



John William Willard

November 15, 1930 - October 14, 2025

John William Willard, 94, of Florence, Wisconsin, passed away on Tuesday, October 14, 2025. He was born in Chicago, Illinois, on November 15, 1930, to Sprague Bailey Willard and Dorothy Ruth (Atkinson) Willard.

He attended Wright Junior College and the American Academy of Art in Chicago. He was drafted into the US Marine Corps to serve during the Korean war in 1951. Following his military service, he was employed by the Union Pacific Railroad. He married Lois Marilyn Safstrom in April of 1955.

John became the Chicago city ticket agent for Union Pacific's passenger service. He went to work for his father's small printing business in Chicago when Amtrak took over passenger train travel. In 1985, he went to work for Morton International initially to run their print shop. He later was promoted into a marketing role where he created ads, coordinated trade shows and events, and generally supported their marketing efforts. He and his wife Lois moved to Florence in 1998, having had a long family connection with the area.

He was an active member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Florence and at Western Springs Baptist Church in Illinois for many years prior to his move to the area. He was a talented painter and writer, and an avid reader all of his life, with a deep knowledge of history, the Bible, and theology. He loved classical music, photography, gardening, the natural world and sports,

particularly baseball. He will be remembered for his kindness, his interesting conversation, dry sense of humor, and willingness to learn and try new things, even at 94. He was much loved and will be sorely missed.

John is survived by his daughter, Barbara Lynn (Willard) Marden; son, Robert John Willard; sister, Lois Ruth (Willard) Rabb; and 3 grandchildren Brandon Willard, Natasha Willard and Allie Banker.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Lois, who passed away in 2017.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, November 22, 10:30 am at Bethlehem

Lutheran Church, 900 Central Avenue, Florence, WI 54121. A meal served at First

Presbyterian Church, 409 Lake Avenue, Florence, will follow after the service.

Condolences may be expressed to the family of John Willard online at www.erickson-rochon-nash.com.

The family has entrusted the Erickson-Rochon & Nash Funeral Home of Iron Mountain with the arrangements.