



John M. Williams

May 22, 1927 - January 14, 2021

In loving memory of John M. Williams

On Thursday, January 14, John Matthew Williams, lifelong resident of Carbondale, Illinois, loving father, grandfather, and great-grandfather died peacefully at the age of 93 of natural causes. Preceded by his wife, he's with her again in Heaven.

John was born in 1927, at his parent's home in Carbondale, in a house that still stands on Highway 51 near Pleasant Hill Road. In the spring of 1952, he met his future wife, Doris Jean Millis of Anna, on a blind date at Crab Orchard Lake coordinated by his cousin, Mary (Hartline). By the end of the summer they were wed and together raised three children, John, Stacy, and LeeAnn. Over the course of their 65-year marriage they rejoiced in additions to their family of grandchildren Erin and Lauren Williams, and great-grandchildren Jackson and Maxwell Wiltowski.

Ever an industrious man, John worked for the Illinois Central Railroad (ICRR) from the time he was 16 years old, leaving for short stints (twice) to serve his country in the armed forces, first in WW2 and later during the Korean conflict. When he returned from service, he went back to work at the yard office of ICRR where he became an agent, shipping loads of coal during the mining heyday of Southern Illinois.

He was also a skilled tradesman who, after work hours, built several houses around town, plus each of the four houses the family called home, and a trailer park—Wildwood Mobile Home Park—that he founded and owned until 1974 with his partner and friend, Hubert Chapman. He was also a gentleman farmer with cows, horses, ducks, geese, and dogs. Soybeans and hay were cultivated on his land. And his large vegetable garden provided for the family. He was a practical, vital man who enjoyed the work of living, often accompanied by the loveliest whistle while he worked of tunes from the big band era and the Baptist hymnal.

Ever a man of faith and community, John, along with Doris, were long-time members of University Baptist Church where he served as an elder and on the properties committee. He was also a member of the Scottish Rites as a Mason and enjoyed the "Best People On Earth" in the Order of the Elks. His public service on the water board of Jackson county helped ensure reliable rural delivery, new waterlines, and the upkeep of the reservoir.

John loved his family and worked hard to provide a good life. And he also loved to fly. He was enamored with airplanes from childhood when his grandfather took him to see the barnstormers and paid a precious \$5 for his first ride. This began a love of flight that would endure throughout his life. At age 15—he had his student pilot's license before he could drive a car. And a few years later with his best friend Jim Friedline, purchased a Stearman biplane, and had many great adventures in the skies above Southern Illinois and once, all the way to the gulf and back. But airplane upkeep was an expensive hobby and he put it all on hold as he raised and cared for his family.

An early retirement at age 59 gave him his reward for this unselfishness. John began to pursue his long-deferred aviation passion. And by this time, he had the means and the time to build and fly his aircraft. For the next 30 years he would build, repair, swap, and fly experimental airplanes with other enthusiasts in the area and across the country.

John was very active in the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) and the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) and a founding member of the Carbondale EAA Chapter 277. He watched as the local organization grew from 3 members to over 100 participants. He delighted in trips to Oshkosh, Wisconsin and Ottumwa, Iowa for fly-ins and Doris always went along. She understood his love for flight and had known it from the start. On one of their first dates he took her for a ride, she in the back seat. He regaled her with the maneuvers he did and after he told her he would then do a “wingover” she grew strangely quiet. When he looked back moments later she was holding on with white knuckles, eyes shut tight. She was waiting to fly upside down! She didn’t know then that a wingover is a very steep turn with a small, sharp descent. She was always game to ride along, but she could take it or leave it. Nevertheless, his joy was in the cockpit—whether in the air, in his hangar, or building it in his shop.

John Williams had a wonderfully full life and is survived by his sons, John K. Williams and wife Cathy, of Carbondale, Illinois; Stacy L. Williams, of Paducah, Kentucky; and daughter, LeeAnn (Williams) Eddins, and husband Stu, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. His descendants include, Erin (Williams) Wiltowski, and husband Jacek, along with two great grandchildren, Jackson, and Maxwell, Wiltowski, and Granddaughter Lauren Williams, daughter of John K., and her partner Ryan Kennedy.

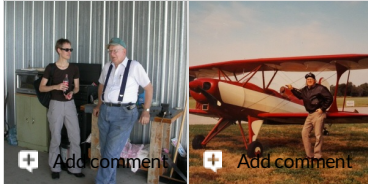
A memorial service will be held at a time to be determined in the Spring or early Summer. In lieu of flowers the family requests contributions to be made to University Baptist Church, Carbondale, Illinois or Carbondale Experimental Aircraft Association Chapter 277, Carbondale, Illinois.

Tribute Wall



Christina Lyons

John was my good buddy. I had the honor of helping him with his last project, building an Aeronca 7 AC 1949. During the three years as his student worker, I learned to weld, sew cockpit fabric together, and put tiny screws in places hard to reach. He was the best teacher I've ever had. He provided me with summer jobs, beans, and cornbread. Lots of fun painting for John and Doris, and playing with good old Mandy (and new puppy). I will never forget you. Christina from Germany



Marilynn Martin

So sorry for your loss. Robert and Marilyn Martin -Mary Lou's Grill



Karen McNeely McMinn

Sending my condolences to the John Williams family. He was always a strong, wise creative with building things for home, office, and church. Shared His thoughts and opinions in meetings. Seemed to enjoy mission accomplished scenarios. Backseat choir singer. Faithful to work, church, community, and family. Humble and kind and ready to tackle anything needed especially at his home, church, and work. Worshipped with Him and His family at University Baptist Church, Carbondale IL for many years. Faithful servant indeed. Keep His legacy alive in your hearts, souls, and minds. Hugs and prayers to the family. Karen McNeely McMinn Carbondale IL.

L Larry Flesner

I shared the love of aviation with John for 50 years and sought his aid and guidance in building my own experimental aircraft. He was always willing to help with a friendly smile and known good advise. Friends like John are impossible to replace but I hope to carry his helpful attitude forward for as long as I'm able. He will be missed and long remembered. Larry Flesner Carterville, Illinois
