



## Joel Frederick Potter

February 11, 1936 - January 31, 2024

Teacher, coach, conservationist, environmentalist, athlete, naturalist, outdoorsman, beloved husband, father, and grandfather. Joel Frederick Potter was all of these things, and then some, and inspired thousands of students to champion and be stewards of the environment, during his 41 year teaching career.

After a long, full, wonderful life, Joel passed away on January 31, 2024, after a brief illness, and is survived by his wife Prudence B. Potter, son Joel F. Potter, Jr. (wife Samantha), and daughter, Paige P. Howard (husband John Howard), and grandchildren Allison Potter, Grafton Howard, and Lillian Howard, who adore him and whose legacy will live on in them and all the lives he touched. Joel F. Potter taught and coached at St. Paul's School in Concord, NH for 37 years as a distinguished member of the science faculty and founder of the Environmental Studies program and Eco-Action, the popular student organization dedicated to raising awareness of the environment on campus. Joel founded Eco-Fest a favorite SPS tradition and day to celebrate the environment and get out in nature, that continues as an annual event to this day. During his tenure at SPS, Joel coached football (12 years), baseball (14 years), ice hockey, and alpine skiing (17 years). Joel was loved by his students and colleagues who called him in turn the "Gentle Polar Bear" and Colonel Potter" for his kind and gentle demeanor that connected so well with his students.

Joel and Prue were married for 63 wonderful years and shared a deep love of

family, education, annual trips to Wellfleet, and enjoyed their travels to Africa, Alaska, and Hawaii, and while on sabbatical living on the Cape and in Boulder, Colorado, camping out west while visiting National Parks. Joel moved to St. Paul's School with his wife Prue in 1964, where they raised their two children and enjoyed spending time together skiing and on annual family vacations at their home in Wellfleet on Cape Cod. Joel had a great sense of humor and wonderful twinkle in his eye, and truly enjoyed connecting with family, friends, and students alike. Joel's vivacious wife Prue nicknamed "the Sunshine Girl" raised the children and resumed her teaching career, and taught first grade for over 35 years. Joel and Prue met while teaching in their hometown of White Plains, New York, after Joel earned his undergraduate degree in Psychology from Williams College, and later his Master's Degree in Biology from the University of Michigan.

While at Williams College, Joel had the distinction of being named one of Sport's Illustrated top football rookies at William his freshman year. While getting his Master degree in Biology, Joel realized his lifelong love of the environment and learning out in the field, hallmarks in his teachings. Joel was a three sport varsity athlete and avid skier. Family lore is that Joel and Prue fell in love on a ski trip, a theme that continued throughout their family life with trips to Colorado Ski areas, the French Alps and Tuckerman's Ravine (with son Joel who was on NH State Ski team and raced in college). A dedicated father and avid sportsman, Joel didn't miss a game or ski race or horse event of his children's and would be up making his famous Potter family French toast with N. H. maple syrup (tapping maple trees and making maple syrup was a family tradition) to ensure a good start to the day. From cheering his daughter Paige on and helping put in horse shoe cleats for cross country jumping to helping coach his grandson's T-ball team, Joel way always ready to help support family endeavors.

Joel received many accolades during his teaching career at St. Paul's School and took great pride in connecting students to nature and to hands-on experiences to study and better understand and appreciate the environment.

Inspired by Henry David Thoreau's river trips on the Merrimack River, Joel took students on 3 day canoe camping expeditions on the Merrimack to study the water quality and the environment. A highlight of many students experiences at SPS.

In 1994 Joel received Conservation Teacher of the Year award for Merrimack County and the State of New Hampshire. Joel served on the New Hampshire Teacher Certification Board and for 21 years on the Concord Conservation Commission. Joel also worked with the N.H. Audubon Society and the N.H. Department of Fish & Game to plan activities and events to connect people to nature. Some of his favorite outings included taking students whale watching and to see the arrival of migrating Woodcock on nearby Fisk Hill. During his field studies, Joel discovered a rare species of freshwater jellyfish, *Craspedacusta Sowerbyi*.

Joel received the Governor's Citation for his 37 years of service at St. Paul's School at his retirement noting: "His dedication and passion to both the environment and students has been limitless. He is an unbelievable warm and resourceful teacher who has made a distinct niche in the St. Paul's community. He will forever remain an irreplaceable legend."

A former student wrote the following in honor of Mr. Potter: "Hard work and study has paid off, but it all goes back to learning and hoping to improve myself and the world around me through knowledge and understanding. That was something I learned most about canoeing down the Merrimack with Eco '89. Thank you for the important lessons on stewardship and caring for our environment. It really made a difference in my life."

After retiring from St. Paul's School in 2001, Joel and Prue moved to Worton, MD to be closer to daughter Paige and family. During retirement, Joel enjoyed his boat "Sunshine Girl", fishing, spending time in Wellfleet, and treasure hunting for their new antiques business Silver Fox Antiques. Joel was tapped by former SPS student and Sultana President Drew McMullen as an educational advisor after being inspired by one of Mr. Potter's legendary

## Camping River Trips.

Living just shy of his 88th birthday, Joel continued to have a wonderful sense of humor and love of family, animals, and the environment until his passing.

Joel continues to be an inspiration to his family and students.

A private memorial service and celebration is planned for spring. In lieu of flowers please make a contribution to Sultana Foundation ([www.sultanaeducation.org](http://www.sultanaeducation.org)) or Mount Harmon Plantation ([www.mountharmon.org](http://www.mountharmon.org)), two organizations Joel believed in and supported that connect people to nature.

Remember, nature is all around us. The better we take care of the environment, the better it will take care of us.

# Tribute Wall

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“ I just learned of Mr. Potter's passing. I was a student of his at St. Paul's from 1970-74. While he did not instil my love of the outdoors, he reinforced and encouraged it, through his teaching and wonderful field trips (remembering a canoe trip on the Merrimack, and discovering sea critters at Rye Beach). I think I may have been one of the earliest members of Eco-Action, as it represented what I felt at the time was important, and still do. The rest of my education and career was very much science and nature (agriculture) oriented. I'm happy to learn his life was full, please know that his influence is significant and remembered.

Regards  
Dan Fay

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Dan Fay - February 22, 2024 at 12:18 AM

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“ Celebrating Joel F. Potter with many wonderful memories ❤️🐾🏊  
♿️ ♀️ ♻️ 🌍 🏠 ⚓



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Paige Potter Howard - February 18, 2024 at 09:03 AM

PH

“ Heaven got the best new angel yesterday marking the passing of an icon for our family, teacher, coach, conservationist, naturalist, lover of animals, and best dad around. So grateful for his example and kind generous spirit which will live on in us all! ❤️🙏❤️🐾🦋♻️♿♀️



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**Paige Potter Howard** - February 17, 2024 at 11:44 AM

PH

*Joel F. Potter*  
*February 11, 1936 ~ January 31, 2024*

*Many thanks for the Roots & Wings!*

*We love you Poppy!!*

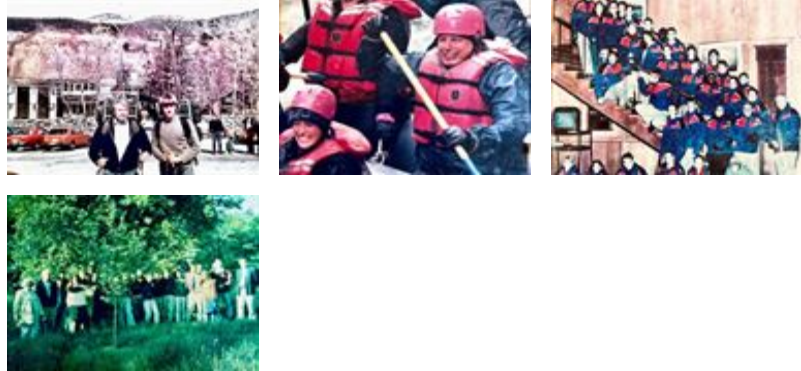
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**Paige Howard** - February 17, 2024 at 12:22 PM



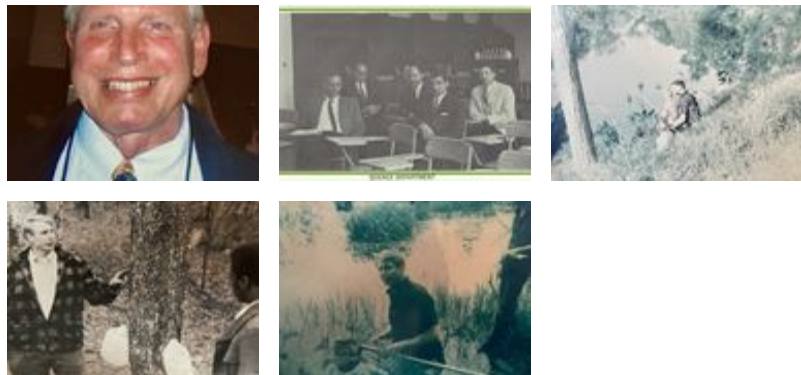
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Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - February 16, 2024 at 10:54 AM



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Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - February 15, 2024 at 02:43 PM



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Fellows, Helfenbein & Newnam Funeral Home - February 15, 2024 at 11:42 AM