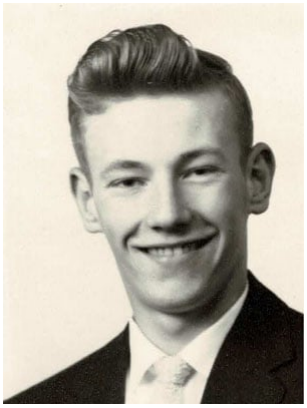
John Alan Devlin

His immense kindness, generosity, stylishness, and ability to work a room earned John his “Contra King” nickname during his long career as a salesman, one which netted several awards and honours. But his legacy in the business community is surpassed by his impact on the lives of family and friends, an incalculable number of whom he impacted greatly.

He was born Ivan James Devlin in Nanaimo to parents Bill and Ivy Devlin. Under the advice of his beloved Aunty Mar, his parents soon renamed him John, though his late and beloved brother Michael called him Harv, kickstarting a list of monikers that would grow to include Big John, Johnny, JD, the Bronze God, Grandad, and Grandpa John.



His long and successful sports career started with baseball. He never lost his love for the game (later coaching the 1961 National Little League All-Stars to a B.C. title), but his 6′ 5″ frame was better suited to basketball. He played for the Vic High Totems in high school, leading to a successful men’s league career with the Haida Chiefs.

A fierce competitor, with elbows like can openers, John saw sports as something more than wins and losses. He coached each of his three children, their friends, and countless others, many of whom consider him the best and most principled coach they ever played for. And nothing made him happier than his weekly Wednesday dinners with granddaughter Carli, or watching his grandchildren play or perform. Their range of pursuits (from hockey, baseball, softball and rugby to ballet, theatre, and track and field) speaks volumes of his influence.

Hearts broke citywide when he married Patricia Anne Burgess in 1964, and theirs was a fairytale union, lasting 47 years until

Pat’s death in 2011. Their long-awaited reunion in the skies above will undoubtedly be marked by laughter and dancing, and an urgent status update on her gardens.

Dashing and handsome, it was during his time at Bell’s Men’s Wear (which he purchased in 1964) that John fine-tuned his salesmanship, and saw how relationships and character mattered in business. The arrival of his children prompted a move from menswear to media, where John remained until his retirement in 2016.

John landed in advertising sales with C-FAX 1070. Within two years, he won a Distinguished Salesman Award. His 37-year career, one of the longest for a salesperson in Canadian radio history, hit lofty heights in 2006, when he surpassed $10 million in career sales for C-FAX.

Vacations at the family cabins in Sooke and on Hornby Island were highlights for the family. A book was never far from John’s reach in those days, though his appetite for novels would later reach epic proportions. His commitment to reading was outpaced by his fondness for collector pins, first piqued during pin-trading ceremonies at baseball games in his youth.

His shrewd bargaining skills (and pursuit of Hard Rock Cafe memorabilia) were fixtures of pin shows everywhere. Those who knew John always searched for pins on his behalf, and his friendships in that community were some of his most valued during his later years. His pin passion never ebbed, even while he was vacationing in Southeast Asia and Australia.

John volunteered on boards and committees across the city; that he did so with little need for attention reflected his true character. A former president of the Downtown Victoria Business Association, he was given the DVBA Lifetime Member Award, only the third in 28 years a member received the honour. He was also invested in the lacrosse community, playing a key executive role with the Victoria Shamrocks,

occasionally covering the team on-air for C-FAX. He was later named to the Shamrocks Wall of Fame.

Family and friends will remember John for his warmth and beaming smile. He was the largest personality in the room, but if his attention was focused solely on you, it was a privilege. He was a towering figure in both stature and legacy, who will be missed beyond words.

John is survived by children Alen (Paula), Catherine (Roch) and Michael (Maggie) and grandchildren Carli, Cameron, James, Joel, Jonah, Sadie, Stella, and Violet, all of Victoria; sister-in-law Diane Devlin and nephew Christopher (Marianne) of Sydney, Australia; cousin Martin Hagarty of Comox, BC; friends Sheila Simpson, Betty Brown, Kerry and Garry Frazer, and a host of others, including his C-FAX and pin-trading families.

He was pre-deceased by wife Pat, brother Michael and nephew Matthew; second cousin Jane Laskin, friends Bea Wright and Barbara MacCaskell and lifelong best friends, Bob Brown and Meron Simpson.

A celebration of John’s life will be held at the Victoria Scottish Community Centre (1803 Admirals Rd.) at 2 p.m. on March 6, 2026.