“John Jones” Memorial Service

(Note: Names have been changed to protect privacy of family)

Memorial Service

Gretchen E. Weis

July 27, 2013

**Prelude**

A Medley of Music

**Words of Welcome**

We are gathered together

This afternoon

to remember and honor

the life of John Jones,

beloved husband, father,

grandfather, great-grandfather and friend.

John is survived by

His wife of 71 years, Mary,

His sons Richard and Jack,

His daughters-in-law Sarah and Pam,

His grandchildren Mark, Jennifer and Eric

And their families, including

And his great grandchildren

Andrew and Isabella, Barbara and Alexander,

And Thomas.

Let us begin our service

With the lighting of our chalice.

NOD TO GRANDSON TO COME UP AND LIGHT

**Lighting the Chalice**

Each human life is sacred.

It is sacred in its being born.

It is sacred in its living.

And it is sacred in its dying.

We come together to say farewell,

And to seek comfort in the face of loss.

We gather in the presence of death,

To say “yes” to the sacredness of life,

“yes” to the sacredness

of deep human love and connection,

And to rejoice and give thanks

For the life we shared with John.

May he live forever onward

in our hearts and in our memories.

(End)

**Readings**

Our reading this afternoon

is from the poet Mary Oliver,

Who writes:

To live in this world,

We must be able to do three things:

To love what is mortal,

To hold it against our bones

Knowing our own life

Depends on it;

And, when the time comes

To let it go,

To let it go.

**Hymn**

#347 Gather the Spirit

**Honoring a Life Well-Lived**

John Jones was born

On November 10, 1915,

in Hankou, in central China.

He was the first son of Harold Marcus

And Eleanor Mason Jones.

John’s father was a U.S. businessman,

working in China at the time.

John’s young life

was touched with tragedy --

His mother died

when he was only 4 years old.

His father remarried,

And John, his younger brother,

And older sister were sent

Back to the U.S.

To begin their education

In American schools.

It was difficult

To be sent

half a world away

at the tender age of six,

But John did well at

his New Jersey military academy.

He graduated

With honors at 15,

and finished high school

In Ft. Lee, New Jersey.

John attended

Newark College of Engineering,

Where he earned

A degree in Mechanical Engineering.

One of John’s college professors

Was involved in a study

To see if engineers

Could learn to fly airplanes

more easily than non-engineers.

He asked John to participate in the study.

As a result,

John lucked into the opportunity

To earn his private pilot’s license.

John’s love of flying

Led naturally

to the next chapter in his life.

He joined the Navy

as a naval aviator in 1941.

John earned his wings

On December 5, 1941 –

Two days before

The horror of Pearl Harbor

Was to draw the U.S.

Into world war.

But before we visit

John’s super secret

wartime military activities,

Let’s pause a moment

To talk about

A little romance brewing

With a certain young lady

in Ft. Lee, New Jersey.

One of John’s best friends

From high school and college,

Was Ray Carlson,

who just happened to have

a younger sister named Mary.

John would often drive by

The Carlson house

To pick Ray up for college.

And sometimes,

Especially on cold, wet or rainy days,

John would invite 15-year-old Mary

To hop into the car with them–

The boys would drop her off

At high school

on their way to college.

John was about

three and a half years older,

So, as Mary tells it --

he had to wait a few years

For her to grow up a bit.

They started dating

When she was 17 or 18.

Now, Mary was quite

the beauty AND the brains,

so John had a little competition.

There were a few other suitors

Also trying to capture Mary’s heart.

But our young hero hung in there –

He knew a good thing when he saw it!

By the time John entered the Navy,

He and Mary had settled into

A steady, serious relationship.

They were engaged in March 1942.

A few months later, John received orders

for his new wartime assignment.

They had one week

To put a wedding together

Before he had to report for duty.

Mary and her mother

swung into high gear.

They found the minister, the place,

Flowers, a cake and a dress.

It was June 27, 1942.

They both wore white.

Mary, in a beautiful silk knit dress

and a little pillbox hat with a small veil,

And John, in his Navy dress white uniform.

John brought his young bride

To Oklahoma,

Where he and a handful

of Naval aviators worked on

a super secret

experimental program

to build the first

radio-controlled,

unmanned aircraft --

the very first drones.

Try as they might,

They could not get

The unmanned aircraft

To work consistently,

With the technology available

During that time.

They never were able

To get the drone program

Up and running

Successfully

during World War II.

Towards the end of the war,

And after,

John was stationed in the Pacific.

He wanted to bring Mary

Over to Guam.

but was told he couldn’t,

Because there was no place

For her to live.

Never one to take “no” for an answer,

John engineered

a small quonset-styled house

Out of any scrap materials

he could find on base.

His superior officers had to admit

That now there was, indeed,

a place for Mary to live,

So John brought her over

to join him on Guam.

Following the war,

John and Mary returned

To the Washington, DC area.

John earned a second bachelors degree

In aeronautical engineering

At the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

It was there, in 1950,

That son Richard was born.

Four years later, in Philadelphia –

young Jack was born.

Now here’s a coincidence –

Some of you may not know

That both sons – Richard and Jack –

were each born on March 23rd --

the same actual birth date, only four years apart.

John always joked

That this the result of

really good “family planning.”

John was a hands-on father.

He was very proud of his sons

And they remember him

As a devoted, loving Dad.

He loved scouting –

and served as a scout master

For years as his boys grew up in the program.

John was also an avid outdoorsman

And he loved to take his sons

Out in the woods, camping.

It was a special “guy” thing,

Between John, Richard and Jack --

Mary preferred to stay home.

Richard remembers

sharing camping with his Dad

Even when John was well into his 80s.

The boys remember

Whenever the family flew,

John loved to take them

Up to the front of

the commercial airliner

To meet the pilots, and see the cockpit.

One time, Richard remembers,

The family was flying to Brazil.

John brought Richard up front

and introduced himself

As a Navy pilot.

As they all talked,

One of the pilots got up

To stretch his legs and take a break.

He asked John if he’d like to take the controls.

John was happy to oblige.

After awhile, the other pilot

Got up to take a break, too.

So Richard sat down next to his father

In the cockpit.

It was just the two of them,

As his Dad continued to fly

That big commercial airliner

To Brazil.

The passengers had no idea

there had been a switch

In the cockpit.

John continued to study in the Navy.

He went on to earn a graduate degree

From the Stevens Institute of Technology

In fluid dynamics and seaplane design.

In all, he proudly served 27 years

And retired as a Commander.

After the Navy, John became a teacher.

He taught algebra and advanced math

To 7th and 8th graders

At Henderson High School

In Monroe County for 13 years.

Alice Mably,

A fellow math teacher,

shares these stories:

She says: I arrived at Henderson

After the school year had already begun.

I was very apprehensive,

But lucky for me

I was assigned a room

across the hall from John Jones,

Monroe County’s most cheerful math teacher,

who became my mentor and friend.

Alice describes John

As having boundless energy

and an unmatched love for his students.

And they loved him in return.

He was one of those teachers

who could get the best out of his students.

Students with unique challenges

were often sent his way

so John could “turn them around.”

John used unusual

Ideas to support learning.

For example, John liked

to play classical music

At a low volume

As background music

While students

were working on problems

Or taking a test.

Alice remembers

John had the same answer

Whenever people asked him

What he taught.

“I teach kids,”

He’d reply with a chuckle.

Indeed, he certainly did.

John and Mary were active members

Of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington

since they first joined in 1959.

John served as assistant treasurer

As far back as anyone can remember.

One time he tried to “retire,”

But the church wouldn’t let him go.

They kept calling him back

And he continued to help out

For many, many more years.

John and Mary

Loved to travel.

They took their sons overseas,

Including a trip to China

To retrace John’s early childhood.

They later shared their love

Of travel with their grandchildren,

including a visit to Scotland to

Meet Mary’s extended family.

John will always be

remembered as an avid story-teller.

He loved to tell stories and jokes.

Now, maybe, just maybe,

There might have been a few stories

Mary got tired of hearing

By the time John was done

Sharing them with everyone he knew….

But the one thing Mary

Never got tired of hearing,

And John never got tired of telling her,

Was how much he loved her.

Even as his health declined

In his final years,

And he sometimes had difficulty

Recognizing people,

He always recognized Mary.

When he knew

He didn’t have long to live,

The thing that bothered him most

About dying,

Was that he didn’t want to lose

His beloved Mary.

In the end,

she was right there by his side.

John Jones lived a long,

Extraordinary life.

As we remember and honor him here today,

What memories will we take with us,

To comfort us in the days ahead?

John always thought

he was a pretty lucky guy –

That a lot of good luck

Had come his way in life.

Mary liked to remind him,

That it wasn’t all about the luck,

It was also about how John

Had the gumption

To take advantage

of the many opportunities

that opened up in front of him.

As we remember John,

May we find the courage

And the gumption

To take advantage

Of whatever opportunities

Life might still have in store for us.

As a military man –

John believed in love and duty –

Love and duty to country,

Love and duty to family,

To his students,

To his community,

To his faith,

And to his friends.

May the life he lived,

Continue to inspire

And to comfort us

All the days of our lives.

Amen.

**Words of Remembrance**

Several of those

Closest to John

Would like to come forward now

To share tributes and memories

In his honor, starting with his friend,

Andy Luckingbill. Andy?

Dr. Randy Collson

Grandson Mark

**Prayer/Meditation**

I invite you to join me now

In the spirit of prayer.

(PAUSE)

Spirit of Love and Life,

Source of all wonder and mystery,

Bless all who have gathered here.

Give us strength

To hold the sorrow we bear

as we remember John

and grieve together.

Be with us here, now

As we go about this sacred work

To honor a life well lived.

To this holy work,

We bring our open hearts

And our shared memories.

We are reminded

This afternoon

That our time here together is brief.

Death and its stony silence teaches us

Again and yet again,

About the urgency to live each day

To the fullest,

The urgency of reconciliation

And of forgiveness,

The urgency to love

With all our hearts.

Let us enter into a time

Of shared silence together

As we remember

And give thanks

For the life of John Jones,

Beloved husband, father,

Grandfather, great-grandfather,

Naval Commander, teacher,

Church treasurer, and friend.

PAUSE FOR SILENCE

NOD TO ORGANIST TO BEGIN PLAYING

REFLECTIVE MUSIC

**Extinguishing the Chalice**

We extinguish this flame,

But not the light of truth,

The warmth of community,

The fire of commitment,

or the precious embers of memory.

These we will carry

In our hearts. Amen.

NOD TO MICHAEL TO PLAY TAPS

**Benediction**

Please rise for our benediction:

May we always remember

And be warmed

By our memories of John,

How he challenged us,

How he inspired us,

May memories of his optimism

And enthusiasm for life,

his friendly, good nature

And good humor

Help to comfort and to cheer us

As we go forward

From this place.

Amen.

(PAUSE)

This concludes today’s service.

The family would like to invite you

To attend a reception

Immediately following

The service

In the Formal Parlor,

Right next to the Chapel.