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John (Jack) Minott Wuerth



March 29, 1920-Sept. 29, 2015

John (Jack) Minott Wuerth of Moraga slipped peacefully into eternity at the age of precisely 95 and a half on Tuesday evening, Sept. 29, 2015. He was born in Montclair, New Jersey, on March 29, 1920, to Gustav and Elsie Wuerth.

Jack graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.S. in physics from Princeton University in 1942. During the second World War, he served as a Lieutenant A(L) and project officer in the U.S. Navy Department in Washington D.C. He used his physics to improve the accuracy of shooting moving targets from airplanes. After the war, Jack moved west to California where he became a nationally recognized expert on space navigation, exciting the nation in 1951 by describing how to get to Venus. He also developed and managed systems of inertial navigation for aircraft, submarine, and guided missile navigation. Jack was issued seven navigation-related patents, related to aircraft, submarines, and the Minuteman II's guidance control system and reliability during his 35-plus-year tenure as an engineer at Autonetics (which later became Rockwell International). He also served as president of the North American Institute of Navigation. Yes, he was truly a rocket scientist!

Jack was married to Joan Alling on June 11, 1948 after a whirlwind courtship of only two weeks,

and they enjoyed 65 wonderful years of marriage. They raised four daughters together in Southern California, but retired to Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard in 1986 and spent many active years there before returning to California in 2008 to be closer to their youngest daughter in Moraga.

Jack was well known for his keen mind and great sense of humor. In his youth he was an accomplished practical jokester, for example arranging for cherry bombs to go off while chatting with local police officers. He matured to become an active problem solver, and took on various leadership roles in community organizations, commissions and church boards, and battled in local politics. To relax, he greatly enjoyed gardening, sailing and music.

Jack is survived by his four daughters: Vicky Sigworth and her husband, Fred, of Hamden, Connecticut; Shelley Rice and her husband, Craig, of San José, Costa Rica; Kelsey Ambrose and her husband, Tom, of Rumney, New Hampshire; and Wendy Scheck and her husband, Andy, of Moraga, California, as well as 10 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He was predeceased by his loving wife, Joan (Alling) Wuerth.

A memorial service is scheduled for 11 a.m. Nov. 21 at the Edgartown Federated Church in Massachusetts.

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