



## John Russell Boyce

January 16, 1925 - April 26, 2020

John Russell Boyce, 95, passed away on April 26, 2020, at his home in Bethany after a long illness. John was born on January 16, 1925, in Jefferson City, MO, to Frank and Mabel Caubarrus Boyce. His father, a railroad engineer, inspired an early love for craftsmanship, travel, and adventure. He enlisted immediately after his high school graduation in 1943, and chose to join the Army Air Corps because, as he later recalled, flying sounded like the most fun. He served in the 4th Air Repair Squadron in the Pacific theater until late 1944 and his time in the service instilled in him a love of flying that defined the rest of his life.

After the war, he attended college on the GI Bill at Western Reserve (now Case Western Reserve University), in Cleveland, OH, where he majored in French and met the love of his life, Lisabeth "Betty" Gierling. They were married in July 1950, and a year later John joined Trans World Airlines as a pilot. His 34-year career at TWA took him all over the world, first in propeller-driven Constellations and later in jet engine 707s and 747s. He lived a truly cosmopolitan life; he was as likely to have a close friend in Tel Aviv as in Bethany, as likely to leave his wallet in a restaurant in Paris as in Teddy B's on Amity Road. During his down time, he took up recreational flying whenever and wherever possible. In 1964 he joined the Nutmeg Soaring Association, a glider club that flew out of the Bethany Airport (now based in Freehold, NY), where he flew his own gliders, volunteered as a tow pilot, and served as an instructor for many, many years, and where he taught his children, and his grandchildren, to fly.

John was a master woodworker, a polyglot, a gardener, an avid reader of poetry, and a lover of classical music. He believed in the marriage of beauty and functionality, and the precision of his work can be seen in the many things he built over the years — a plane, a harpsichord, a dock at Peck Pond. John was above all a craftsman who loved beautiful things, and he found the most beauty in the things most finely wrought, most cleverly constructed — a turn of phrase in Dickens, a deceptively airy harmony in Bach, the knife-point turn of a glider in the air, a perfectly fitted dovetail joint. He left the world a more beautiful place than he found it.

John is survived by his loving wife Betty; his children John, Sara (Lisa), and Anne Marie; and his grandchildren Katherine, Christina, Elisabeth, and Lisabeth. The family would like to thank Opal Stork Home Care, and in particular Lyn Farquharson for her devoted care.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be mailed to the Clark Memorial Library, 538 Amity Road, Bethany, CT 06525 or online at <http://www.thegreatgive.org/organizations/bethany-library-association> or to the Connecticut Food Bank.

# Comments

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“ John took me up in Piper cub owned by Dave and Nan Jackson (also members of Nutmeg Soaring) in the summer of '86. We were flying in formation with a Cessna 180 to take photos of the other plane. Once I'd gotten some shots I yelled to John I was all set (no headsets). Here I was, thinking that a 747 captain was going to be all about the slow, steady, and conservative flight maneuvers. I was not prepared for him to break formation by doing something close to a split S.  
- David Dimijian

David Dimijian - May 13, 2020 at 06:30 PM

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“ My beloved Uncle John, such a treasure. When I was growing up in California, it was always so exciting when John would visit after his TWA flights. I remember he would bring fresh bread from France, or coins from different countries, and always little quips in French. When I was an adult and worked at TWA, I was always so proud that my uncle was a Pilot--Captain Boyce--the highest honor. I loved visiting their beautiful home, where he had made so many things in his woodshop, --including a harpsichord and airplanes!-- and he and Betty would play music and sing. I remember once in the 1950s they sent us a record they had made as a souvenir while visiting the Empire State Building--a duet of "Muss I Denn"-- We played it over and over. When my mother moved to Italy, and then to France, she cherished every letter and visit from him. I loved visiting their Nutmeg Soaring club and had an awesome flight in his glider. What an experience! It was such a privilege to be soaring through the air with my own uncle, who learned to fly in WWII and made a lifetime career and hobby of flying. There are still so many things I wish I could talk to him about and questions to ask--I will forever cherish the times I spent with him--he will forever be "Mon Oncle". We're all going to have so many memories racing into our hearts and minds! Bless you John.

Margaret Echanique - May 04, 2020 at 06:59 PM

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“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Margaret Echanique - May 04, 2020 at 04:33 PM

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“ I will always, always remember him, my Uncle John. So many memories of his kindness and spirit-- the Chinese silk outfit he brought me coming back from the war, I was 5. His enthusiasm to teach me songs on the piano. His films from his trips overseas, the one shot in Paris. His help with my studies when the family broke up. His bringing my grandmother Mamo over to see us, who didn't want to stay overnight in France. His support for our mother, the many visits. His practicing his French on us. Our last visit where he and Betty fixed a barbecue for all of us in the garden.. Also He flew the plane when I left California for NY on my way to France, having received the Fulbright fellowship. He and Betty invited me to the Russian Tea Room before I sailed on the liner "France". He helped me carry my trunk to my cabin. It was midnight on my birthday September 12th 1962. These are memories I have always loved.

Jeanne Glass

Jeanne Glass - May 04, 2020 at 03:52 PM

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“ I met John in the mid 90s painting grid numbers on the runway in Springfield VT for the up coming regional. It was my first contest and a brutally hot day. I was looking to be useful and noticed an old guy on the searing tarmac. I had no idea who he was. We were anxious to get into the shade so we worked right along not saying much to each other.

Over the next couple of decades I had the pleasure of flying several Sugarbush Regionals with John and his Nutmeggers. Some of my most treasured days in the sport were spent circled up behind the trailers drinking a cold beer and passing snacks around after a contest day. We chatted about the day, departed flying friends and flying in general.

John's quiet, calm demeanor was all the more impressive as I little by little, year after year learned about his incredible flying career. Occasionally, he would narrate a story of what it was like to pioneer inter-continental, commercial flying in those beautiful, but unreliable Connies. John would describe hair raising experiences in an almost matter of fact way.

Wow, a maker of the history of commercial aviation right there, drinking beer with me. WOW, a dream come true.

Thanks for the memories sir. RIP my Captain.

Steve Sovis Mitsa/Gbsc

Steve Sovis - May 01, 2020 at 10:03 PM

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“ I remember John from the early days the the eighty's when we were trying to start a New England wide organization of glider pilots that became NESCO or The New England Soaring Council. He was always there to lend a hand and to give back something to the sport he loved so much. And, he was a true gentleman - in a world where there are not enough of them.  
Roy Bourgeois

roy bourgeois - May 01, 2020 at 05:28 PM

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“ I have so many memories it's hard to pick one to share. There is one that comes to mind, though, whenever I think about John. I was 15 or 16 years old and was visiting the Boyce household. John came in from getting back from a TWA flight home from somewhere in Europe. He told everyone they'd been through a severe thunderstorm as they approached JFK and that the plane had been struck by lightning. After landing he walked around the aircraft and plucked a blackened fragment from the wingtip that had been struck and had it with him to show us. Godspeed JRB.

Jim Sidway - May 01, 2020 at 03:10 PM

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“ John and Betty were two of the kindest and most uplifting people we ever met at Nutmeg.  
They showed the world what it meant to be a friend. I light a blue candle for the blue skies that John will forever be flying. There can be no doubt that the golden gates are opened wide for his landing. We will never again look at the skies above the mountains in Freehold without a thought of John. Our most sincere sympathy to Betty and family.

JEANNE L BENSEN - May 01, 2020 at 10:38 AM

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“ JEANNE L BENSEN lit a candle in memory of John Russell Boyce



JEANNE L BENSEN - May 01, 2020 at 10:33 AM

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“ I recall a Nutmeg club Christmas party, when during the din of conversations going on all about, John and Betty seated themselves at the piano at the host's home. The room slowly quieted as they played. For those moments nothing existed but each other and their music, and there were quite a few teary eyes. And my forever mind picture of John is him sitting in the tow plane at 115, headphones donned, and head down, going through his preflight checklist. I have the honor of being able to say that I flew with him. Our hearts break for Betty and John's family.

Deb and Bruce Stobbe

Deb Stobbe - April 30, 2020 at 07:59 PM

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“ Country Basket Blooms was purchased for the family of John Russell Boyce.



April 30, 2020 at 04:43 PM

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“ I remember the first time that John rode his bicycle over to the Bethany airport to see our glider club operation back in 1964 when I was 13. Over the years he became a good friend, and later crewed for me in National and World competitions. I had the privilege to also fly with him on his last glider flight in June 2017 - some 53 years after we had first met. A long life well lived. He will be sorely missed.

Michael R. Opitz - April 30, 2020 at 03:36 PM

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“ John,

A pleasure and honor to know you ! It was a fantastic learning experience for my commercial glider add on .

To fly west my friend is a journey we all must make .

Take care,

Robert Johnston & Family



Robert Johnston - April 30, 2020 at 02:48 PM