



John Mack Casterman

July 25, 1941 - February 19, 2024

John Casterman left us peacefully on February 19, 2024. John was an intense and challenging man, and he was well-loved.

John grew up in Pittsburg, Kansas where his family ran the local Coca Cola Bottling Plant. He graduated from the University of Kansas with a Fine Arts degree. He volunteered for the Vietnam War and served three tours in combat with the 11th Armored Cavalry-- the legendary Blackhorse Regiment.

The Regiment did not have its own shoulder patch. While training his unit to ship to Vietnam, John used the library at Ft. Meade, Maryland to research the history of the Regiment and military heraldry and with that, he designed the now-famous Blackhorse patch. With the able assistance of men in his platoon, John got the patch officially adopted in 1967.

As a young tank commander in Vietnam, John earned the extreme loyalty and lifelong friendship of his soldiers by being brave and bold and by fiercely

looking

out for each of his men. John was severely wounded in action in 1967 and spent

two years recuperating in Walter Reed Military Hospital in Maryland. Upon his release, John returned to Vietnam to his combat unit, M Company, 3rd Squadron,

11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

John was a recipient of the National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign

Medal, Vietnam Service Medal, Parachute Badge, Army Ranger Tab, Bronze Star

with "V" Device, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star, two Overseas Bars,

Jungle Expert Badge, Bronze Star Medal (1st Oak Leaf Cluster), and the Purple

Heart for Wounds Received in Combat. He completed the Armor School, Jungle

Survival School, U.S. Army Infantry School, Jungle Operations Course, Army Ranger School, and Airborne Training. John was honorably discharged in 1971.

Even outside of combat, John had an extraordinary appetite for adventure. He skied the world, insisting on using his ragged, old-fashioned gear to descend infamous peaks. To decompress from the war, he acquired a barn-find 1935 Ford

panel delivery truck and drove it through the United States and into Mexico, producing the kinds of stories one might imagine and then some. He later traveled the world as a Tour Manager, taking distinguished travelers to exotic destinations.

During John's travels, he encountered Carol, then a stewardess for Pan Am

Airlines. The effect Carol had on John caused him to manipulate his itinerary for several subsequent years, so he could frequently cross paths with her while they both traveled, as he would later shamelessly admit. He succeeded in marrying Carol and having two sons, in whose raising he found a new, unshakeable purpose. In lieu of conventional family vacations, John took his family on rugged wilderness trips, setting off from Kennedy Meadows Pack Station on horseback to spend weeks camping in the beautiful and remote Sierras. When his sons started school, John focused on improving the entire district. In early days, when many local families did not have computers, John convinced Apple executives to donate rooms full of computers, so the students would not be left behind. He organized ski trips and ensured that all students who wanted to go would be sponsored.

Those who knew John would agree he did not fit neatly into any ordinary personality boxes. He was confidently original, practical, and hyper-social. His sons recall that it took John a very long time to run errands, because he was interested in every person he saw and would stop to chat with each, whether it was the mayor, the janitor, the older lady down the street, or the police officer on the beat. He effortlessly related to people whom others did not see, and he believed that everyone had a story worth hearing.

John is survived by his beloved wife Carol Woodward Casterman, his sister Julie

Newlin and her children and grandchildren, his son and daughter-in-law Mack and Sara Casterman and their daughters, his son David Casterman and Dave's love Amanda Carpenter, his brother and sister-in-law Patrick and Joan O'Connell, his brother and sister-in-law Dr. Paul and Donna Woodward, and his brother-in-law Neil Woodward.

Those who went before him include his father and mother John Jules and Doris Catherine Casterman, his sister Leslie Cates, and his brother-in-law John Newlin.

There will be a Memorial Mass on March 6, 2024, at 11 a.m. at St. Charles Catholic Church, San Carlos, California. A Military Honors Ceremony and interment of ashes will take place March 7, 2024, at 11 a.m., at San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in Santa Nella, California.

Cemetery Details

San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery

32053 West McCabe Rd
Santa Nella, CA 95322
(209) 854-1040

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

MAR 6. 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM (PT)

St Charles Catholic Church
880 Tamarack Ave
San Carlos, CA 94070

Burial

MAR 7. 11:00 AM (PT)

San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery
32053 West McCabe Rd
Santa Nella, CA 95322
(209) 854-1040

Tribute Wall

BK

“ Carol, Mack, David and beloved family of the 11th Cav's iconic trooper; please accept the condolences of the veterans of the 11th Armored Cavalry- the 11th's veterans of Vietnam and Cambodia. John was one of us, one of own. John is so well remembered as an honorable, distinguished, positive leader whose very presence brought comfort and support to his fellow troopers. He will be included on the Honor roll of our combat veterans, as his Purple Heart award highlights his bravery and valor. But it doesn't stop there, he returned again after intense recovery to jungle and continued as an intrepid leader, warrior, guardian and inspirations, not only for the men he lead, but years later as a model of a true and dynamic Blackhorse Trooper. Listen to our Funeral Mass Liturgy, and you will hear: "His life has not ended, merely changes ..." and as we were then, we will be together again, now warmly embraced in the arms of our heavenly Father. Allons my brother Blackhorse Trooper; Rest in Peace. Chaplain Bill: 11th ACVVC.

Blandin Karabinos - February 28, 2024 at 09:24 AM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Sacred Space Memorial - February 26, 2024 at 03:00 PM

JS

1967 - Blackhorse Regiment shoulder patch - designed by John Casterman. See obit.

Joan O'Connell, sister-in-law - February 27, 2024 at 12:09 AM