



John Alvin Russell

August 15, 1934 - February 16, 2024

Mr. John Alvin Russell of San Antonio, Texas passed away on February 16, 2024 at the age of 89. He was born in San Antonio on August 15, 1934. He is preceded in death by his parents, Bea and Alvin Russell. He is survived by his beloved wife of 65 years, Betty Russell; daughter Kathy Johnson and husband Matt; daughter Dianne Russell; grandson Taylor Johnson and wife Marilyn (great-grandchildren Sofia, Sarah, and Christopher); granddaughter Erin Gutierrez and husband Andrew (great-grandchild Josephine).

John graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with a BS in Aeronautical Engineering. He later earned a MS in Mathematics from St. Mary's University. John applied his education to a successful career in engineering. He was a research engineer at Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio. In the 90s, John and Betty lived in Washington, D.C. where he worked for the Department of Energy as a Director heading up the alternative fuels program. John was the author of over 100 technical papers and co-authored a book, Alcohols Toxicology. He was a member of Mensa and taught Mathematics at the college-level.

After retiring, John volunteered for Owl Radio where he read the newspaper for people who are blind or visually impaired. He also volunteered at the Texas Air Museum, where he donated the last plane he owned.

Flying was one of John's greatest passions. It started as a teenager when he soloed at age 17. His love for aviation continued with his service as an Officer in the Air Force. He was a licensed private and commercial pilot and a certified flight instructor. He pursued his avocation as a civilian pilot for 60 years, flying over 75 different types of aircrafts and owning four airplanes. As a pilot, John liked to perform aerobatics for onlookers and for his own enjoyment. During the 70s, he had fun hang-gliding. He was a proud member of the Quiet Birdmen.

During his high school years, John was a state-ranked tennis player. He continued playing tennis as an adult and even taught lessons. He also enjoyed music which inspired him to build a banjo and learn to play the harmonica.

John met his wife Betty on a blind date and two weeks later they got engaged. John and Betty both appreciated traveling and together they went to over 50 countries. The two greatest loves in John's life are best described in his own words. A few years ago, he was interviewed for a short film about his life as a pilot and said, "After my family, in a distant second place, comes flying."

John was a dear man and he will be missed immensely. In lieu of flowers, consider honoring John by making a donation to the charity of your choice.

A memorial service will be held at St. Mark's Episcopal Church 315 E. Pecan St., San Antonio, TX 78205 on Thursday, February 29, 2024 at 1:00pm. .

Cemetery Details

Mission Burial Park North

20900 IH 10 West
San Antonio, TX 78257

Previous Events

Memorial Service

FEB **29**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
315 E. Pecan
San Antonio, TX 78205

Tribute Wall

MJ

“ Mike and Theresa Johnson purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of John Alvin Russell.



Mike and Theresa Johnson - February 25, 2024 at 02:38 PM

MJ

“ Mike and Theresa Johnson planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Alvin Russell.

Mike and Theresa Johnson - February 25, 2024 at 02:38 PM

BB

“ John A Russell was a prince among men (I'm quoting someone who knew him quite well when he worked at the Department of Energy in WDC). I fully concur with this observation based on my own interactions with John after many years of knowing him beginning in 1978. John was a great example to me, someone who had a cheerful demeanor, seemed to always look for the positives around him, and was kind and considerate of his colleagues through the good times and the bad. John was my first real boss after graduating from college and he turned out to be the favorite boss of my entire working career. My appreciation has grown over the years as I look back and realize how patient he was with my shortcomings. I feel blessed to have been put in such a favorable environment and to have had the opportunity to work for a such great person and excellent life coach. John had the "right stuff" as far as personal qualities go and these are the most important things to master in life in my opinion. When I think about John's last flight from terra firma here in mortality, I envision the words of the poet:

Perhaps where you went the sea breeze blew with a fullness in its blast;

As you approached the deck of the heavenly ship with a roger to the last.

And He on His bridge returned your salute, the report of the battle won.

And echoed the hearts of all of us, with a "Very Well Done," my son.

Brent Bailey

Roswell, GA

Brent Bailey - February 22, 2024 at 07:15 PM

CL

“ I am so sorry for the loss of John. He will be remembered as such a kind and caring husband, father, and grandfather. I know he will be greatly missed.

My family has always considered John (and Betty) to be part of our family and they always treated us as if we were. I remember how excited he was when he found out that Hannah and I worked at a flight museum. I think he talked to us at least an hour or more about planes! John definitely had a passion for flying and planes.

I hope you can all take comfort knowing that he had a great life and loved the Lord. Prayers for you all.

Love, Christine and the Lyles family

Christine Lyles - February 19, 2024 at 05:46 PM

DL

WOW! What a life well lived!

Dennis Lyles - February 20, 2024 at 10:35 AM

JF

John was a dear man who uplifted everyone he was around. He will be greatly missed. Sympathies to his entire family. With lots of love, Josie and Paul Fauerso

Josie Fauerso - February 22, 2024 at 12:09 PM

SB

John was a tower of a man in all respects; integrity, intellect, friendship, loyalty, kindness. A real role model.

John will be missed by a huge cross section of people.

Family, friends, coworkers, associates, .et. al.

A very special person who truly made a difference. Can't say about many.

Sam & Mary Helen Bell

Sam Bell - February 23, 2024 at 03:17 PM

LM

John will be deeply missed. Here at Owl Radio, we treasured the mornings that John and Tommy read together. John had a wonderful sense of humor and was always so happy and uplifting. He was a true gentleman and a very dear man. We send our condolences and love to Betty and the entire family. Rest in peace sweet John.

Lisa Miele - ED of Owl Radio and the Low Vision Resource Center

Lisa Miele - March 15, 2024 at 03:23 PM