



John E. Appel

January 4, 1934 - February 22, 2020

Major John E. Appel, USAF Retired, passed peacefully in his sleep in his own home in Largo, Florida on 2/22/2020. He was 86 years old. Thanks to the loving care of his son, Michael, he was able to enjoy the last 16 months of his life surrounded by the things he loved most.

He was born in Washington, DC on January 4, 1934 to Edgar John and Ruth (Miller) Appel. He always spoke with pride about the house of love his parents provided him and his two sisters, Betsy & Ruthie. Being the middle child and the only boy, he experienced his share of mischief over the years, even running away to join the circus, but graduated from Woodrow Wilson High School in 1952 and went onto college, first at Ohio Wesleyan and then graduating from the University of Maryland in 1959 with a Bachelor of Science from the College of Business & Public Administration. He was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa fraternity and also Beta Theta Pi. He joined the ROTC to pursue his dream of flying.

After graduation he moved to New York City to work in the accounting field while he waited for his training with the USAF to begin. It was there he met Brita Linnea Velin. They were married in 1959 and began the life of the military family in 1959. They moved from San Antonio, Texas to Malden, Missouri (where he flew T-34's and T-38's), and back to Laredo, Texas (T-33's). The birth of their two children, Anne Marie and Michael quickly grew their young family. USAF Survival School in Reno NV was followed by a move to Topeka, Kansas and Randolph AFB where he received Basic Instructor Training. And then divorce in 1964 and a transfer for all to NH with John stationed at Pease AFB in Portsmouth, NH.

Between 1966 and 1969, John was stationed at Craig AFB in Selma Alabama as an instructor and Flight Commander and Homestead AFB in Florida where he graduated from F-4 RTU. He then spent the next 2-1/2 years, flying split SEA tours fighting for the freedoms of the America he loved in the Philippines, Cam Rahn Bay AB, Viet Nam with the 12th TFW, 557 TFS with F-C4's and at Ubon RTAB with the 8th TFW, 433rd TFS in the F-4D and then a tour at Korat RTAB in Thailand with the 469th TFS in new F-4E's.

During his two tours of duty in Southeast Asia he flew 255 combat missions and was awarded numerous medals and decorations including the Meritorious Service Award, the 1st Oak Leaf Cluster for Meritorious Service, the Bronze Star, 17 Air Medals, the Combat Readiness Medal and four Distinguished Flying Cross awards. He is featured in the book, "On Heroic Wings: Stories of the Distinguished Flying Cross" published in 2012.

From 1972 – 1974 he was stationed at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, Texas, enjoying his time there as a flight instructor in the T-37 and Michael joined him to live. At Sheppard he was Chief of the Check Section and an Ops Officer. Upon his Honorable Discharge in 1974 he and his son moved to Great Falls, Virginia and Gaithersburg, MD where John spent the next 25 years of his life. He went back to school at Montgomery College to learn more about computers and earned an Associate of Applied Science in 1996 at the age of 62. He purchased and ran Stonestreet Printing in Rockville, Maryland. It was during this time that he also began making award winning wines & beers at this home under the "Chateau Roundleaf" label, played Bridge & Tennis, tried to play golf with mediocre success, relished Striper fishing with his boat in Chesapeake Bay, continued to teach flying in the Andrews AFB Aero Club and rounded out his non-military life with adding to his considerable coin, movie and stamp collections, vegetable gardening, gourmet cooking and his love of reading as evidenced by his extensive library. His thirst for knowledge and travel never ended. He also purchased a 36' motorhome in 1986 and spent 3 years discovering 49 states, Canada and Mexico, tracking down unmet relatives from his family genealogy, including trips to Alaska. He volunteered as a tutor for the Literacy Council, worked on a suicide crisis hotline and appraised books for the annual Salvation Army Sale at the DC Convention Center. At that time, he also began a life-time love of breeding Pembroke Corgis.

In 1999 he purchased his retirement home in Largo, Florida where he lived until his death. In Florida he was very active volunteering his time with the Guardian Ad Litem organization as an advocate for children in the court systems as well as tutoring, working as an election judge,. He was also a member of numerous military veteran organization, including the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Distinguished Flying Cross Society where he volunteered his time in numerous capacities serving the organization and its members. He was also active in a Bridge League, playing 3 times per week.

When he lost his medical clearance to fly, he lost one of the most precious parts of his life. His greatest loves were spending time with his family and Corgis, his lifetime of soaring in the sky, being an active Republican in what he believed was the greatest country on earth and volunteering his time and knowledge to others. He was taken too soon, he had much left to give.

He is predeceased by his parents, Edgar John and Ruth (Miller) Appel of Washington, DC as well as his sister, Ruth Anne Appel, also of Washington, DC. He is survived by two children who loved him dearly, his daughter Anne Marie Appel-Gibbens and her husband David Gibbens of Wilmot, NH their two children, Kirsten & John; his son, Michael John Appel and ex-wife Robin Belz of Lexington, SC and their two children, Max & Eric; his loving sister, Elizabeth (Appel) Lexa of Lafayette Hill, Pa and her children, four nieces and nephews & their families, Frank Lexa, V11, MD and his wife Tanya Humphreys, MD, and their sons, Frank & Matthew of Rosemount, PA; Elizabeth (Lexa) Wilson and her husband, David with their daughter, Frances of Bryn Mawr, PA; Andy and Tracy (Middleton) Lexa of Lansdale, PA and their children, Lauren (Lexa) Crapanzano, Ryan and Andrew; and Sharon (Lexa Galvin) Gutierrez and her husband Alberto, of San Mateo. CA and their children Amanda and Alex Galvin.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Moss Feaster Funeral Home of Clearwater Florida and a burial with full military honors will be held on Wednesday, October 28, 2020 at 11:00 am at the Old Post Chapel at Arlington National Cemetery. A scholarship fund in John's name will be established in the next few weeks.

Cemetery

Arlington National Cemetery

Arlington, VA,

Events

OCT 28 **Graveside** 11:00AM

Arlington National Cemetery
Arlington, VA, US

Comments



“ Sorry to hear about John, he taught me to fly at the Andrews AFB Aero Club in 1985. Heck of a pilot instructor. Mike Roberti

Mike Roberti - May 06, 2020 at 03:40 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Memories Album



Anne Appel - February 26, 2020 at 05:43 AM



“ 12 files added to the album Memories Album



Anne Appel - February 25, 2020 at 09:04 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Moss Feaster Funeral Home & Cremation Services - February 25, 2020 at 01:10 PM