

John Whitman “Whit” Sears Jr. (1933–2026)

A Life Eloquently Lived — Sung Loudly, and Rarely Off-Key

John Whitman “Whit” Sears Jr. (1933–2026) has officially moved on to editing the universe’s punctuation, ensuring that every apostrophe is in its place and that the rest of us remember when to use “whom.”

Born to John Whitman Sears and Mary Catherine Sears, Whit inherited their integrity, curiosity, and stubbornly high grammar standards — which he lovingly enforced on the rest of us. He believed words mattered and that no sentence was beyond improvement, especially yours.

A proud Harvard MBA (Class of 1959), Whit brought intellect, charm, and a touch of mischief to every room. He loved language, travel, and good conversation — ideally all at once, preferably with a story and a strong cup of coffee.

Whit’s life was a masterclass in global citizenship, a journey that traced a path across continents and cultures. His adventures took him far and wide, beginning with the vibrant energy of Tehran and the bustling harbors of Hong Kong, before a chapter spent amidst the historic landscapes of Belgium. His time in the Peace Corps was defined by a humble heart for service and a quest to learn everything the Thai people could teach him by truly living like a local and working hand-in-hand with the community. By the time he served in India, he had perfected the art of collecting stories, friendships, and the occasional questionable meal with curious delight. The phrase “adventure awaits” might well have been embroidered on his passport.

Central to many of those adventures was his wife, Diane “DD” Sears — Whit’s travel companion, singing companion, and life companion. Together they shared a deep love of exploring new places, meeting new people, and filling the journey with conversation, laughter, and song. Whether navigating unfamiliar streets abroad or sharing everyday moments at home, DD was his steadfast partner and the harmony to his melody. Their partnership enriched every chapter of Whit’s life and created a home filled with curiosity, warmth, and music.

Back home, Whit was a fixture on the soccer field and the pool deck — a coach, a referee, a timekeeper, a starter, and a role model who believed deeply in fair play and character. He could calm a sideline squabble faster than a whistle blow, usually with humor, patience, and one well-placed look over his glasses.

But perhaps less known — or impossible to forget — was how much Whit loved to sing. He sang everywhere: behind the wheel, on hikes, around campfires, and sometimes mid-conversation if the moment called for it (and sometimes when it didn't). From folk tunes to favorite classics, he sang with gusto and volume, rarely off key, and with a joy that reminded everyone that enthusiasm always outshines perfection. Music was the background score to his life — and, for better or worse, everyone nearby got to hear it. He is survived by two siblings (Robin and Martha), his four children — Heather Madaus (spouse Jason), Angus Sears (spouse Wendi), Summer Poepping (spouse Mike), and Andre Sears (spouse Courtney) — and his twelve grandchildren: Nicholas, Alexandra, Devereaux, Avery, Ian, Kamryn, Sam, Owen, Camden, Macyn, Kenley, and Carson, who adored him for his warmth, wit, storytelling, and his spontaneous serenades — along with numerous foster children Whit and DD considered their own.

Whit will be remembered as a thoughtful scholar, a curious traveler, a joyful singer of songs, and a loyal friend. He left behind both good advice and good melodies — often wrapped up in the same sentence.

Celebration of Life

A Celebration of Life will be held at Tree of Life UU in McHenry, IL on Saturday, April 18, 2026, at 11:00 a.m. Family and friends are invited to gather, share stories, sing a few verses in his honor (on key if possible, but he'd never insist), and raise a glass to a man who made life richer, louder, and far more grammatically correct. Location to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Tree of Life to support the youth service trip to Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. *Choose "Youth Group" in the drop-down menu and add his name in the memo. The link for the gift donation is

<https://treeoflifeuu.churchcenter.com/giving>

Tree of Life UU

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