

John Lamar Luce

February 14, 1938 ~ March 23, 2023

John Lamar Luce departed us March 23, 2023 at Oro Valley hospital near his home in Arizona. His wife Laura was at his side. His love of life was celebrated as recently as this past February when he had his 85th birthday party in San Antonio with his wife sons, and his large extended family.

John was born February 14, 1938, in Price, Utah where he started on the path to a life of adventure and exploration. Before he entered a career serving his country, he tried various traditional jobs and several service and adventure jobs including working at nursing homes and joining the circus. His desire for adventure and service ruled his life and led him to his main career and calling in the US Navy as a senior Naval petty officer and head of the engine room on a number of submarines. He was dedicated to the diesel boats, very silent and deadly, and resisted going to the nuke boats – “no nukie boats for me” he was fond of saying, “diesel boats are the best.”

His favorite boat was the USS Caiman (SS-323) – he served on many other boats than this one – but his naval character was developed on the Caiman. His dedication to doing anything needed to support his family, Belva and their three kids, resulted in multiple part-time jobs and at one point in his Navy career while a recruiter in Merced, California, he served concurrently as a Merced County Deputy Sheriff. The most spectacular time in his career was when he witnessed the elimination of an island during atomic testing.

His career in the Navy resulted in his family and others following his service with the result of over 120 years of total military service by him and his direct descendants. With some reaching the exalted rank of Major (CW3 or Colonel– etc.)!

His experience in the Navy led to his next career as a service manager for smaller vessels of the national security like Porsche-Audi in Boulder, Colorado where he met his mate for life Laura and started the next chapter of their life journey.

Their adventure included travel won through his awards for excellence at work including trips to Mexico and beyond. The travel continued with trips to the extended family, resulting in hunting and fishing adventures (with fish from six ounces to 540 ½ pounds (“da fish”)) along with fishing everywhere from Mexico to Alaska, Hawaii, and other magical locations, like Schofield.

John loved life and loved to relive his life’s experience and share it with those around him. This resulted in stories about the sea, hunting and fishing. He showed his love of life through sharing his joy with others. This often resulted in those around him deciding that they wanted to enjoy life just as much as he had and either join them on the next trip or head out for their own adventures and enjoyment.

He and Laura loved attending reunions of the crew of the USS Caiman and other of Navy’s diesel-electric boats.

He and wife Laura initially retired and began wintering in Green Valley in 1994 with many years commuting between summers in Utah and winters in Arizona. They became full-time Arizona residents in 2017. They continued traveling with their 5th wheel everywhere logging in well over 200,000 miles on the road.

John could fix anything. Neighbors could and often did call upon him for advice or instruction in carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and much more. He was always there to help. But he was also renowned as a chef, particularly of the barbeque. His special barbeque sauce was so sought-after that it was eventually bottled in Texas and sold commercially. Told of John's death, retired ABC News science editor Jim Slade said, "Oh, that's hard news. John was a great guy and a heckuvva sauce maker." John knew everybody.

John's idea of a birthday party each year was for him to do the cooking and his friends could do the eating. He was especially proud of his roasted prime rib dinners and John's steaks. He and Laura also hosted annual Superbowl parties for friends and neighbors.

He is survived by his wife and two sons, plus 13 grandchildren, 21 great grandchildren and one great-great granddaughter and many close friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, John and Agnes plus sisters Betty and Donna, and half-brother Rouland Blackburn, his first wife Belva, daughter Teresa, grandson Caleb, and best friend Barney.

Funeral services for John will be held at 11AM on Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at Larkin Mortuary – Riverton, 3688 West 12600 South, Riverton, Utah. A viewing will be held prior to services beginning at 9:30AM. Interment with military graveside honors to follow at the Utah Veterans Memorial Park in Bluffdale, Utah.

Funeral services will be streamed via Zoom for those wishing to attend virtually. To watch the previously held funeral services, please click the "Watch Services" link above.