



## John Stanley Townsend

July 13, 1952 - November 23, 2023

John S. Townsend was born 7/13/1952 and passed away 11/23/2023 surrounded by his family at the age of 71.

John graduated from Cullman High School in 1970 at the top of his class. He was an outstanding athlete and loved being a linebacker for the bearcats. After receiving his masters from Auburn University, he earned his doctorate in mechanical engineering from Washington State in 1984. From there, he landed his dream job and went to work for NASA. He was a distinguished engineer for more than 30 years who specialized in vibration dampening for rocket engines and machines involved in shuttle transport. He won several awards in this field including the Silver Snoopy Award, which is the astronaut's personal achievement award that recognized his contributions to human flight safety and mission success. In his 30 years at NASA he was involved in many innovative projects, and has four official patents to prove his engineering brilliance. Many of his colleagues stated he was the smartest man they have ever met. He was dedicated to this field and the exploration of space. He had an amazing analytical mind that loved solving problems.

As his children, we witnessed first-hand his stubborn analytical mind when he decided to build our mother her dream house. He designed the plans, dug his own footers, put in the plumbing, did the wiring, and even let us stay home from school to help with the process. He was always improving on the house

to make it a home worthy of his family.

John was an avid outdoorsmen. He was a fisherman, camper, hiker, cyclist, kayaker, and adventurer. Anyone who went fishing with him would say that he could catch a fish in a dry bank. Family vacations were mostly to the Smoky Mountains and his favorite spot was Myrtle Point. He had a love of nature and was in awe of creation. Toward the end of his life he was grateful for seeing each sunrise.

He was the epitome of a family man. He loved his wife of 47 years and through their union they were blessed with four daughters whom he loved dearly. As their biggest fan, he coached his girls through many unforgettable basketball and softball seasons. He was the head coach of our family leading us to Christ, instilling strong values and standards to help us succeed in life, and pushing us to never underestimate our potential. He was a true example of a wonderful father and our mentor.

In 2015, he had end stage heart failure and was gifted a second chance at life when he decided to pursue a new adventure as “LVAD John.” For 8.5 years he wore this device, fighting every day to be present and live abundantly and fully. During this time he was able to see grandchildren born, a daughter marry, take long bike rides, go fishing, travel, skating, enjoy many concerts, visit Disney World, and attend many Auburn football games such as his first Iron Bowl victory – War Eagle! He persevered through it all recognizing the second chance he had been given. Special appreciation is given to his LVAD team at UAB who helped keep him going for the past 8 years, especially to his LVAD coordinator Jessica Sharpton, RN. His daughters Kerry and Joni Townsend who stepped up and sacrificed so much to ensure he would survive after his wife’s unexpected passing in 2021. We are grateful to the team at MMCN, Dr. Tyler Hughes, and staff for always being receptive to help. Special

thanks to Myra Weaver, who was his daytime caregiver during the last few months.

Preceded in Death by his Wife Jeannette Townsend; Parents John Joseph Townsend and Gertrude Maria Townsend. His sister Edna Townsend, sister and brother in law Larry and Jackie Gentry.

He is survived by his daughters Kelly (Cody) Wheeler; Kerry Townsend; Joni Townsend; and Jackie (Clint) Shumate. His siblings Sarah (Jim) Cornett; Harold (Laura) Townsend; Karen (Robert) Richard; George (Lesa) Townsend; and Linda (R.B.) Bean. His brother in law Doug (Randi) Harbin. Grandchildren: Harper & Nathan Shumate; Noah & Samuel Wheeler. He is also survived by a host of nieces and nephews.

The family will welcome guests for visitation Monday Nov. 27th, 2023 at Gilliam Springs Baptist Church in Arab, Alabama. Visitation will be from 12-2 p.m. and the Celebration of Life will take place at 2 p.m.

Pallbearers are: Luke Townsend, David Townsend, Chris Morris, Cody Shumate, Charles Richard, and Sean Harbin. Honorary Pallbearer: Nick Morris

In lieu of flowers, the family asks for donations in his honor to the Big Oak Ranch at <https://bigoak.org/one-time-donation/>

Arab Heritage Memorial Chapel, directing

# Previous Events

## Visitation

NOV 27. 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Gilliam Springs Baptist Church  
1351 North Brindlee Mountain Parkway  
Arab, AL 35016

## Funeral Service

NOV 27. 2:00 PM (CT)

Gilliam Springs Baptist Church  
1351 North Brindlee Mountain Parkway  
Arab, AL 35016

# Tribute Wall

RC

“ To the family of John Townsend, the NASA retirees join in his celebration of life and his wonderful gifts to the Space program. We encourage the family to add John’s story and career contributions to the NASA Marshall retirees association space explorers honor roll. John’s name will be engraved on the Space Exploration memorial wall, which is being built at the US space and rocket center in the rocket park. His story can be added to the online database which will be accessible through a kiosk at the memorial wall. We strongly encourage his family members to share his wonderful story as part of the history of Huntsville’s great space exploration leadership. The Website for adding his story and career accomplishments is [www.marshallretirees.org](http://www.marshallretirees.org). Thanks to you and John for his wonderful contributions! Rick Chappell NASA Marshall retirees association. Please contact me if you have any questions 615-308-3484 Rick.

Rick Chappell - December 04, 2023 at 09:23 AM

SB

“ John was my next-door neighbor. He was a great neighbor and friend. He helped me a ton when I was building my house. John built his himself and was full of knowledge by the time I built mine. He gave me lots of pointers that saved me time and money. His wife also passed a couple of years ago. They will be missed!!!



Steve Benefield - November 30, 2023 at 09:39 AM

AB

“ Please accept my condolences on the loss of John, too early. He had a great mind and heart. He helped me enormously with my dissertation and with helping out my career at NASA, and everyone in the old ED21 knew all about his love for his 4 daughters.

Andy Brown - November 27, 2023 at 05:09 PM

LT

“ Lorraine T. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of John Stanley Townsend.

Lorraine T. - November 25, 2023 at 10:34 AM

LT

“ Lorraine T. purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of John Stanley Townsend.



Lorraine T. - November 25, 2023 at 10:34 AM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of John Stanley Townsend.



November 24, 2023 at 08:18 PM



“ *Divine Peace Bouquet was purchased for the family of John Stanley Townsend.*



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November 24, 2023 at 06:09 PM