



John Michael Neel

January 4, 1940 - February 26, 2016

John Michael Neel was born on January 4, 1940 in Morton, Texas (though he loved to tell his children and grandchildren he was born in Muleshoe, Texas and yes, there is a Muleshoe 30 miles from Morton.) and passed away at home in Nipomo, California on February 26, 2016 surrounded by his wife of over 55 years, children and grandchildren. His battle was brief but fought courageously and without complaint.

In his youth, he worked on the family farm and ranch and at a gas station. By the time he was 14, he had started his own mechanics shop out of his parent's garage. He graduated from Ysleta High School in El Paso, Texas in 1956, 2 years early at the age of 16, and later was able to attend his 50 year class reunion. After graduation, he worked at White Sands Proving Grounds near Alamogordo, New Mexico when Dr. Oppenheimer was still there. Later he found out that he was unable to work in the private sector doing similar work as he had at White Sands without the express permission of the US Government. At the ripe old age of 20, he found himself in Los Angeles. After hearing an excessive amount of noise in the apartment above him, he knocked on the door and asked, "Little girl, is your mother home?", and promptly had the door slammed in his face. Three months later that "little girl" became his wife though not yet 21, his mother flew from Texas to give her in person permission as required by law at the time. Soon after marrying Diane Clare McCullough on July 2, 1960, they packed up and headed to the New England and finally settled in Groton, Connecticut. He worked as a welder at

Electric Boat Shipyard on numerous naval submarines throughout the 1960's. Later, he opened his own welding shop—Neel Welding Company—“We Weld anything but the Break of Day”. However, the West once again called, and in October of 1973, he packed up his wife and 5 children and headed to the south eastern corner of Arizona to a place called York Valley. He proceeded to spend the next 1 ½ years working in Morenci, Arizona at a copper mine upgrading and expanding a smelting plant. In May of 1975, he found himself working at Diablo Canyon Power Plant, and soon after he became a member of Local 403 Plumbers and Steam Fitters of San Luis Obispo. During the next 30 years, he worked at Diablo Canyon extensively as well as other Nuclear Power Plants, Medical Research Facilities, Oil refineries and Bottling Plants around the country. He enjoyed his work and took great pride in his craft. After retiring in 2005, he extensively remodeled his Nipomo house. Then, after 3 years of retirement and numerous attempts to call him back to the workforce, he returned to work during Outages and other short term projects at power plants. He also taught in the unions' apprenticeship program. He enjoyed the challenges of supervising projects and the camaraderie of his union brothers and sisters. In retirement, work was ok as long as it didn't cut into his fishing time for too long.....

Throughout his life, he supported the youth activities of his children and those in the community in which he lived. In Connecticut, he was active with the Boy Scouts and kept stats for his son's football team. One year, after his sons baseball team won only 1 of their first 4 games, he offered to buy the team ice cream Sundaes at the local Dairy Queen if they won. He repeated the offer as long as they won. He bought ice cream Sundaes for 17 straight games at which time, the season was over. He enjoyed taking his children to Washington Park during the winter for some good sledding. While in York Valley, Arizona, he was instrumental in convincing a local farmer to build a baseball practice field on some fallow land. Then, he helped put together a baseball team that traveled the area looking for games. He also helped start

the first Boy Scout Troop in York Valley. After moving to Nipomo, he helped resurrect the Boy Scout Troop in Nipomo and worked out a deal with the newly opened Swap Meet to run a snack bar so that the scout troop could buy much needed equipment.

He proudly served in the Army Reserves with his big brother Herman and was Honorably Discharge in January of 1965. He was a member of the Free & Accepted Masons of California-Lodge 264. He was a proud member of UA Local 403—Plumbers and Steamfitters in San Luis Obispo.

John could be seen driving around town, hanging with the Donut Derelicts on Saturdays or at a local car show with his 1947 Willys Jeepster and his faithful dog Finnagin in tow. His granddaughters often requested his chauffeuring services for dances, proms and other special occasions. Other times, he could be seen on his homemade motorized bicycle towing Finnagin in a bicycle trailer, or out for a 5 mile walk with his dog. He constantly traveled around California watching his granddaughters play soccer and softball. He thoroughly enjoyed selling 50/50 tickets at Nipomo High School football games. He attended work days on the JV Softball and Baseball fields at the Nipomo High School in support of his granddaughters and the Nipomo Youth Softball League. And, just this past Christmas, he made sure the Softball program had a tractor for dragging the infield.

His favorite leisure time activity was fishing. In retirement, he bought a brand new bass boat and enjoyed teaching his grandchildren how to fish. John, Finnagin and his boat traveled throughout California looking for good fishing spots. He spent many hours off the local coast in his friend Don's boat with Larry and Mike catching ling cod and rock fish. His love of fishing took him to Alaska twice and numerous times off the coast of Cape Cod with his family.

His backyard included a BBQ Pit, Smoker, Refrigerator, Popcorn and Shaved

Ice Machine, French Fryer, Hot Dog Cooker, Fire Pit and Sound System. We were never sure if he built it for himself or so that his grandchildren always had a place to hang out or celebrate birthdays with their friends.

John is survived by his wife of 55+ years Diane, sons John Michael (Lisamae) Neel II, Daniel, and Mark all of Nipomo, and daughters Kristin (Randy) Roberts of Huntington Beach and Kerry (Chris) May of Jackson Heights, New York, as well as grandchildren Alannamae, Michael, Glen, Kanani and Kamaile of Nipomo, Joseph of Orcutt, and Shannon and Kennedy of Jackson Heights, New York.

He was preceded in death by his parents Oran E. and Sydney E. Neel, brother Herman G. Neel, sister Oranell Kingsbury and daughter Shannon Lee Neel.

The entire Neel Family would like to thank Central Coast Hospice for their support, caring and professionalism during a difficult time. Marianne, Katie, Sheena and Joseph, you are all awesome and are credits to your chosen profession. We also owe thanks to Albert Lai M.D., Ph.D and Dorothy Harris, M.D., Ph.D and the staff of UCLA Neurology at the David Geffen School of Medicine and Jeffrey Wu, M.D. and the staff at the Mission Hope Cancer Center in Santa Maria.

John believed that you didn't have to be the very best at something to be a success, he believed that you should just be the very best that you could be.

In lieu of flowers, feel free to make a donation to Boy Scout Troop 450 of Nipomo or Mission of Hope Cancer Center in Santa Maria.

A celebration of his life will be held on Saturday, March 26 from 11:00 am to 3:00pm at The Edwards Barn, 1095 Pomeroy Rd Nipomo, CA with Military Honor Guard starting promptly at 11:15 am. BBQ

lunch will follow. Bring your favorite John Neel story for telling or written for the family to enjoy for years to come.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

MAR **26**. 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM (PT)

Edwards Barn

1095 Pomeroy

Nipomo, CA 93444

<http://www.edwardsbarn.com>

Tribute Wall



“ *Diane Sue and John Patnaude
Just looking up friends we ne Sorry to find passed
We had good memories when we worked together at Groton hope
all is ok John Patnaude*

john d. patnaude - October 14, 2016 at 05:29 PM

GH

“ I first met John in 1975 when his son Mike and I were both freshmen in high school. After Mike and I became friends, I soon began spending a lot of time at their house on Orchard Road in Nipomo. When they moved to Primavera Lane, only a couple houses away from where I lived, I spent even more time at their house.

I think it was the winter of '75 when they invited me to go with them on a Christmas road trip to Waco, TX. I had so much fun traveling with them because I had never been on such a long trip before.

They towed a tent trailer behind their Ford station wagon and Mike and I had to sleep in the back of the station wagon while everyone else slept in the trailer. One morning the inside of the car windows were covered in frost because of it being so cold. We made a stop in New Mexico to visit John's cousin, who happened to be a former bull rider. During our visit John and his cousin started wrestling with all of us boys and gave us all something to remember.

John spent a lot of time teaching Mike and I to drive. He took us driving through the back roads of Nipomo where there was little traffic because there weren't so many houses and the roads were still all sand. He was a very patient teacher.

One of my favorite memories of him was when Mike, Danny, and I raced hobby stock at the Santa Maria Speedway in 1983 and 1984. We had so much fun, especially at the end of the first season when there was a 250 lap race and the transmission coolant line sprung a leak. John jumped into action and fixed the leak so I could make the race.

Even though he probably got tired of seeing my face, John always treated me like a son, for which I will be forever grateful.

Gerrit Hull - March 14, 2016 at 01:00 PM

MS

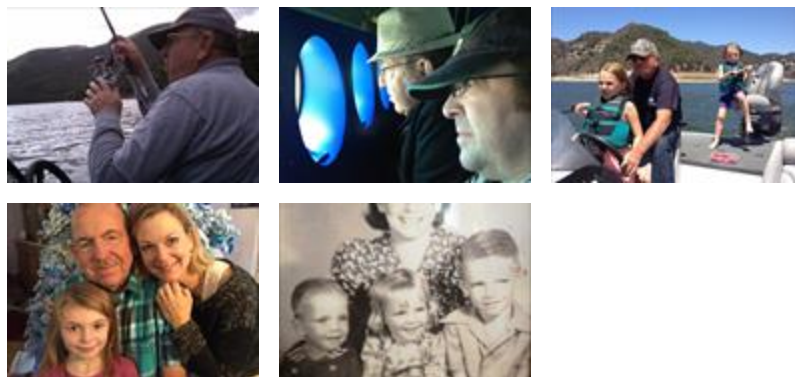
“ I have good memories of a couple of times when I saw and talked to John while visiting back in Nipomo. One was at Hope's softball game in Santa Maria. The other was at Nipomo's Park by the cars on display, and listened to the story he had to tell. We shared other times as my boys, Kevin and Jon, grew up with the Neel boys, and I'm sure there were stories we never heard about, knowing them. God bless you all.

Melba Simmons, Box 434, Hartford, AR 72938

Melba Simmons - March 08, 2016 at 08:32 PM

KE

“ 27 files added to the album *The Neel Family Memories Album*



kerryneel - March 08, 2016 at 08:59 AM

BC

“ *Your cheerful and contagious grin, your positive attitude, and your wisdom will be sadly missed around here. our generosity, love, caring and kindness defined your personality and sensitive nature. Guys like you are few and far between these days, but you succeeded in raising the bar on how to live a meaningful life. Farewell my friend and happy trails, let me know if they have Jeepsters in Heaven!!! Our condolences to your family and friends.*



Bruce and Cathi - March 07, 2016 at 09:45 PM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of John Michael Neel.*



March 07, 2016 at 06:45 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of John Michael Neel.*



March 07, 2016 at 05:31 PM

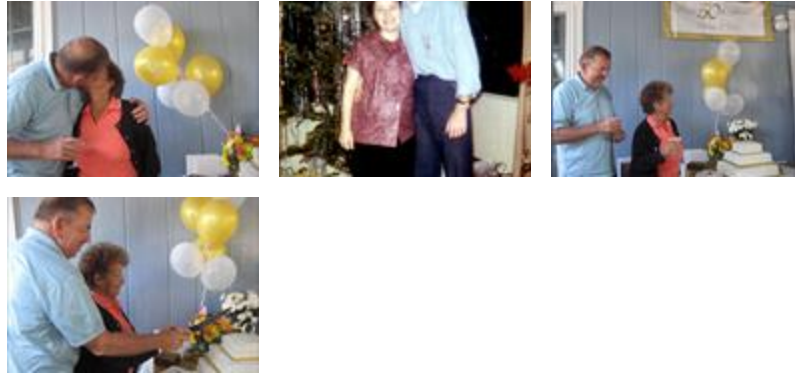
CO

“ *What a great man.. He was always at all the grandkids athletic events. I don't think he missed one. He will be missed dearly by the Nipomo Community.*

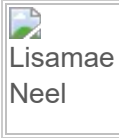
Charla Olivares - March 07, 2016 at 05:08 PM



“ 4 files added to the album *The Neel Family Memories Album*



Reis Family Mortuary & Crematory - March 07, 2016 at 04:26 PM



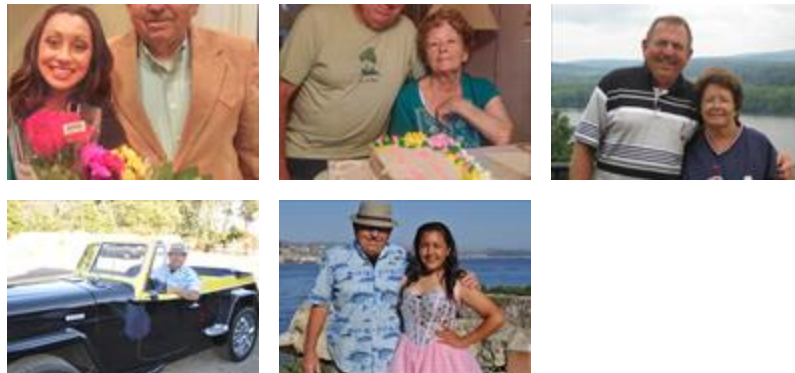
“ You will be sadly missed! We love you so much! Thank you for being the most wonderful grandpa and father in law.



Lisamae Neel - March 07, 2016 at 03:26 PM



“ 12 files added to the album *The Neel Family Memories Album*



Reis Family Mortuary & Crematory - March 07, 2016 at 03:18 PM