

John Jacob Bouma

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-- John and Bonnie Bouma showed up in Arizona in 1960 as just another pair of hopeful, bright-eyed, skinny kids from the Midwest. John was born the son of Jack and Gladys Bouma, and raised in the thriving metropolis of Pocahontas, Iowa. "Poky" was so small that it only had one stop sign and it was on wheels. The locals would wheel it to the side of the road when it wasn't needed, which was most days.

John came to Arizona as a Captain in the Army JAG Corp., assigned to Fort Huachuca. Although he had a good job waiting for him in Milwaukee, he never went back. Instead he got a few days leave, drove to Phoenix and met with all 7 of the "big" Phoenix law firms, one of which was Snell & Wilmer. Snell hired him, but didn't specify the salary, telling him only they would pay him what he was worth. That was a bet/challenge he couldn't refuse. Snell & Wilmer and John both won.

Eventually, John became Chairman of Snell & Wilmer in 1983 and grew the firm to over 450 attorneys, making it the largest homegrown law firm in the Southwest. He was succeeded by Matt Feeny in 2015, but retained his seat on the influential compensation committee.

John packed more fun, hard work, good deeds, charitable acts, civic actions, travel, hunting and fishing into 82 years than most people would have if given a dozen lifetimes. And he did it with love, fairness and integrity. While he was very smart, he always said the secret to his success was his intense competitiveness and willingness to work harder and longer than the other guy. He also credited his willingness to say "Yes" to offers and opportunities. He always saw the best in people and judged charitably.

He was one of a rare breed, born of a wilder and rougher time, who kept himself current and relevant by forcing himself to constantly adapt to what was coming over the horizon, whether he liked it or not. He was relentless and could still out-hunt and out-fish most men half his age. His last hunt was 3 weeks ago and he spent days in the cold, at altitude, in Colorado, chasing his favorite game bird (pheasant) an average of 9 miles per day. He came home and turned 82 on January 13. And we all knew - absolutely knew! - that he was good to go for another 15 years. However, on January 22, John was crossing 7th street, near the home he and Bonnie built in 1974, when he was struck by 2 vehicles. Despite heroic efforts by all involved and first responders, he died instantly and did not suffer.

He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Bonnie; 4 children, Jeffery, Wendy, Laura, and Jennifer; their spouses, Elizabeth, David, and Brian; as well as 12 adoring grandchildren who would each consider him one of their best friends. Throughout his unique life, John was dedicated to passing on his values of trust, integrity, responsibility and love to his family, along with his endless curiosity and sense of adventure. He enthusiastically showed his family the world and taught them what unconditional love really is. In the words of his grandchildren he was generous, humble, inspirational, genuine, unstoppable, optimistic, and just plain fun to be with.

Due to John's passion for the community and involvement in an endless list of civic organizations (https://www.swlaw.com/people/john_bouma), charitable donations are requested in lieu of flowers. He founded both the Arizona Legal Justice Foundation, which provides access to justice for all Arizonans (<https://www.azflse.org/>), and Wildlife for Tomorrow (<http://wildlifefortomorrow.org/>) to aid in the protection of Arizona wildlife. Additionally, he was a board member of the Valley of the Sun United Way (<https://vsuw.org/>). Please consider a contribution to one of these organizations.

An upcoming celebration of John's life will be held on the afternoon of February 22. Location to be announced in the near future.

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