



John B. Bestic Jr.

April 13, 1943 - March 23, 2025

John B. Bestic, Jr., a two-decade resident of Pawleys Island, South Carolina, died on March 23 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. He was a retired senior Central Intelligence Agency officer and a Vietnam veteran.

John was born April 13, 1943, in Spokane, Washington, to Major General John Bestic, U.S. Air Force, and Frances Powell, both Midwesterners. The eldest of three brothers, he grew up in Nebraska, Hawaii, and Virginia. He graduated from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in 1965, with a bachelor's in political science and a confirmed lifelong love of Tar Heels basketball. Some who knew John later in life will be surprised to hear he had planned to join the Peace Corps as a volunteer in the Dominican Republic, an assignment canceled when President Lyndon B. Johnson sent the 82nd Airborne Division there instead.

With the Vietnam War heating up, and expecting a draft notice, John enlisted in the Air Force. He became an officer and served on active duty from 1965-1971, working in intelligence and special operations, in Germany and in Southeast Asia. In the latter capacity, he logged over 1,000 combat flight

hours in the air over North Vietnamese-controlled Laos, and was awarded multiple Air Medals.

In 1966, while training in Denver, Colorado, John met the love of his life, Kathleen Madigan. She initially would neither talk to him, nor give him her name, but John deployed wit and charm, and the couple married in June, 1967.

After returning from Southeast Asia, John transferred to the reserves and went to law school. He earned a JD from the California Western School of Law in San Diego, California, in 1974. During that time, while on a reserve tour at the Pentagon, he was recruited by the CIA.

John served in the CIA from 1975-2002, mostly overseas, as a member of the Clandestine Service. He, Kathie, and their children spent about 20 years living in eight countries, mostly in Africa, some not known as "garden spots." No shrinking violet, John was blunt, creative, aggressive, and had a spark of wit. But he was not flashy. He was outspoken in support of his organization and his people, and effective with U.S. partners and against U.S. foes. In a crisis, he was the one you wanted. John retired as a member of the Senior Intelligence Service.

John and Kathie moved to Pawleys Island in 2003. This marked the longest

span in 57 years of marriage they had lived in one place. He continued to work intermittently as an international security consultant, retiring fully in 2010. And he played much golf, a favorite pastime, until his last months. One brother, Philip, formerly of Litchfield Beach, South Carolina, died in 2020. John is survived by his wife; his brother, Jeffrey, of Aspen, Colorado; two sons, John III of Las Vegas, Nevada, and Edward of Alexandria, Virginia; and a daughter, Laura, currently in Maputo, Mozambique; and four grandchildren: Evan and Charlie, from Edward and his wife Suzanne, and Kiera and Luke, from Laura and her husband David.

John's loves were his children, grandchildren and above all - Kathie.

There will be a small gathering for friends in coming weeks, and a private family memorial service later during the spring. In lieu of flowers, the family encourages donations to three local charities John favored: Teach My People (www.teachmypeople.com), St. Christopher's Children (stchristopherschildren.org), and Smith Medical Clinic (smithfreeclinic.org).

Tribute Wall

JM

“ John and I were roommates at Chapel Hill 1961-1963. During that time, for all long weekends his father would fly down and pick us up for a long weekend in Arlington. His mother was one of the greatest ladies of this world. On normal weekends John and I would spend them at my home in Southern Pines. Almost every week when we saved up our money, Jim Whitlock, Walt Honour and my self would go to the Goddy Shop on Franklin street and order 4 cheese burgers except John. He would order 3 cheese burgers and a tuna fish sandwich. We lost touch over the years but Whitlock, John and I had a chance to have lunch together several years ago at Myrtle Beach.

John will be missed by so many of us. Jim McKeithan

Jim McKeithan - April 20, 2025 at 08:27 AM