JOHN SALVADOR, JR., A TRIBUTE
By Carol W. LaGrasse

John Salvador, Jr., one of the most inspiring and influential leaders in the mission of the Property Rights Foundation of America®, died on November 13, 2018. He was well known locally, both as the owner of Dunham’s Bay Boat and Beach Club and Dunham’s Bay Lodge, as well as for his civic leadership. He is deeply missed.

After John Salvador died at the age of 85, Tom Randall, who founded the Adirondack Journal, wrote a fine article that appeared in the successor weekly newspaper, the Sun Community News, on December 8, 2018, seemingly recognizing that more substance needed to be written publicly than the dry obituary or the local daily’s rambling article featuring restrained remarks by a number of local officials, not necessarily friends.

John, as many of the Property Rights Foundation members will recall, held a degree in civil engineering from Lafayette College and master’s degree from New Jersey Institute of Technology. After service in the U. S. Army, he worked as an engineer, building or operating refineries for Esso in Europe and the Mideast, as well as South America, and, as he told me, ultimately disassembling the refinery in South America and removing the components to an island nation nearby so that they would not be stolen by the government as happened in the Mideast. In 1973, he and his wife Kathy returned to the U. S. to raise their son in this country.

Thom Randall stated that his article focused on John Salvador’s positive influence on the community, dedication to civic ideals, and service to the nation.

Beyond his business acumen in operating the Dunham’s Bay enterprises, Salvador was well-known since the early 1980s as a government watchdog—attending town and county government meetings, making sure elected officials were following the law, and that policies didn’t abridge citizens’ legal rights, Thom wrote.

He called attention to John Salvador’s lawsuit work, including that against the county garbage disposal “flow control” law, which was ultimately declared unconstitutional, just as John had pointed out.

Thom Randall also called attention to the frustrating battle John waged for many years. This was John’s assertion of the right to utilize his submerged underwater land, for which he paid local town of Queensbury real estate taxes even though the submerged land was in the Town of Bolton, which is above ground on the opposite side of Lake George. The Dunham Bay business was the only one built out over water on submerged land, for which John traced the title to the King. In fact, their dock was the only one on the lake that was built on private property. According to court papers, although they had a permanent permit from the state Department of Environmental Conservation, the state’s new Lake George Commission revoked this permit without a hearing and the Salvadors were blocked from improving the dock space. The Lake George Commission also arbitrarily changed the records so that the name of the corporation did not appear as the owner, and substituted John’s and his wife Kathy’s names. A remark by a commissioner, recorded in writing, stated that the name change was to be able to access the Salvadors’ personal assets.

When John constructed a floating dockage improvement, the New York State Attorney General fined him the extraordinary amount of $723,000 without any hearing or formal attempt to evaluate the facts, even though fines by the Lake George Park Commission in excess of $5,000 are required by law to be approved by the DEC commissioner. In the course of the litigation, the Salvador’s attorney Madeline Sheila Galvin filed a petition for certiorari to the New York State Court of Appeals, but it was denied.

John generously advanced the Property Rights Foundation of America’s goals. His research revealed that the Adirondack Land Trust, which is affiliated with The Nature
Conservancy, was paid $2,600,000 by New York State in 1994 for the acquisition of the 176-acre “Morgan Property” on Lake George in the town of Putnam in Washington County for which the official state files had two professional appraisals, one appraiser’s for $1,708,000 and another appraiser’s at $1,764,000. John worked with me from his voluminous research to bring a lawsuit in 1995 to cancel this sale. To this day, I cannot comprehend how our significant, meticulously researched and developed lawsuit was turned down by the Appellate Division.

Tom Randall’s article quoted some of my thoughts: “Carol LaGrasse…recalled how Salvador was focused on stopping government entities from overextending their authority. She talked about how Salvador would do extensive legal research to back up his objectives.”

He continued my remarks, “John was quite thorough and very meticulous in his legal research on issues of government, whether he thought it was good for the general public or unfairly restricting the use of his property. He knew what he knew.”

Tom Randall also quoted one of the Property Rights Foundation of America’s most deeply committed original participants, actively involved to this very day. He wrote that George McGowan, a friend of Salvador’s and former Lake George Town Board member, said:

“Salvador was a staunch advocate of limited government and had great integrity…John was a fine patriot who believed in the U.S. Constitution—he was passionate about protecting property rights and curbing regulatory overreach…He sought to have government comply with its own laws. He loved America.”

John Salvador used his creativity and brilliance as an engineer to seek justice and responsible government. We were honored to be counted among his friends.