John Harper Bennett

March 12, 1926 ~ September 24, 2016

John Harper Bennett died September 24, 2016, at the age of ninety.

Born March 12, 1926, in London, England, to Emily Higgs and Harold Harper Bennett, he was the eldest of eight children. John grew up in the Gilmer Park neighborhood of Salt Lake City, attending Emerson and Roosevelt schools and graduating from East High School in 1943.

After his freshman year at the University of Utah, he was drafted into the U.S. Navy, trained as a quartermaster (navigation specialist), joined the last class of the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadrons Training Center in Rhode Island, and served in the Philippines at the tail end of World War II. Discharged in 1946, John returned to school and then entered the California LDS Mission, where he served "without purse or scrip" under President Oscar W. McConkie. Those who know him find it hard to imagine John knocking on strangers' doors asking for dinner and a place to sleep.

John met Moana Ballif at his sister Elen's wedding reception. He fell in love with the young reporter and BYU graduate and married her on May 22, 1951. He said, "She was a much better person than I ‚Äî consistently wonderful. She never made a single error, except perhaps in marrying me." They spent their honeymoon in Colorado Springs, where John played in a tennis tournament and Moana cheered.

In 1953, John finished a degree in Philosophy at the University of Utah ‚Äî not because he believed it would get him a job but because he hoped it would teach him to think. He had worked part-time at Bennett Motors and continued in the sales department after graduation. In 1957, he moved to the leasing department, which was eventually spun off as a separate business. In time, he became president of Bennett Leasing Company and a respected national leader in the industry, serving as vice-president, president, and then chairman of the board of the American Automotive Leasing Association, and on boards and committees of several other trade organizations.

The game of squash racquets was his grand passion and became his second career. Following the example of his father, John took up squash at the age of forty and never looked back. He admired the ethical and cerebral demands of the game. In a fast, aggressive, chess-like match, each player has an absolute duty to get out of his opponent's way. He was state champion in Utah, Colorado, and California; won Intermountain and Pacific Coast regional titles; and claimed the 1983 55+ Softball National Championship. Including hardball, softball, and doubles, he participated in 63 nationals. John served as president of the Utah Squash Association, leading the effort to build an exhibition court at the Deseret Gymnasium and bringing the North American Open to Salt Lake City in 1980. When the Gym closed, John opened the Chancellor Racquets Club, with two converted racquetball courts, and operated it for nine years. In 1999, with partners including his son Craig, he launched Squashworks, a squash-only facility with six international courts that has hosted twelve professional tournaments. In 2012, he was named to the

U.S. Squash Grand Masters Honor Roll.

A classic introvert, John nevertheless enjoyed close associations with family and friends, including his siblings and members of the Garden Park and East High study groups, with whom he met regularly for over 65 years. He had squash friends all over the country and enjoyed seeing them at tournaments. In his last years, although he mourned the loss of his ability to play, he loved being at Squashworks, watching squash, talking with members, reading the paper, and enjoying the sounds and energy of the club. He took special pleasure in watching his grandchildren play, hoping that his love for the game would continue in generations to come. Besides squash, he loved jazz, theatre, road trips, model cars, and BYU sports. He was a committed member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, serving in many capacities over his lifetime. His favorite assignment was teaching Gospel Doctrine.

Together John and Moana raised six children, two daughters and four sons, in a loving home full of her goodness and his humor, mixed with books, sports, debates, service, faith, and mutual respect. After Moana's death in 1988, and through many losses and reversals, he remained the center of their family circle. His legacy is integrity, courage, and an astounding optimism in the face of adversity. His dry self-deprecating wit and concise wisdom are already deeply missed.

He is survived by his children and their spouses: Heather (Kevin Hanson), John (Lorraine), Brandon (Virginia Vierra), Marc (Shelley), Craig (Eden), and Shannon a.k.a. Shaz (Jean-Pierre Caner); fourteen grandchildren (and three spouses); three great-grandchildren; two brothers, Michael and Stephen; and many in-laws, nieces, nephews, and cousins. His wife, parents, four sisters, and one brother preceded him in death.

Funeral services will be held on Monday, October 3, 2016, at 12:00 noon in the Garden Park Ward, 1150 East Yale Avenue. Friends and family may call at Larkin Mortuary, 260 East South Temple, on Sunday, 6:00,8:00 p.m. and on Monday, 11:00,11:45 a.m. at the church. Burial will follow at Larkin Sunset Lawn, 2350 East 1300 South.

Instead of sending flowers, John would like you to play squash!