



John William Spalding

August 26, 1931 - July 8, 2023

John W. "Jackie" Spalding, 91, recently of Norman, OK, passed away on July 8, 2023.

Colonel Spalding was born east of Dewey, Oklahoma, on August 26, 1931, to Harold and Bernice (Barrett) Spalding. He graduated from Dewey High School in 1949, where he was a member of the State Champion football team. He attended Coffeyville Junior College before being drafted during the Korean War in 1952.

The Army stationed him in Ft. Benning, GA, where he was an instructor for helicopter pilots. That began his long career as a pilot. He joined ROTC and earned a bachelor's degree in forestry from Oklahoma A&M University. ("Don't buy me OSU stuff, I graduated from A&M!") He maintained his membership in the OSU Forestry Alumni Association until his death.

Flying and forestry served him well, as he flew for the Reserves out of Tulsa, transferred to the Oklahoma Air National Guard, and eventually retired as a Colonel in the Alaska Air National Guard. After retirement, he flew oil developers, geologists, and hunters into the Alaska interior for exploration and adventure. He and his wife flew to dog shows with their German shepherd dogs.

John had so many stories, and they were all good! He always wanted to go to Alaska, but it took a while to get there. He and a few buddies were going to drive, but it didn't go smoothly as they drove through Colorado. He finally made it to Anchorage in 1963. He was one of the first planes in the air after the earthquake in 1964. He would fly a plane in to the Dewey airport and walk the four miles home to visit family in his younger days. One time he was delivering a helicopter and took a side trip to visit family. He planned on landing in the field south of the house. Half the town saw the copter slowly going down and called and reported a helicopter crash. Imagine all the emergency workers when they arrived and saw him walking across the field, helicopter intact. He trained astronauts in water rescue. Two different times he killed a bear with a trooper's pistol while camping on an exploration trip. (He didn't want to kill them, but they were a danger to the group.) He

had a lot of firsts in Alaska while flying. (Flying the North Slope, going further into the bush.) He and his wife raised and showed German Shepherds, and were instrumental in starting a program in Anchorage to supply dogs for law enforcement. He made friends all over the world through Rotary International. He was a member of several Alaska Airman associations. No matter where he went or who he met, he would eventually figure out there was a friend in common. He never met a stranger.

John and his wife, Jane Ellen Cochran, were married in Alaska in 1969. She preceded him in death in 2015.

He moved from Anchorage to Norman, Oklahoma, in 2021 to be closer to family. He was the oldest of six children, and all his siblings survive him. They are Phyllis Spalding Carroll Diaz, of Norman; Roberta Spalding Burr, of Dewey; Harold Ray Spalding, of Minnesota; James E. Spalding, of Dewey; and Bruce Alan Spalding, of Lake Tenkiller. He is also survived by 6 nephews, 8 nieces, numerous grand-nieces and -nephews, some cousins and kin, as well as Jane's Cousins Nancy Brock and Suzanne Boone, (who were like sisters,) and her two nephews, Scott Cochran and Daniel Cochran.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in John's memory to Cookson Hills Children's Home, 60416 OK-10, Kansas, OK 74347, 918-948-6300, cooksonhills.org.

There will be a graveside service (he and Jane will have ashes buried together) with an Honor Guard at Dewey Cemetery, SE Section, on Saturday, September 23rd, at 2:00, followed by "story time" at Davis Family Funeral Home in Dewey until 5:00. If you knew John or his family, you are welcome to spend the afternoon with us as we share, celebrate and remember. John had requested a military "fly-over" during his funeral, but since those are no longer furnished to retirees, some of John's ashes will be shot into space by NASA to orbit the Earth for a few years. He will get a "fly-over" one way or another.

Cemetery Details

Dewey Cemetery

HWY 75 North
Dewey, OK 74029

Previous Events

Graveside Service

SEP **23**. 2:00 PM - 2:15 PM (CT)

Dewey Cemetery
HWY 75 North
Dewey, OK 74029

Celebration Of Life Service

SEP **23**. 2:15 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Davis Family Funeral Home - Dewey Chapel
113 S Osage Ave
Dewey, OK 74029
(918) 534-3030
davisfamilyfuneralhome@gmail.com