JOHN EDWARD "JACK" STEINER died in a swimming accident in Lake Washington on July 29, 2003. Honored as the "father of the 727," he lived in Medina, Washington. He was 85.

Jack Steiner began his 43-year career at Boeing in 1941 after earning a master’s of science degree in aeronautical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a bachelor of science degree in aeronautical engineering from the University of Washington.

During his career at Boeing he played a major role in the design, development, and marketing of every commercial plane from the Stratoliner to the 767. Recognized as one of aviation’s greatest designers, Steiner was in charge of aerodynamics on the design of the 707 and was chief engineer for the 737 program and also chief engineer and program manager for design and development of the best-selling 727.

Steiner was known for being energetic and hard working, attributes that contributed to his success as general manager of the 707 / 727 / 737 division. While heading that division, he saw the company through one of its bleakest period during
the early 1970s, when two-thirds of the market vanished and combined production rates for the 707, 727, and 737 dropped to a mere four planes per month.

Steiner consolidated the manufacturing of all three single-aisle planes and managed to produce them at a profit. In 1973 he was appointed vice president of program operations for Boeing Commercial Airplane Company. Before his retirement in 1984, Steiner contributed to development of the 757 and 767 and was elected vice president of corporate product development.

In 1981 he was selected by the President’s science advisor as the sole industry participant in the White House Aeronautical Policy Study and went on to become chairman of the Aeronautical Policy Review Committee for the Office of the President of the United States. He retired from that position in 1990.

A brilliant engineer, Steiner worked on high-technology research involving aerodynamic efficiency of swept wings and total commercial and military configurations, structural efficiency and durability, propulsion integration, and computer-aided productivity improvement research in engineering and manufacturing. He was the tough point man for production and was quoted as saying, “If we don’t have a few problems, we’ll die of comfort.” He received numerous national and international awards, including fellowship in the Royal Aeronautical Society and the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, and was selected twice as Aviation Week’s “Man of the Year.” In 1978 he was honored as Alumnus Summa Laude Dignatus, the highest award the University of Washington bestows on a graduate.

His daughter Christine Schwager wrote:

Jack’s wife of 60 years, Dorothy, passed away in January, 2003. They were survived by three children and five grandchildren. Their oldest son, George, died in November of 2003, leaving his wife Carlyn and daughter Joanna as survivors. Jack and Dorothy’s remaining
children include Christine Schwager (husband Bruce, children Dan and Karen) and son John Steiner (children Jeremy and Nicholas).

My dad loved boats. As a child he built model sailboats, and during high school he rebuilt an old sailboat he named the *Rogue*. He had dreamed of designing boats as a career, but the airplane business was booming so he decided to become an airplane engineer.

Our family spent part of almost every summer cruising in British Columbia first on a 34’ cruiser and later on a 53’ custom designed ketch. My parents explored and sailed with their boat every year until they died. My parents’ love of sailing, fishing, beachcombing, swimming, skiing, and exploring the world was passed on to their children and grandchildren.

My father had an active, curious, and creative mind. He was a prolific writer and an accomplished public speaker. He was an avid reader and liked the challenge of big ideas. He was always eager to teach what he knew and listen to what his children and grandchildren had to say. I learned something new at every meal, and my children say they have learned much from their grandpa.