



John William Matthews

February 27, 1924 - February 5, 2015

John (Jack) William Matthews passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on February 5th, 2015, after a short time battle with cancer. He was an important figure to his immediate and extended family with many achievements in his long life and career.

John was born in Scranton, PA, son of Arthur Washington and Lydia Lena (Probst) Matthews. As a young boy he was active in the Boy Scouts, attaining rank of Eagle Scout. He was an excellent scholar and at the age of 16 was valedictorian of his high school class. He attended Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA and joined the Navy ROTC at the start of World War II. The Navy later transferred him to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, MA where in an accelerated program due to the war he earned a B. S. in Chemical Engineering in three years. In the Navy he was commissioned as a Lieutenant Junior Grade where he was trained in radio communications and the new technology of radar. He was honorably discharged from active duty after the war and remained in the reserve until 1955. After the war ended John returned to MIT to earn a M. S. in Chemical Engineering.

John joined Standard Oil Company of New Jersey and moved to Caracas, Venezuela where he was an engineer at oil refineries in Caripito and Amuay. In Caracas he met and married Kirby Lucille Adams of Tulsa, OK in 1948, daughter of Hiram Clark and Manie Lucille (Jopling) Adams. Five children were born to the couple in the years that they lived in Venezuela, and after moving to New Jersey, a sixth child was born.

In New Jersey, John worked for Esso Research and Engineering at Florham Park, designing systems for Esso and later Exxon refineries around the world, with extended stays in Libya and France for refinery start-ups. Surely the crown of his career was the design and start-up of the Exxon Benicia Refinery, where he worked from 1968 until his retirement in 1986. He remained as a consultant for another 10 years. In 1978 he married Maria Teresa Plata-Martinez who was also an employee at the refinery and who retired in 1996 as an executive senior assistant. The family was increased by the addition of Maria Teresa's two sons from a previous marriage in Bogota, Colombia.

Prior to their retirement, John and Maria Teresa purchased and managed a Baskin-Robbins franchise store in Benicia which they operated for 17 years. Also, for three years

during that time they also opened and operated in Benicia "Casa de España", a Spanish restaurant.

John loved sailing and traveling. He would sail on the San Francisco Bay and at various times owned a couple of sailboats. He learned navigation and used that skill to help sail a boat from Los Angeles to Hawaii. He said that at the end of the 22-day trip that it was very easy, "Just follow the contrails!" John joined the Diablo Power Squadron in 1976 becoming a very active member and the instructor for the Weather Class for many years.

With his wife Maria Teresa, he traveled all over the world, both to visit family and friends in Colombia and Spain. They toured extensively -- Europe, Brazil , Argentina, Chile, Peru, China, Russia, Middle East, Turkey -- and by cruising visited Alaska, the Caribbean Sea, the Adriatic Sea and the Rhine and Danube Rivers. John, Maria Teresa, his step-son Julio and his family sailed a catamaran in the British Virgin Islands and later John and Julio sailed the Leeward and Windward Islands in one of the largest sailing vessels the "Royal Clipper".

John was an active member of Rotary of Benicia. He and Maria Teresa were charter members of the Benicia Yacht Club; members of Families In Transition of Benicia, Rebuilding Together of Solano County, and Futures Unlimited Investment Club. John was a mainstay of the Wayside Methodist Church since 1978 and contributed to the congregation with his job in the construction and financial affairs of the church holding different positions.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years Maria Teresa, children John of Plymouth, MN, Ann of Florence, Italy, Jeffrey of Benicia, Patrick (Wladzia) of West Bloomfield, MI, William of Auburn, CA, Edward Plata of Benicia, and Julio (Rene) Plata of Cumberland, RI; niece Liliana Orjuela of Benicia; grandchildren Jessica and Timothy of Etowah, NC, Joshua of Portland, OR, Alexandra of Chicago, IL, Bernadette of Los Angeles, Jarrett Thorsted of Kirkland, WA, Miranda, Courtney and Andrew of Cumberland, RI. Son David (Cristina) preceded him in death in 1993, sisters Elizabeth Hendry in 1972 and Ruth Heaberg in 1989.

Visitation will be on Friday, February 27, 2015, from 4 to 9:30 pm at Passalacqua Funeral Chapel, 901 West 2nd Street, Benicia [707-745-3130]. A funeral service will be held at the Wayside Methodist Church, at 2309 Columbus Parkway, Vallejo, on Saturday, February 28, 2015, at 11:00 am.

In lieu of flowers donations in his memory can be made to the Pancreatic Cancer Research, the Wayside Methodist Church, or Hospice of the East Bay.

Comments



“ Jack was an exceptional man who presented himself in the best of ways. He was a strong Christian and always had the right words in prayer. Pat and I enjoyed his company the few times we were with him. Our prayers and sympathy to MT and family/Bob and Pat Skelding

Bob Skelding - February 28, 2015 at 03:50 PM



“ Our deepest sympathy to Maria Teresa and the family - John will certainly be missed. He was a gentle caring soul, generous and a perfect gentleman. Our hearts go out to you all.
Pauline & Don Ramsay

Pauline Ramsay - February 27, 2015 at 07:30 PM



“ What a gentle giant....my deepest condolences to the family...and especially to Maria Teresa. John was an exceptional person.....intelligent, thoughtful, personable and always willing to help. They attended both of my granddaughter's bat mitzvahs and were always kind to them when I had to bring them along to meetings. Their collective strength of character and poise always impressed me. What a beautiful tribute you have written....I actually learned more about John from reading it then I ever did from knowing him. He was not a bragger and was modest in his approach to life. I will always remember this gentle giant.....

Gail Lamkins and Family

Gail Lamkins - February 26, 2015 at 07:12 PM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of John William Matthews.



February 22, 2015 at 04:06 PM



“ 1 file added to the album LifeTributes



Passalacqua Funeral Chapel - February 10, 2015 at 01:43 PM



“ Our deepest condolences to the Matthews family, especially to Maria Teresa. May he find rest and peace in life eternal. Here is a short prayer: We humbly commend to you, Lord, John Matthews whom you have called out of this mortal life. You loved him always with great love. Now that you have freed him from all evils of this earth, bring him into your paradise where there is no more grief or mourning or sadness but peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit forever. Amen From, Roland & Remy Regala

roland & remy regala - February 09, 2015 at 04:36 PM



“ By itself this biography was a wonderful tribute to John. It was a great pleasure to know and work with him. He was the consummate professional in the way he handled himself and everything he did. He was an inspiration to all of us who had the honor of working with him.

Reg Page

Reg Page - February 09, 2015 at 08:49 AM