



## John Bittner

December 21, 1940 - April 6, 2020

John Bittner passed away in his home in Prescott, AZ on April 6 at the age of 79.

A heartfelt letter from John's children:

He was Dad, John, Juan, Uncle John, Johnny Fudge, the goat and llama guy, but most importantly PAPA. He was a father, a husband, a brother, an uncle, a brother in law, a father in law, a son, a friend, a goat cheese and fudge craftsman, an ice cream cake maker, he found joy in puzzles and playing checkers. He was a master joke teller and the world's most extraordinary Papa that there ever was. Dad left us way too soon but while he was with us, he devoted his life to his wife, four kids and spouses and 10

Grandchildren. He had many nieces and nephews and brothers and a sister, he loved his big

family. He lived to watch his grandkids do all the things that they loved to do and made each one of them feel as if they were the master of their craft and that there was no way anyone could be better. He was always so proud of his family and let everyone know it. He was such a positive force and always looked at the bright side of things. He made each of us feel as if we were the most special person in the world. He made sure that you always knew how much he loved you, there was never a question about that. The jokes he told were endless and he spent countless hours texting them to anyone who would listen.

His story is a Rim Country story. Thousands have enjoyed the farm, and the cheese. Employing locals and connecting children to nature and the farm culture. Dad loved those goats and they loved him. He called them by name. It was his ministry. He worked that dairy with a teachers heart. Always willing to stop what he was doing to share the significance of what he was doing for the animals and the quality of the craft.

He cared about people, loved to talk to them, anyone really, just as long as he could make them laugh. Even if they didn't laugh, he loved to try. He was sensitive and loving. Honest and kind. He was present and involved. He wasn't afraid to cry and love deeply. He will be missed more than he will ever know but one thing is for certain, there is a lot more laughing in Heaven now that he is there.

John's story is one of a father's love.

We love you Dad...We love you Papa...We love you John. Keep living big and telling your silly jokes as we will do the same here until we see you again.

John's Obituary in it's entirety:

John Bittner passed away in his home in Prescott, AZ on April 6 at the age of 79.

He was Dad, John, Juan, Uncle John, Johnny Fudge, the goat and llama guy, but most importantly PAPA. He was a father, a husband, a brother, an uncle, a brother-in-law, a father-in-law, a son, a friend, a goat cheese and fudge craftsman, an ice cream cake artisan, and he found joy in puzzles and playing checkers, especially with his grandchildren. He was a master joke teller and the world's most extraordinary Papa that there ever was. John Frances Bittner was born in Rochester, NY on December 21, 1940 to Helen Welch Bittner and John Bittner. He attended primary school and high school in Rochester (where he rode the same bus as his future wife) and attended Ricker College in Houlton, Maine. He married Joyce Smith Bittner in 1965 and after their children, Craig, Danielle, Erin and Sean were born, John and Joyce made the pilgrimage to Scottsdale, where they would begin a wonderful life and story in the great state of Arizona. John worked for McCulloch Properties in Fountain Hills in the early 1970's, and then was an executive for Sun Valley Waterbeds for the better part of two decades. He "retired" early, but was active in Joyce's Arizona Insights company, consulting for companies, and busy with a real estate license and business.

His life's calling would come to fruition in the town of Strawberry, where he and Joyce bought property, built a home, and a farm with llamas and milk goats. The Ranch at Fossil Creek and Fossil Creek Creamery would become an outstanding fixture in Rim Country over the course of 20 years. People from literally all over the world experienced John's beloved goats (all with special names), his kindness in teaching and connecting children to nature and farm culture, and his prowess in creating delicious cheeses and fudge. He supported Rim Country causes, employed many local students and residents, and touched the lives of many more. He was always willing to stop what he was doing to share the significance of farmwork, the animals, and the quality of his craft. He cared about people, loved to talk to them, anyone really, just as long as he could make them laugh. For years his phone rung with the "baaaa, baaaa" of a bleating goat, and he always had many a joke at the ready. Just days before his death, a nurse told him of the wonderful goat farm she had visited in Strawberry so many times, and of course, so she was thrilled to know it had been his. And surely, he was thrilled to share a funny anecdote, or three. John was sensitive and loving. Honest and kind. He was present, and involved, a positive force who always looked at the bright side. And though he left way too soon, while he was with us, he devoted his life to his family. He is survived by his wife Joyce; his son Craig and wife Kristi and twin grandchildren Parker and Jordyn (age 19) in Santa Barbara, CA; his daughter Danielle and husband Barry and children Jeremy (age 18) and Madison (age 14) in Pleasanton, CA; his son Erin

and wife Cherryl and children Jack (age 15), Kate (age 13), and Ethan (age 12) in Frisco, TX; and his son Sean and wife Jennifer and children Adam (age 16), Brianna (age 13), and Luke (age 12) in Dana Point, CA. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews, and his two brothers Joseph and George in upstate NY, and their families. He was preceded in death by his younger sister, Mary. He loved his big family. He lived to watch his grandkids do all the things that they loved and made each one of them feel as if none could be better. He was always so proud of his family and let everyone know it - he left each and every one knowing just how great his love was for them. He wasn't afraid to cry and love deeply, but it is laughter that's filling Heaven now that he's there telling silly jokes. We love you Dad...We love you Papa...We love you John.

The family kindly requests no flowers, cards are welcome. The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation was near and dear to John's heart since his grandson Jeremy was diagnosed as a 13 year old. Memorial donations can be made at [JDRF.org/donate](https://www.jdrf.org/donate). A memorial service is planned for a future date, yet to be determined.

# Comments

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“ My friend John... sorry and a long time in learning of John's passing. John and I were friends when working together at Coldwell Banker Bishop - many years ago. A very accomplished and wise man - I cherish the memories and wish all the very best to Joyce and family. Gods Blessings.

**John J Jamison** - August 21, 2020 at 11:30 AM

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“ Joyce, I tried to call John this morning and of course greeted with the bad news from the operator, Phone Disconnected. I am so sorry to hear that we/you lost John. I am so grateful that you came to Boulder Colorado last summer and I got to visit with you and John for lunch. It has been a long time since we were young and crazy back in Rochester. Having lunch with John that day was like having the years go away. Just like the old times remembering the interesting times when we met both here in Denver and Arizona. He was a very interesting person. Extremely loyal to friends and family. I will delete his phone number but will not forget him, you and his family. Thanks for being the couple that you were. Your friendship will always be remembered. God Bless. Big John, R.I.P. my friend. TonyMineo

**Tony Mineo** - July 22, 2020 at 01:23 PM

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“ To Joyce and the family, you have my heartfelt condolences. John was simply a great man. I respected him the moment that we met. The good old Sun Valley days. We had communicated on Facebook earlier this year and planned a visit to Prescott to visit and have lunch at the Palace. Then the world changed. RIP John. Thank you for always being a dear friend. Micah Popa.

**Micah Popa** - July 03, 2020 at 03:32 PM

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“ Oh nooooo.....we had been talking awhile back before the covid days...he told me that he was on the kidney list but also needed a heart valve replacement. We had plans to get together in Prescott for a little get together before the shit hit the fan. John....you were a great guy...a great friend and I always enjoyed you. I will miss you. My condolences Joyce. I remember the tin foil pie plates scattered around the kitchen and you explained that John was messing around trying to make goat cheese. Who knew it would grow into the business it did. This is a very sad day. RIP my dear friend. Love you brother.

**Micah Popa** - June 30, 2020 at 05:33 PM

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“ My "Silly Goose"...grateful to always know I was his "Asher Dasher." Will miss you tremendously my wonderful uncle. Thank you for all the love and support my whole life. Give Richard a big hug for me :)

**Ashley** - April 16, 2020 at 10:01 PM

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“ John, our Dear Friend:

With your passing, we ache with grief yet smile with joy that you are now with our Lord.

We're smiling with joy of being friends for nearly 40 years – a friendship that has ripened to total trust and admiration through many ups and downs we experienced both separately and together. We weathered them together.

No matter how much pain, how weary physically or emotionally or wondering about your health and survival, you were there for us with encouragement as told through the only John known jokes. Through you, they were always really funny because of how you told them.

What a model you were and continue to be for all of us. You willed your body to accept multiple surgeries, you learned the ins and outs of technology in order to make the best use of dialysis machines. Even with those machines, you and Joyce traveled from family to family. Your children and grandchildren gave you much hope. Yes, the two of you produced an incredible family and now your grandchildren have puzzles and jokes of memory and surely will pass your jokes on to others

You and Joyce had the vision, drive and skills to even create the most incredible goat farm where the goats were your dear friends as well as productive sources of milk for your delightful cheese, fudge and creams.

You so enjoyed making and selling the goat cheese, not so much for the pleasure of making a supreme product but rather enjoying the fact your store brought people in giving you the opportunity to talk and tell more of your infamous stories and jokes. The goats became so dear to you that you even mimicked them in your voice mail message.

You also enjoyed being part of and contributing to the communities of Strawberry and Payson, where you demonstrated how people could know and trust each other.

We will miss you dearly but also have such rich memories to carry on – and perhaps a few jokes as well.

Donna and Tomas McIntosh-Fletcher

Jill Jackson - April 15, 2020 at 02:19 PM

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“ So sorry, loved John..he will be missed. Always, Debbie and Mike and Pine Deli

Debbie kroll - April 14, 2020 at 03:36 PM

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“ John was our realtor when we bought our cabin in Pine. He and Joyce were so great during the transaction and invited our grandkids to the farm. He loved explaining all the goats to us and let the kids feed the littles. He also explained the cheese and fudge process. He was such a great guy and will be etched forever in my heart. God bless his family!

**Lynda Waas** - April 14, 2020 at 12:02 AM

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“ John and Joyce gave our grandchildren the opportunity to experience caring for the goats as their first jobs. He was a very positive influence in their lives. Our deepest condolences to the family of this fine man.  
Norma Jean and Joe Scibetta

**Norma Jean Scibetta** - April 13, 2020 at 04:17 PM

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“ I helped John build his dream home almost 25 years ago on Fossil Creek Rd that so many know as goat dairy, or llama farm.... We became friends with John (and Joyce) and his Son Erin and the rest of the family.... I absolutely loved his corny jokes and his dark humor too... You will be missed my friend. Thank you for all you did. God Speed.

**Gino Wullkotte** - April 13, 2020 at 03:31 PM

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“ 16 files added to the album John's Fantastic Photos



**Cheryl Bittner** - April 13, 2020 at 01:08 PM

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“ John was my best man in 1968 and my best friend ever since...

**Jack Grover** - April 12, 2020 at 08:43 AM



“ 4 files added to the album John's Fantastic Photos



Cherryl Bittner - April 10, 2020 at 06:52 PM