



# John Davis Laughlin

February 13, 2025

John Davis Laughlin, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, father-in-law and friend, passed away peacefully on February 13, 2025, at the age of 92. Born to Samuel Dillard Laughlin and Julia Chappell Laughlin, John's life was marked by intellectual curiosity, deep faith, professional achievement, a deep love for family, and a great sense of humor.

A child of the Depression, John learned early on the value of hard work and the joy in people over things. He spent his formative years in Arlington, Virginia, where he attended Washington-Lee High School. A bright and driven student, he graduated in 1950 and was admitted to prestigious engineering programs at MIT, Cornell, and RPI. He initially pursued engineering at Cornell but soon realized his true interests lay elsewhere, leading him to study psychology at the College of William & Mary, graduating as a member of Phi Beta Kappa. His academic excellence earned him a nomination for a prestigious Woodrow Wilson Scholarship and assistantship offers from Duke, Iowa, and Michigan, though he ultimately chose to enter the business world.

Before embarking on his corporate career, the Korean War intervened and John enlisted in Officer Candidate School of the U.S. Navy, graduating to serve as a Lieutenant, an experience that shaped his perspective on discipline and leadership. It was a period that added to the rich tapestry of his life and career.

John's very successful professional journey began with the Chesapeake & Potomac Telephone Company (C&P), part of the Bell Telephone System. He quickly rose through the ranks, holding managerial and executive roles in various districts across Virginia and Washington, D.C. as C&P became part of AT&T, and he ultimately held leadership roles for much of AT&T's Mid-Atlantic sales efforts. His career was marked by strategic leadership and a dedication to innovation in the telecommunications industry, culminating in his retirement in 1989.

In Richmond, VA in 1959, John met the love of his life, Rosalie Kizziah. They married on June 25, 1960, and together built a beautiful life centered on faith, family, and community.

They raised three children—Sherburne, John, and Bill—in a home filled with love, encouragement, and laughter. All who know John and Rosalie can attest to the deep love they have shared and the close partnership of their marriage. John's career took the family all over Virginia, but roots were strongest in Richmond and Virginia Beach where the children lived most of their developmental years. After John's retirement, he and Rosalie settled in Salisbury in her family home.

A man of many passions, John was an avid reader, woodworker, history enthusiast, and finance and tax whiz. He was also incredibly handy, able to fix just about anything. While he always dreamed of owning a pickup truck and a dog, he never quite got around to it. More than anything, John will be remembered for his sharp wit and mischievous sense of humor. He had a knack for delivering the perfect one-liner at just the right moment, making everyone around him laugh.

He found joy in simple routines, especially his cherished Saturday tradition of "breakfast with the boys," a close-knit group of friends who gathered each week to share stories, laughter, and good company. John was also a dedicated Rotarian, both giving and getting great value in the work of that fine organization. He became a dedicated citizen of Salisbury.

John is survived by his beloved wife, Rosalie, and his children: Sara Sherburne Laughlin (Brad Shingleton) of Bethesda, MD; John Chappell Laughlin (Gail Herrington Laughlin) of Charlotte, NC; and William Brantly Laughlin (Paula Dudenhoefer Laughlin) of Waxhaw, NC. He was a cherished grandfather to William Wiley and Matthias Bernhardt Shingleton; Julia Laughlin Cawley, Remy Herrington Laughlin, and Tracy Colburn Laughlin; and William Davis, Alexander Thomas, and Elizabeth Kathryn Laughlin.

He is preceded in death by his parents and his brothers, Dillard Chappell Laughlin Sr. and Charles Wayne Laughlin.

John Laughlin was a man of wisdom, kindness, humor, and unwavering integrity. He leaves behind a legacy of love, laughter, and quiet strength that will live on in the hearts of those who knew him.

The family would like to give loving thanks to the wonderful caregivers from Trinity at Home and Adoration Home Health who provided gentle and warm care to John in his last months and allowed him to stay at home with Rosalie.

On March 5th a burial service will take place at City Memorial Park Cemetery, Salisbury,

NC at 1:00 pm, and a celebration of John's life will follow at First Presbyterian Church of Salisbury, NC at 2:00 pm. A reception will be held at Lewis Hall after the service.

In lieu of flowers, if so inclined, the family suggests memorial contributions in John's name be made either: by check to the Rotary Club of Salisbury Charities, P.O. Box 4092, Salisbury, NC. 28145, to the Historic Salisbury Foundation at <https://historicsalisbury.org/support>, or to the Rowan Museum at <https://rowanmuseum.org/support>.

Summersett Funeral Home is serving the Laughlin family. Online condolences may be made at [www.summersettfuneralhome.com](http://www.summersettfuneralhome.com).

# Cemetery Details

## City Memorial Park

1316 West Innes St  
Salisbury, NC 28144

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

MAR 5. 2:00 PM (ET)

First Presbyterian Church  
308 W. Fisher St.  
Salisbury, NC 28144

# Tribute Wall

JH

“ I am humbled to have had the opportunity to know and be mentored by this amazing person and leader. Mr. Laughlin became a central figure in my professional career and development for which I am eternally thankful and blessed. His gracious wife and his amazing children are a testament to his upbringing, character, parenting, and leadership. I mourn with this amazing family yet rejoice in the fulfilled promise of his final destination!

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**jht** - April 05, 2025 at 11:39 AM

MS

“ We are so sorry for your loss. Our thoughts and prayers are with Family and Friends at this very difficult time  
COUNCIL OF OLD DOMINION CHAPTER TELEPHONE  
PIONEERS..RICHMOND

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**Mary Simons** - February 18, 2025 at 02:02 PM