



John Lawrence Baird

John Lawrence Baird, born April 7, 1935, wasn't your typical boy from the rural town of Viola, Idaho. He was a pragmatic idealist who held together a dichotomy of ideas with loyalty, compassion, sheetrock screws, and concrete. His parents—father Thomas Orville Baird and his mother Mary Evaline Baird—were teachers who passed on their gifts to their son. Living with loquacious siblings Bill, Bonnie, Pat, and Rick, he learned the gift of gab and friendliness that would allow him to see no one as a stranger. Starting work in a local hardware store and moving into working the farm fields with migrant workers in Washington and at a ranch in Montana, he learned that all work is valuable and all people should be treated with respect.

Graduating from Lincoln High School in Tacoma at age 17, he enrolled in a medical radiography program and worked while pursuing his undergraduate education at the University of Puget Sound. Then, remembering his surreptitious airplane flight at age 7 when he sneaked off without his folk's knowledge, he enlisted in the Air Force for a stint from 1955 to 1958. He washed out medically from flight school but fought the Cold War, including the Cuban Missile Crisis, interpreting classified photos. While he was serving, he was posted at various duty stations including Vance AFB and Forbes AFB SAC Unit. His grounding was not permanent and while stationed in Topeka, Kansas he met a woman who complemented his gifts. Together they soared. She was Joan Elizabeth Trimmell, and they were married in 1957.

They teamed well together and following his honorable discharge he completed his undergraduate studies earning his BS for Physical Science Education at Washburn University. He taught high school physics and calculus in Topeka and completed his MS Degree in School Administration/Chemistry at Kansas State University. The next move was to Seattle where he sold pharmaceuticals for Burroughs Wellcome. The birth of their son Brian Guy in 1962 made the regional travel untenable and he returned to teaching middle school and school administration in Auburn, WA. A year later he was able to incorporate practical compassion into education as coordinator of the summer Auburn Head Start Program in the Seattle University's Institute for Teachers of Disadvantaged Youth. After that summer he was encouraged to pursue a higher degree by the grant's director.

Wanting to expand their education, both he and Joan launched off to Stillwater to pursue their doctorates at Oklahoma State University. Both accomplished their goals with John earning an Ed.D. in Educational Administration and Higher Education. He then accepted an offer to be the Assistant Dean of the Graduate College at OSU and became a private pilot. Within a year his talent was tapped when Senator Henry Bellmon invited him to be on his staff to provide research in Education, Energy, and Foreign Policy for Congress. Moving to Virginia, his professional life grew and it wasn't long until the family did as well, with Brendan John born in 1970 and Elizabeth Mary in 1971. In the midst of his professional life, he took his personal time and designed and built with his own hands a home on a steep hill in McLean, VA. Following the assignment in the Senator's office, he accepted administrative appointments with the Department of Energy and the Department of Education where he remained through 1977.

He and the family moved to Stillwater when he was named Director of Faculty Development in Academic Affairs and eventually moved into a tenure-track position as Associate Professor in the Division of Occupational and Adult Education in the College of Education. In this capacity he taught graduate-level courses and advised both undergraduate and graduate students at the OSU-Stillwater and OSU-Tulsa campuses. He became Professor Emeritus upon his retirement in 1992.

After 25 years of marriage, Joan died of cancer. Throughout this illness and in their marriage he demonstrated his loyalty and love. Lightning struck again as he became acquainted with another sharp farm girl, Carolyn Bauer, who was also a professor in the College of Education. The next year they were married and together they blended the two families and he gained a new son with Carolyn's son, Jay Croft.

For the next 33 years they had many varied and cherished experiences. Returning to his native Northwest and reunions with his siblings, their spouses and friends were highly anticipated and oft repeated trips. Travels also included Europe and Asia with highlighted experiences in his ancestral homelands of Scotland and Germany. Other celebrations included the occasions of high school and college graduations and welcoming new family members with Brian's wife, Candace Ann Teetrick; Jay's wife, Lisa Marie Moretti; Brendan's wife, Lana Jeanette Ryan; and Beth's husband, Craig Woodrow Neill. The blessings continued in becoming grandparents with the additions of Tiffany, Heather, Jessica, Wyatt, Sarah, Timothy, Carolyn, Abby, Emily, Katy and Isaac. The joys expanded with the births of great grandchildren Kayleigh, Elizabeth, Anavay, Jamison and Ganon. John is also survived by family members of the heart in Sajjith and Dilani Samarkoon, Sean Beyke, and Brent Trammell.

John was an accomplished carpenter and he and Carolyn continued the home rental business and restored the family farm in his later years. His memberships included OSU Emeriti Association, Kansas State University Alumni Association and the Hanner-Sharp American Legion Post. He was also a member of the First United Methodist Church of Stillwater where he was active in Methodist Men's Fellowship, the Charitus Sunday school class, and several missions of the church. In his life, John showed a caring personality that exhibited itself in the simple acts of talking with complete strangers, helping foreign students adapt, and assisting elderly family members through their last years. This type of compassion was recognized when he was awarded State Volunteer of the Year by the Hospice Association of Oklahoma. Even recently, he was undergoing training to be a Stephen Minister.

John Baird will be sorely missed by those who knew him. As one friend noted, "He will not be forgotten easily, and his heroic legacy will be oxygen for the rest of us for decades."

Following his sudden death on January 28, 2017, he was cremated in accordance with his wishes. His ashes will be interred at various sentimental sites of his choosing.