OSU, Jack was asked by the President to coordinate the ill-fated effort to convert the University from the quarter system to the semester system, and at the same time to serve as part-time Associate Director of Athletics. When the conversion was scrapped, Jack served full time as Associate Director of Athletics until 1991, when he retired. He continued to work part-time after retirement, developing a departmental manual of operations and assisting with the eligibility of student-athletes.

As part of his professional life, Jack published over 70 technical papers and articles and contributed two chapters to published books. He served as a member of the Indiana Water Resources Study Committee, as a member of the Board of Directors of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers, a member of the Board of Directors of the Engineers' Council for Professional Development (the accrediting body for engineering programs in the US), and a member of many committees in engineering, agricultural, and athletic organizations. He was elected to a number of honorary organizations in engineering including mathematics and physics, which still amazes him. He was a registered Civil Engineer in California and a registered Agricultural Engineer in Nebraska and in Oregon. In 1974 he received the "Agricultural Engineer of the Year" award by the Pacific Northwest Section of ASAE, and in 1980 and 1985 he was honored as "Boss of the Year" by the Office Personnel Association at OSU. In 2003 he received the "Everyday Hero Award" from the Pacific Northwest District of Kiwanis International.

One of Jack's favorite awards is the "Vic Brookes Standard of Commitment Award", by the Faculty-Staff fitness program at OSU, in which he has been a faithful participant for 28 years. Otherwise he would have been dead a long time ago. Also a favorite is a "Certificate of Achievement" from Sea Gull Charters in Newport, for hooking and landing a 34-pound Chinook salmon. Good luck strikes again!!

Jack has been a member of Grace Lutheran Church in Corvallis since he and Lois arrived in 1971, and served several times as a member of the Church Council. He was President of the Heartland Humane Society until he was appointed by the Mayor to the Corvallis Budget Commission.

During 2001 to 2010, Jack served as a voluntary bailiff for the Benton County Court, and in addition to meeting lots of people in all walks of life, he gained a keen appreciation for the hard work and interests of all of those people who work in law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

Jack and Lois enjoyed every minute of living in Corvallis. They also had a cabin on the Metolius River for a while, which was always inspiring, especially in winter. The manhattans taste so good when it is cold, after spending the day splitting wood. Jack enjoyed skiing at Mt. Bachelor, worked at playing golf. As the years went by, his hobbies became more sedentary, such as his interest in family genealogy. He found that his great-grandfather emigrated from Wales in 1850 and served in the Civil War in the 28th Iowa Infantry. Jack's genealogical searches found about 350 of his descendants, most of whom are delightful people.

Jack and Lois recently celebrated their 66th Wedding Anniversary, a testimony to Lois' love, stubbornness and forgiveness. They and their children have had a wonderful life together, and looking back, no regrets at all. He is survived by

son Joel and his wife Kathleen, and daughters Jacque Davis, Michele Davis, and Robin Cronk and her husband, Richard Cronk; by three lovely granddaughters Kate Larsen, Claire Davis, and Lauren Cronk; by four wonderful grandsons, Daniel Lee, David Lee, Jack Davis, and Brian Cronk; and by Jack's sister-in-law Dottie, and Jack's sister Elaine and her husband Fred Dietrich, and a bunch of good nieces and nephews. His brother Trevor preceded him in death.

It is not often that one can write their own obituary. Actually, the best time is prior to one's death, so as not to burden some innocent victim with trying to say good things about the old duffer. So, good reader, please forgive this lengthy dissertation, but please understand that you were not the target, but instead I was trying to impress my grandchildren. ~ Jack

The family is planning a private burial service. In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting that donations be made to Heartland Humane Society or Samaritan Evergreen Hospice.