



John Neal

January 30, 1953 - August 2, 2022

John Neal, age 69, of East Wenatchee, WA, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, August 2, 2022. He was born in Wenatchee on January 30, 1953, to the late Lonnie and Virginia (Ecker) Neal. He attended Eastmont High School and graduated in 1971.

His mother, a seamstress and upholsterer, and his father, a TV/radio repair man instilled a work ethic in John at an early age. He had a paper route as a boy and his parents encouraged him to persevere through cold weather, dog bites, and paying for papers out of his own pocket when an unscrupulous person stiffed him. They lived across from a golf course, so in summer, he and his sisters collected wayward golf balls to sell to passersby outside their house to earn spending money for summer vacation. Later in life, friends good-naturedly teased John as being "tight" with money. He had learned at a young age how hard it was to come by!

Those early life lessons helped John earn the bicycle he rode with his friends. Bicycles eventually became motorcycles - both dirt bikes and road bikes. There were many hours of riding in the hills and thousands of miles on various road trips to places like Reno, Tahoe, and Montana with groups of friends. Then there were the cars. One of John's first purchases was a 68 Ford Fastback Mustang that had been in an accident which he repaired to pristine condition. Later there was a Landcruiser for fun in the hills, various pickups

and commuter cars for work. He usually bought something used and made it better, selling as his interests changed. His most recent toy was a hybrid Jeep - he loved playing with the electric features and buying all types of accessories to "trick it out."

While still in high school, John worked at the Honda shop assembling motorcycles out of the crate, then did a short stint at Pepper's Chevron. Realizing he had a talent working with his hands, he went on to being an automotive technician at the Fiat dealer, then Bud Wesby's, then Finkbeiner's which later became Sangster Motors. He enjoyed his coworkers and made good friends, often assisting each other, or picking each other's brains, and boating or snowmobiling together after hours. He retired in 2018 from Grant County PUD after approximately 15 years caring for the fleet at Wanapum Dam.

John was not afraid to try to build or repair something he had never done before, whether it be mechanics or home repair. If something was new and interesting to John, he would read, research, try, fail, and persist, until he was satisfied with the result. He was interested in energy efficiency. After selling a home, he designed his own energy efficient earth home and drew up plans. The contractor he hired to help him build, Carl, became a friend in the process. Thirty years later, the same friend helped John upgrade the windows and siding to maintain the home's appeal and energy efficiency. In recent years, John became interested in LED lights. One can find LED lights inside and outside of all of John's vehicles and residence in places where most people wouldn't have known they needed them, but how handy they all are!

In 1989, an impromptu invitation to go out dancing with friends at the Franklin house in Wenatchee led John to meet his future wife, Arlene. Arlene recalls, "We all had a good time dancing, but our friends forgot his car was at their house and took off without him. I gave him a ride back to his car, but John

wouldn't quit talking, so we went out for breakfast and talked some more. That was the beginning of our friendship. I loved his humor and good nature. The clincher, that really won me over, though, was the romantic candlelight dinner that he prepared. The man couldn't cook, but he did his best; he served Tuna Helper, saying as he was dishing it out, 'It's Tuna Alfredo, the really good one!' How could a girl pass that up?" John & Arlene were married December 1, 1990 and resided in the house he designed in East Wenatchee until his last day.

After less than a month of marriage, John was introduced to the large Gamache Christmas gathering on the farm, with good food, the excitement of children, and wrapping paper everywhere. He adapted well to holidays and events with his new large extended family, sharing his skills and humor with them, going on trips, and visiting them on the hop farm in Toppenish, plus many trips to Port Gamble to visit his in-laws, Virgil and Gerri. (Friends, Lyle and Julie Ruffle, often were included in the Port Gamble adventures.) There were many repair projects, good meals, and laughter.

While John was frugal with money, he was generous with his time; quick to help a friend or neighbor, oftentimes helping troubleshoot a problem. Many times, he could be heard whistling happily to a song on the radio as he tinkered. He always tried to leave things better than the way he found them and paid great attention to detail. He liked spending time with friends. Wintertime was for enjoying his passion, snowmobiling, with his wife and friends. Each season lasting until the pickup couldn't make it up the trail to unload in the snow. The other seasons were to pass time tinkering, repairing, and improving things around the house, or helping others until the snow hit next season.

Friends and family said this about John. "He liked using his skills to help

others." "He was a great conversationalist, he listened." "I remember his great sense of humor and dry wit." "John was a faithful friend" "He was an excellent mechanic and a perfectionist." "He LOVED snowmobiling." "We teased John, but we always appreciated that he was unapologetically himself." "He was a great friend and a wonderful helper." "He kept his good humor to the end. Even in his last days he could make people smile." "He was a good sport." "He will be missed by all who knew him."

He is survived by his wife, Arlene (Gamache) Neal, his sister, Joy Neal of Mt. Vernon, WA and nephew, Timothy of Mt Vernon, WA. Also surviving are brothers/sisters-in-law Kenneth (Chris) Gamache of Yakima, WA; Bernard (Vicki) Gamache of Yakima, WA; Steve (Jocelyn) Gamache of Toppenish, WA; Barbara (Arnie) Bangs of East Wenatchee, WA; Paul (Trudy) Gamache of Selah, WA; and Raymond Gamache of Yakima, WA. He is also survived by nephews/nieces Nicholas, Jacquie, Allison and Andrea; Darren and Andy; Aric and Ryan; Michael and Katie; Patricia, Awndre and Crystal; and Daniel, Sarah and Amanda; and multiple great-nieces/nephews, cousins and good friends. He was preceded in death by his sister, Nancy (Neal) Gifford.

Chapel of the Valley in East Wenatchee handled the arrangements.

In lieu of a service, John asked that people just laugh together and remember the good times. He loved his friends and family very much.