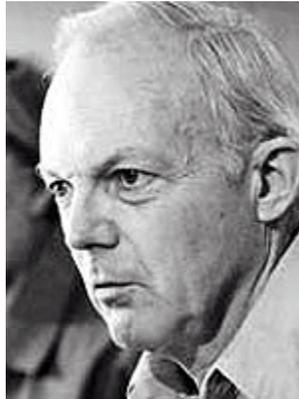




**JOHN FREDERICK SEIBERLING, JR., SMA '37**  
**(1918 – 2008)**



John Frederick Seiberling, Jr. was born on September 8, 1918 in Akron, Ohio, and died on August 2, 2008 in Copley, OH. Seiberling attended the public schools of Akron, and entered Staunton Military Academy (SMA) in the fall of 1933. He graduated from SMA in 1936 as a Captain in C Company and a member of the Honor Committee and the Officers Club.

He received his A.B. from Harvard University (1941) and his LLB at Columbia Law School (1949). His parents were Lieutenant John Frederick Seiberling (1888–1962) and Henrietta McBrayer Buckler (1888–1979). He had two sisters: Mary Gertrude Seiberling (born 1920) and Dorothy Buckler Lethbridge Seiberling (born 1922). His paternal grandparents were Frank Seiberling, the founder of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, and Gertrude Ferguson Penfield. His maternal grandparents were Julius Augustus Buckler and Mary Maddox. John married Elizabeth “Betty” Behr, a Vassar graduate and former OSS translator, and they had three sons, Stephen, David, and John B. Seiberling.

During World War II he served in the United States Army from 1942 to 1946, attaining the rank of Major. He was awarded the Bronze Star and also awarded the Legion of Merit for his participation in the Allied planning of the D-Day invasion.

After the war and graduation from Columbia Law School, Seiberling was an attorney, first in New York City, and later for Goodyear in Akron. He served as a member of the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and Akron's Regional Development Board and Metropolitan Housing Authority. In 1970 he was a successful Democratic candidate for the US House of Representatives. He served eight terms as a Representative from Ohio. In 1974 he helped to establish what later became the Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and served on the House Judiciary Committee that held the impeachment hearings against President Richard Nixon. Seiberling was an opponent of the Vietnam War and helped author the War Powers Act.

The best way to profile John F. Seiberling was to let the now-deceased Akron congressman tell his own story. That was the approach Ohio filmmaker Paul R. Jacoway used to create *A Tree Grows in Washington: The John Seiberling Story*.

Jacoway's film, explored Seiberling's life, character, and success in wilderness preservation and as a member of Congress from 1971 to 1986, and Seiberling, the legislator behind the Cuyahoga Valley National Park.

Much of the documentary is told in Seiberling's own words, displaying his passion for the environment and his career in Washington representing the old Akron-based 14th District.

The portrait of Seiberling includes him in France during World War II, looking up from the post-Normandy destruction to see a wedge of ducks flying over and commenting on how humans are insignificant creatures on Earth. Or Seiberling getting teary in a University of Akron classroom while teaching about Watergate, an American political scandal in which he played a key role as a member of the House Judiciary Committee that investigated former President Richard M. Nixon.

Seiberling was "a very complicated topic" to profile, Jacoway said in a telephone interview. He said he came away very impressed by Seiberling, his integrity and his ability to develop bipartisan support for projects, unlike today's Congress.

From 1992 to 1996 Seiberling was a member of the faculty at the University of Akron Law School and headed its Center for Peace Studies. Akron's John F. Seiberling Federal Building and a professorship at the University of Akron were named in his honor. In 2001, President Clinton awarded Seiberling

the Presidential Citizens Medal. Clinton called him an "environmental hero" for crafting the Alaska Lands Act of 1980, which doubled the size of the U.S. national parks and wildlife refuges nationwide. It also tripled the area of federally designated wilderness. Seiberling helped create the Historic Preservation Fund, which gives millions of dollars in preservation grants each year to states and communities. "He was the original environmentalist. He was green way back when. He really was ahead of his time. . . . He was a man of integrity and made his decisions based on what was right, not for their political value. And he cared deeply for the country and its people."

Sources: Bob Downing, Beacon Journal staff writer, *Wikipedia.org*, and Bill McKern. Kablegram 12-08, Taps.  
Edited by Kelly McGavock, SMA '59