



## Mr. John Howard Whitney

April 22, 1935 - May 26, 2022

John Howard Whitney, 87, of Richmond died peacefully at his home surrounded by his family on Thursday, May 26th. He lived a long and full life. He leaves his wife, children, grandchildren, brother and sister, and extended family enriched by his stories, wisdom, and love that he gave to everyone. Son of Howard and Millicent Quenvold Whitney, John was born on April 22, 1935, in St. Paul, MN. After Millicent died unexpectedly, John was 12. It was a challenging time in the country's history and John shouldered increased responsibility for his 5-year-old sister and 3-year-old brother. Howard remarried Mary Kaufman Howerton in 1948. John never considered Mary as his "step" mother. While living in Glen Ellyn, IL, John graduated from Glenbard Township High School in 1953. John attended Purdue University and earned his BS in Mechanical Engineering in 1957. At Purdue, John was a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity and always enjoyed the Saturday football games. He also enrolled in the Air Force ROTC, receiving a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. He was a true "Boilermaker" for life, and always kept an eye on the score for the decades that followed.

Upon graduating from Purdue, John landed his first job at General Motors in Chicago designing a flexible drive shaft for the Pontiac Tempest in an attempt to remove the hump in the floor of the back seat. In 1958 the Air Force called him to serve in the 100th Air Refueling Squadron, as a navigator in KC-97 aircraft. The KC-97s escorted and refueled the B-52 bombers in the air, enabling them to travel over the North Pole into Russia. Because the missions

were stealth, John was required to navigate celestially (without radar or LORAN, and before the existence of GPS), flying in formation often in the dark, under radio silence, with no lights on the planes. He was stationed at Pease Air Force Base in Portsmouth, NH, and served as part of the Strategic Air Command or “SAC,” a vital component of US nuclear deterrent policy during the Cold War. John’s time in the Air Force engendered in him a lifetime love of flying.

While stationed at Pease, John met and began dating Jane McEldowney whom he would eventually marry. After his honorable discharge at the rank of Captain in 1960, John returned to civilian life and began what would be a multi-decade career as a manufacturing executive. He worked for American Home Products in Chicago. He married Jane in April 1962, and they lived in Evanston, IL. During this period, John attended the University of Chicago in the evening and obtained his MBA in 1966. That same year, John was promoted to the New York office of American Home Products and he and Jane moved to New Jersey. “Avon” called in 1969, and John worked his way up within Avon until he became Avon’s Director of International Manufacturing. He spent decades traveling throughout the world to oversee Avon’s manufacturing outside of the US, including New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Argentina, South Africa, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Indonesia, and beyond. In these beautiful and interesting places, John met and worked with great people, many of whom he invited for BBQ at his home in Upper Saddle River, NJ. He told endless stories about his travels, such as: walking through the ruins of Malacañang Palace in Manila after the Marcoses were deposed; being among some of the first US businessmen to enter the former Soviet Union; being escorted by KGB language school students in Ukraine, who were shocked to learn that SAC actually could launch all of its nuclear bombers within 15 minutes; and his many travels and adventures throughout China.

During his many years living in the New York metro area, John still managed to be involved locally. He was a scout leader, President of the local Lion’s Club and caused endless controversy and source for jokes when one of his lottery

tickets won the Jeep Cherokee at the annual carnival, and took great pride in working for years on the Board of the Patterson, NJ food pantry. He also found time for himself and pursued his love of flying by obtaining his glider pilot's license and flying up in the Catskill Mountains and at "wave camp" in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Minden, Nevada.

After retiring from Avon in 1996, John did some consulting work for 3 years, and then he and Jane moved to Richmond in 2000. John enjoyed the simplicity of life in Richmond, especially his morning visits to Bartlett's to pick up some cider doughnuts and his copy of the New York Times. They became members of the Richmond Congregational Church, John served as the Moderator for the town of Richmond from 2007-2017, and he continued flying gliders and being active in the Mohawk Soaring Club out of the North Adams airport. John co-purchased his favorite glider "Tinnyhawk," and he was thrilled to share it with a good friend. John loved riding the "wave" that formed over Mount Greylock and taking in the beauty of the Berkshires silently from the air. John and Jane joined the Lenox Club and John especially loved the camaraderie of the Thursday Night Men's Group.

Besides Jane, his wife of 60 years, John is survived by his children; Mark M. Whitney (Deborah) of Marblehead, MA, and Susan H. Yehle (Gregg) of North Kingstown, RI; grandchildren Peyton, Jessica, Cameron, Jillian, Bailey, and Beckett; and his siblings, Laurel M. Whitney (and her partner, Julie K. Roberts) of Phoenix, AZ, and Stephen Q. Whitney (Susan) of Port Charlotte, FL.

There will be a memorial service held on June 19, 2022, at 1pm, at the Richmond Congregational Church with a gathering afterwards at the Lenox Club. There will be no calling hours. Burial will be private at the convenience of John's family. Donations in John's memory may be made to the Cradle Society ([www.cradle.org](http://www.cradle.org)).

To share memories and stories please visit [www.rochefuneralhome.com](http://www.rochefuneralhome.com)

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

JUN **19**. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (ET)

Richmond Congregational Church

# Tribute Wall



“ *Bountiful Rose Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. John Howard Whitney.* ”



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June 13, 2022 at 05:50 PM