



Jack Upper

SEP 14, 1926 - MAY 28, 2024



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Jack was born in 1926 in Highland Park, Michigan. He was an only child, lost his own father at the age of five, and was raised by his mother in Detroit. This beginning defined his life in many ways. With a supportive extended family and his naturally upbeat and vivacious personality, he made his way in the world with enthusiasm and charm.

Encouraged by his uncle, Warren Upper, who recognized Jack's tremendous mathematical abilities, Jack applied for scholarships and was able to attend the Cranbrook School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, as a boarding student for high school. He later credited his interesting, unusual life to the life-changing time that he spent at Cranbrook.

He went on to join the Navy, and under the G.I. Bill went to three different colleges while serving, including Oberlin College and Yale University, where he was graduated in 1948 with a degree in History. In between his studies he ran track, sang with the Society of Orpheus and Bacchus at Yale (also known as the SOBs;), and met and married our mother, Claudia Overington Reid, who was attending Wellesley College when they met.

Together they pursued graduate studies in Near Eastern History at the University of Michigan. Jack earned an M.A. in Near Eastern History with an emphasis in Economics, while Claudia earned an M.A. in Ancient Middle Eastern History.

In 1951, Jack moved with Claudia to Cairo, Egypt, where he worked with the U.S. State Department as an Economic Officer. Since they had both been students of the history of that region, it was an especially interesting place for them to spend a part of their lives. They were there for a little over a year, developing lifelong friendships as well as a passion for the region, and came home with their first daughter, Nadia.

Jack also learned to speak Arabic. When he took his younger daughter Lisa to Egypt in 1981, he seemed so at home there that she swore he'd been an Egyptian in a former life! However, it's



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probably more apt to say that he was a man of the world. Arabic was just one of the 4 other languages he spoke besides English.

Returning to Michigan from Egypt, Jack took a position with the Ford Motor Company, where he worked in finance for 3 years. During that time their second daughter, Elizabeth (Lisa), was born. When a lead from a friend resulted in a job at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., Jack and Claudia moved there with their 2 young daughters. They would call Washington home for the next 60 years.

Jack enjoyed a wonderful career at the World Bank. It gave him the opportunity to travel much of the world, especially the Middle East, as well as India and Western Europe. Claudia was able to join him on several trips, and they shared some wild adventures in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Lebanon.

Jack was also a natural born singer. No doubt he sang in the cradle, but the first formal singing he did was as a choir boy in church, starting at the age of 8 or so. He never stopped. After moving to Washington D.C., he joined the men's cappella group The Augmented Eight, and sang with them for 40 years. But that wasn't all! He also sang in the Washington Oratorio Society, and he directed a chorus at the World Bank. Along with Claudia, he sang in a madrigal group that endured for many decades, and was another source of lifelong friendships.

After retirement from the World Bank, then in his late fifties, Jack started out his "retirement" with a visiting professorship in Nigata province, Japan, at the International University of Japan. He and Claudia spent a semester there, in the more rural reaches of the country. Definitely not a typical tourist destination!

Later, he developed courses in Economics for the International Law Institute, teaching seminars to foreign dignitaries for many years— essentially a second career for him, which he continued into his mid- eighties.

Subsequently Jack and Claudia chose to leave Washington D.C. at last, and moved to the Shell Point Retirement Community in Fort Myers, Florida. Although the pace of their lives slowed down, it was not by much! They were very active in various book groups, a discussion group called Inquiring Minds, and the Democratic party. They made many dear new friends, and Jack sang (of course!) with the Shell Point Chorus.



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Last year, just a couple of months before Claudia's death in July 2023, Jack and Claudia were able to meet their then 6 month old great-great granddaughter! Kinsley. Their delight was beyond measure. And, just days before he died, Jack saw Kinsley one last time on a video call. Although he was able to speak very little by that time, he said her name. And, he managed to sing a few last notes with his daughters in his final days, with Nadia by his side, and Lisa zooming in from Colorado.

Claudia left this world 10 months before Jack did, after 72 years of marriage. He grieved her loss, but he carried forth, and always had a ready smile. He continued to enjoy the companionship of his friends, family, and devoted caregivers.

Jack had his energy, determination, and intelligence right up until the end. He really enjoyed life, and yet at the same time was not afraid of death. He was surrounded by caring people, and his own joie de vivre was reflected back to him.

We will remember him dearly and be deeply inspired by him for the rest of our own lives.

Jack leaves his loving memory with his survivors, daughters Nadia Berrigan and Elizabeth (Lisa) Upper granddaughters Suzannah Sweeney and Caitlin Berrigan, great-granddaughter Marissa Pettigrew, great-great-granddaughter Kinsley Pettigrew.

Jack's family ask that in Lieu of flowers please make donations to
St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Sanibel Island, Florida
Cranbrook School, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and Habitat For Humanity.

There will be a service held in Jack's memory on November 16, 2024 at 11 AM held at Saint Michael and all Angels church on Sanibel Island.




Events


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Celebration of Life

 **Saturday**, November 16, 2024

 11:00 AM Est

 **St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church**
2304 Periwinkle Way, Sanibel FL 33957





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Jack by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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