

Obituary for John A. Ball

John Allen Ball, 83, died August 6, 2019, of complications resulting from Alzheimer's Disease. He died peacefully at his home in Harvard, Massachusetts, surrounded by family.

John was born in 1935 at his family's home in Ravenna, Nebraska. He attended Ravenna High School and graduated from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 1957 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering.

Having participated in ROTC in college, John served for two years as a lieutenant in the United States Air Force, stationed at Wheelus Air Base in Tripoli, Libya.

After returning from Libya, John attended graduate school at Harvard University in Cambridge, earning a Ph.D. in astrophysics.

John launched his career as a radio astronomer at Harvard University, first at Agassiz Station, the Harvard College Observatory in Harvard, Massachusetts, later at Harvard's Center for Astrophysics in Cambridge and its radio astronomy station in Fort Davis, Texas.

Later John joined MIT's Haystack Observatory in Westford, Massachusetts, where he worked as a research scientist until he retired in 2006. At Haystack, John worked with the 37-meter diameter radio telescope, part of a global network of Very Long Baseline Interferometry (VLBI) experiments. John also taught astronomy at Worcester State College.

Throughout his career, John published extensively in his field of astrophysics. Other publications include a book *Algorithms for RPM Calculators* (1978) and papers, “The Zoo Hypothesis” (1973) and “The Search for Extraterrestrial Life: Recent Developments” (1985).

John also had a large number of other interests. These ranged from civil rights activism to photography, motorcycling to sailing, poetry reading and writing to classical music appreciation. He perfected his skills in making sushi. Later he focused on health and nutrition, adopting a vegan diet. He organized a film series on nutrition, which was shown on the local cable station. John served on the Town of Harvard Cable Committee and helped with video taping town meetings.

John is survived by his wife of 64 years, Audrey Roth Ball; daughters Fifine, Desirée, and Laurie; son Kevin (Teresa Gudger); nephew Michael Ball (Beth); grandchildren Justin Walsh, Daniel Walsh, Jessica Anderson (Duke), Audrey Lewis, Lindsey Champion (Corey), and Samantha Gudger; and great grandchildren Brookelan Heck and Tucker Ray Champion. A memorial service for John will be held on a date to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, donations in his name may be sent to the Alzheimer’s Association / alz.org