



## John Ellis Donohue

March 27, 1939 - July 15, 2019

To those who knew him, it is hard not to note the similarities between John Donohue and the Dos Equis “Most Interesting Man.”

Born to Francis “Squawk” and Catherine Donohue, John lived a maverick’s life, and almost all of it in Chico. The middle child between two sisters, Jane and Mary, he was a hellion to them as a kid before he was their best friend forever.

His was a life which was full with love, family, friendship, adventure and travel.

His love of travel probably began at a young age when he and a friend left Chico in a station wagon with a box of spare parts and a mattress. That journey would take them to Panama City, where the vehicle was sold. These proceeds, coupled with wins at a local casino, paid for his return to San Francisco on a cargo ship. This began a lifetime of trips, including travel to South America, Europe, the Caribbean and cities throughout North America and the world.

A passionate outdoorsman, John hunted and fished the Central Valley, Northern California, Mexico, South America and beyond. It was suggested by one fishing magazine, through photographic evidence, that he likely held the world record for largest bonefish caught on a fly rig.

He could spin a yarn as good as the best. His stories, whether about sports, past experiences or something he read in the paper, were full of impossible detail and imagination. He told hilarious tales of botched facial skin grafts that somehow resulted in a nipple on the chin. (Don’t worry: according to John it fell off in a few weeks.) Then there was the submission to Herb Caen’s famed column regarding a typographical error on a menu which indicated pot stickers were wrapped in foreskins. (Caen noted, “keep the tip.”) Despite all the stories he told, the one thing he never fully explained was what, exactly, he did for a living.

John did things his own way and it was never more true than when expressing love. Though not a joiner, he had a vast network of friends in every walk of life for whom he cared for deeply. He certainly did not express himself in Hallmark sentiments. His love was subtle: a smile, a nod, a tap on the arm. When you got a hug from John you knew it was genuine. In those moments, John created a bond that was so real and so strong you knew you had a friend for life. His love was something earned and special.

Nobody mattered more to him than his family: his loving and understanding wife Jan, his son, pride and namesake John, and his partner, Carol Lams, and his grown daughter who was always his little girl, Lisa. Their hearts are heavier for their loss and we ask you to keep them in your thoughts and your prayers.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Wednesday, July 31st, at Butte Creek Country Club from 1-3PM.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael in honor of John at [guidedogs.com](http://guidedogs.com) (click on box "This is an honor or memorial gift") or call (415) 492-4160. Condolences may be sent to the family at <http://www.brusiefh.com>

# Events

---

**JUL** **Celebration of Life** 01:00PM - 03:00PM

**31**

---

Butte Creek Country Club

175 Estates Drive, Chico, CA, US

# Comments

---



“ John was all about family and he made me feel a part of the Donohue clan. I rarely visited Chico but whether as a child or adult he welcomed me warmly with love. His smile, wink and timely jokes were ever present. I will miss these moments so much. Godspeed, John.

**Barber Kathleen** - July 30, 2019 at 01:50 PM

---



“ Jan,  
Arlene and I were so sorry to hear about John. He will be missed and you will be in our prayers.  
Love David and Arlene Deter

**Dave Deter** - July 25, 2019 at 02:34 PM

---



“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



**Tim Donohue** - July 23, 2019 at 07:56 PM

---



“ Jan,

Trish and I just saw John's obituary and are deeply saddened to hear of his passing. We will always have a smile on our faces thinking about the fun dinners, wine tasting, Mexico, and birthday celebrations we all shared. He was a true Bon Vivant and a memorable story teller, I'm almost laughing as I type this.

Again words do not suffice at times like this but I want you to know we are thinking of you, John Jr. and Lisa during this incredibly sad time.

Due to a long planned upcoming family reunion in Sunriver we will not be able to attend the memorial service but will keep John in our hearts. We will reach out after we return later in August.

All our love,

Mark and Trish

**Mark Reinhart** - July 23, 2019 at 07:47 PM

---



“ John was the respected patriarch of our extended family. His life insights were grounded and sensitive. For someone with such an interesting life, John was a modest and humble man. He never sought attention but was always curious and wise. His jocular humor was always preceded with a wink. He was proud of his Irish heritage and happiest in the company of his family and friends. He will forever be our charming Lord of the Manor.

**Tim Donohue** - July 23, 2019 at 05:20 PM

---



“ John was longtime hair client of mine. I will miss seeing his smiling face every month and talking and joking with him. John always spoke fondly of his family and was such a kind caring person. John was not just a client of mine, John was my friend. My heart goes out to his family and friends. I will always have fond memories of you.



**Lisa Barsuglia** - July 21, 2019 at 11:58 PM



“ John was a terrific family man and a true friend with a great sense of humor and a kind and generous spirit. He will be greatly missed by all who were fortunate enough to have known him.

**Frank & Sally McNamara** - July 21, 2019 at 04:21 PM



“ John, thank you for the adventurous 72 year ride. So many stories that only you could tell in a way that all would listen and wonder what happens next. There will always be a special spot in my heart for you as you were a most kind and caring person. Thanks again for journey and as Yogi said "if you come to a fork in the road take it" God Bless you and your family.

Raul Vonnegut

**Raul Vonnegut** - July 28, 2019 at 11:02 AM