

## Half Staff – John E. Bennett, 92

January 23, 2014



Rockport, MA — John Bennett, 92, of Rockport, passed away at the Lahey Clinic in Burlington on January 23, 2014, after sustaining a head injury in a fall. The son of John I. Bennett and Hazel (Dorr) Bennett, he was raised in Dorchester and the Germantown section of Quincy, where he learned to handle a boat almost before he could walk. He attended Boston Mechanic Arts High School and Massachusetts State College, now UMass Amherst. As a young man, while working at the Fore River Shipyard, he learned to weld. When World War II came, he enlisted in the Navy and was sent to aviation mechanics school. In 1943, the Navy sent him to Pan American at LaGuardia Field in New York City, before assigning him to four-engine seaplanes, like the PBY Coronado, that carried cargo and mail across the Pacific Theater. Last fall, he realized his ambition to visit the Naval Air Station Pensacola, in Florida, to see the last remaining PBY and sit at his old flight engineer's station aboard that plane.

When the war ended, John returned home to Savin Hill, Dorchester, with his hometown sweetheart, Mary Rivers, whom he had married while stationed in Alameda, Calif. Together with his father and father-in-law, he built the Linda B., a 52-foot fishing dragger. John and Mary Bennett moved to Rockport, and the dragger joined the Gloucester fleet. John soon decided he would rather repair boats than fish on them, so he sold the Linda B. and started Bennett Welding, the company that became his career. In later life, after what he called his “failed retirement,” he enjoyed working part time with the crew at Gloucester Transit Mix.

John and Mary were enthusiastic square dancers and were among the original members of the Gloucester Skippers Square Dance Club. They enjoyed traveling throughout the country, including a 10-week family camping trip around the United States when their two daughters were young. They loved their camp in Madrid, Maine, and were avid members of the North Franklin Snowmobile Club in Phillips, Maine. John also enjoyed both flat- and white-water canoeing and kayaking.

He and Mary were founding members of the Thacher Island Association and served for several years as co-chairs of the Thacher Island Town Committee. John remained an active member of the Thacher Island volunteer work crew through this past summer. He was also active in his Masonic lodge, the American Legion Edward Peterson Post 98 in Rockport, the Sandy Bay Brotherhood, and was a faithful attendee of the Sandy Bay Historical Society's programs.

People who knew John admired him for his dry humor, his unassuming nature, and his methodical approach to mechanical problems, which resulted in practical and often creative solutions.

John was predeceased by Mary, his wife of 66 years. He is survived by two daughters, Linda Berard of Rockport and Alice Bennett of Hartland, Vt.; a sister, Winifred (Bennett) Corniea of Oakland, Calif.; and several Dorchester cousins. He had many close friends, including those who were like sons, J. Gregory Porter of Gloucester and West Glover, Vermont, Robert McComiskey of Gloucester, and Lee Marr of Rockport.

ARRANGEMENTS: At John's request, there will be no visiting hours or funeral. His ashes will be scattered off Thacher's Island. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Thacher Island Association, P.O. Box 73, Rockport, MA 01966. A memorial celebration of his life is scheduled for Sunday, May 4, at the Rockport Community House.

Arrangements are by the Burgess and Mackey Funeral Home, 201 Main Street, Rockport. Condolences may be given at [www.burgessandmackey.com](http://www.burgessandmackey.com).