



John Bengtson

September 10, 2024

John Martin Bengtson, 76, son of the late Chester and Nina (Heilala) Bengtson, was born a month early at a scrawny 4 lbs, in Marquette, MI on November 2, 1947. As a premie, he was placed in a shoebox with a chicken lamp to warm him and given a shot of brandy by the hospital nuns as the last resort to get him to thrive. Little did one know he would grow up to be tall and strong and live a long, healthy, active life. After a short illness, John was reunited on September 10, 2024 with the loved ones who had passed before him.

John grew up in Ishpeming, MI, graduating from the Ishpeming Public Schools in 1965. He was active in various vocal and instrumental groups. In 1957 he became a charter member of the Ishpeming Blue Notes Drum and Bugle Corps as a novice in a group of young, inexperienced musicians that became a talented corps and proudly won 3 state championships during his 8 years of participation. Additionally, John was very active in activities/sports at the Ishpeming playground and winter sports area. He especially enjoyed skiing and skating.

In 1965, he moved to Green Bay, where he went to business school and worked at Schreiber Cheese. In 1966, while working at Wally Potoczek's Meat Market, he met and fell in love with Cathleen Potoczek, whom God took from him suddenly, shortly after they became engaged. John has carried Cathy's heart in his these past almost 60 years.

John then enlisted in the Navy. He was a "happy boot camper" at Great Lakes, IL, where he was assigned to the Navy band, while his not-so-lucky peer recruits spent more time in physical training. He served two deployments as Gunner's Mate 2nd on the John R Craig destroyer warship in Vietnam during the war. Upon discharge he returned to the Upper Peninsula he loved and served as a park ranger at Van Riper State Park and worked as a guard and then in a supervisory role for the Michigan Department of Corrections for 26 years, from 1973-1999: Marquette Branch Prison (MBP), Kinross Correctional Facility (KCF), Chippewa Correctional Facility (URF), Baraga Correctional Facility (AMF).

John loved the UP lifestyle, especially spending time at his parents' camp on the Big Dead River Basin. One knew John was in residence if they could see smoke coming from the sauna walls! The hotter, the better! Cruises on the pontoon boat were always exciting with John at the helm. He loved the outdoors and spent many hours scouring the backroads and trails of the U.P. on foot, ATV, or in his truck. He loved fishing and hunting, swimming in the local UP lakes, and harvesting cranberries on the lake of his residence. When he was not outdoors, one might find him playing pool, and if there was karaoke anywhere in the area, John could be found there singing. When at home, he spent precious hours with his two feline babies, Alma and Mutti.

While living in Michigamme, John worked as a bartender at Bob's Cozy Inn in Nestoria. He was known to pester the crew and customers, and he could be found in the center of the midst of laughter. John always had a litany of jokes and humorous stories and continued to entertain those around him, right down to his last hospitalization and home hospice visits.

John decided to escape the Michigan snowstorms in 2013 and head south to enjoy his last winters in Gulf Shores and Foley, Alabama, where he was an

active member of veteran organizations. He found great pleasure in reporting the sweet Alabama weather to those up north during their blizzards and frigid temperatures!

John was an excellent chef and baker, but one always needed to approach his savory creations with caution however due to his love of hot peppers! He baked excellent bread, made his own cudighi/sausage, brewed beer, made wine, pickled suckers, made homemade sauerkraut, and much more. He generously shared his creations with family and friends.

John loved his family and friends. He had the kindest heart, often doing favors or giving gifts to others out of love and not looking for recognition. Throughout life, John marched to the beat of his own drum. Three partners shared this march with him: Pat, Julie, and Judy.

He is survived by his sister Christine (Tom) Longlais, and her children, Rachel (Lance) Carlson and Rebecca Hissong (friend Dan); his sister Kathleen (James) Barabe, and her children, Andrew Tyler (friend Carli) and Kate (John) Carter; grand nieces and nephews: Kaytlinn, Jasper, Kemaya, Alaska, Salem, Markus, Kennedy; many loved cousins and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, brother George, and dearly beloved fiancée Cathleen Potoczek.

At John's request, his ashes will be scattered in various favorite places in the U.P. and Wisconsin. Private memorials will be held in Alabama and Michigan. For those wishing to remember John, please consider a donation to a veteran organization.

The family wishes to thank Cindy and the Elberta AMVETS and the caring team at Gentiva Hospice for their love and caring attention to John.

"Anchors Aweigh, my boys, Anchors Aweigh! Farewell to foreign Shores, we sail at break of day. Through our last night ashore, drink to the foam, Until we meet once more, here's wishing you a happy voyage Home!"

Smooth sailing to your new Home, John. Rest in peace.