



John T. Bien

September 16, 1949 - January 3, 2019

John Tracy Bien died on January 3, 2019. He was 69 years old, born September 16, 1949 in Glen Ridge, New Jersey to Frank John Bien and Arlene LaVern Bien née Gokey, who predeceased him. He suffered a major heart attack and was transported from his home in Freehold, New Jersey to Jersey Shore hospital in Neptune. He was surrounded by friends and family, and he died peacefully.

John is survived by his life partner, Valerie Howell, with whom he lived in Freehold; and his wife of 46 years, Kathleen Marie Bien née Tatzmann of Englishtown. His family includes his sisters, Ruth Finn (Gerard Russomanno) of Freehold and Linda Forgiarini (Gennaro) of Eatontown; and his brother, Thomas Bien of Albuquerque, New Mexico; his wife's sister Dorothy Tatzmann; his nephews, James Finn of Cos Cob, Connecticut and Brian Finn, of Ocean Township; and his nieces, Krystine Quick (Kristian) of Keansburg, and Rachel Kozic of Aberdeen.

John grew up in New Shrewsbury, New Jersey (now Tinton Falls) where he attended Monmouth Regional High School. He lettered in cross country and track. He graduated Rutgers University in 1971 with a BA in English. He did active duty with the New Jersey National Guard and was employed at the Internal Revenue Service where he was a Revenue Officer for 36 years. After retirement, he was an avid day-trader.

John was a constant reader and had an open book waiting next to his chair. Along with sets of the classics, his many floor-to-ceiling bookshelves were filled with hardback contemporary fiction and his favorite, science fiction. He wrote many short stories and several novels.

The bookshelves competed with his music equipment. If his books could fill a library, his guitars could equip many rock and roll bands. He wrote songs for groups he played with, and he delighted in performing to an audience, especially an audience that wanted to dance. From the time he first played guitar in high school, he wanted to play in a band and sing. His brother, Tom, would join him in early bands to play lead guitar, and his cousin, George supplied the drums. Later bands included Naked Prey. His equipment stands ready for a pick-up session in his basement.

The Christmas Party at John's house was an annual tradition. Friends and family would come together, usually on the Saturday before Christmas, to exchange gifts and to eat, drink, and . . . dance! His living room became the dance floor with his outsized speakers playing his favorite dance mix.

John loved candles. In the early '70s, he formed Empire Candles, a partnership with his friends, Mimi Hill and Paul Hanlon, that established a product line with unique creations like "Love Lights" that burned a soft candle light through multi-colored squares of wax, and "Flute Things" that resembled blooming flowers and were too interesting to burn. He continued the tradition of candle-making with Val and played with new designs, giving the candles as gifts to friends.

His generosity was well-known. He would help out with money, the loan of a car, or even by inviting someone to live in a spare room until circumstances improved. He would readily give a "loan" without really expecting repayment.

John was not perfect. He couldn't (or wouldn't) cook. He broke more dishes than he washed. He wasn't moved to clean the house but appreciated cleanliness. He gave advice freely, whether it was needed or not. His opinions were strong, and he repeated them often (in case you didn't hear them). He could not have been a better partner, and he could not have been a better friend.

A memorial service will be scheduled for a future date for friends and family to celebrate his life.

Tribute Wall

LD

“ Dear Val,
I just heard about John's passing tonight. I'm so sorry for your loss. You're in my thoughts and prayers during this difficult time. I'll remember John for his sense of humor and positivity. I lit one of the candles you guys made in remembrance 🕯️
🙏❤️
Lynn Dundon



Lynn Dundon - January 21, 2019 at 01:15 AM

BM

“ John was my first "serious" boyfriend when I was in high school. When he used to come over to my house (in Long Branch) with his guitar, my dad used to say "Oh my God". We re-connected not too long ago, my mom (87 yrs old) still remembers him and his guitar. He and Val have sent us candles, and so whenever we light one up, we will think of John and Val and smile. Thanks for the memories, Bien. Love, Martire

Barbara Martire - January 10, 2019 at 10:45 AM



“ Tasha Dizard lit a candle in memory of John T. Bien



Tasha Dizard - January 09, 2019 at 10:49 AM

NA

“ This is Natalie Avery, I knew John for almost 30 years. John is the most selfless person that I ever met. Never had any children but he sure helped everyone else's children including mine. I will always remember his sarcastic humor, our conversations about God, the wonderful advice he gave me. I love John and I will always continue to share his memory to anyone I know. I was just talking about him two days ago. I wished i had come to the Christmas party but had transportation issues. John you will always be a part of me. I love you.

Natalie Avery - January 07, 2019 at 08:42 AM

BH

“ Bongarzone Funeral Home lit a candle in memory of John T. Bien



Bongarzone Funeral Home - January 05, 2019 at 03:54 AM

MT

I've known John for over forty years and he was quite the story teller and character at times! He was also a very good hearted individual and could be very generous! But most of all he was a very good friend and I will miss him!

Mark Tryba

Mark T - January 05, 2019 at 09:31 PM

RB

Good bye John, we will miss you. God knows the crazy summer parties, the annual football game you used to run, your music at the Cabin, and of course your Christmas parties were always good times we enjoyed with you, some great memories John. Sleep well.

Reni and Burke

Reni and Olcott Burke - January 06, 2019 at 11:18 AM

BT

I worked with John for many years, developed a friendship that we maintained for decades. His love of music and his love of his wife were admirable. A good soul who will be missed but not forgotten

Bedell Terry - January 07, 2019 at 10:29 AM

TW

I will miss you friend. You were a very generous and kind person. You touched my life and I appreciate it. You had a style all your own!!!! My thoughts are with Val!!

Tom Whitaker - January 07, 2019 at 12:33 PM

RR

I have known John for over 20 years and will truly miss his genuine care and concern that he had for those he knew or just met. My condolences to his longtime partner and family. John you will be truly missed and I am very glad to have seen you as recently at your last Christmas Party. My friend, rest well because there is still work for you in Heaven.

Rita Rosby - January 07, 2019 at 01:18 PM

SF

John befriended me when my family relocated to New Jersey in my senior of high school -- a hard time for a teenager to be displaced. He was there for me in a big way and he quickly became my best friend. We played in a (presumably terrible) rock band together called The Pink Cloud, and spent our time Ping-Ponging between metaphysical speculation and speculation about what sex was "going to be like" when our ships finally came in, so to speak. Life moved us together then, and then away from each other once more, but we always stayed in touch and he always felt like a dear friend.

Steven Forrest - January 08, 2019 at 03:21 PM

EJ

John was a very sharp witted person and had a fine personality. someone who was very generous. he gave my son a commodore 128 after i told him my son loved the commodore 64. Didn t see him lately but glad we connected on Facebook.He will be missed!

Ed Jaslar - January 11, 2019 at 10:16 PM

PD

John was an amazing person. I knew when my friend Val met John at work that they would be together forever, and they were. They were a perfect match. I will always remember John at work and his laugh. He always took the girls out for valentines day. "if they wore something red, he would say" He was the nicest person ever, The way he made you feel special was priceless. He always said how much he cared for and Loved Val. He would say he was the luckiest man when god brought Val into his life. He was a blessed man for how Val always thought of and took care of him. I will light my candle I got from John and Val and smile when I think of both of them. I am sure John is saving a place right beside him in Heaven for Val one day. Patty Deak-Sanford

patty deak-sanford - January 29, 2019 at 07:00 AM

LF

You promised daddy to take care of mom after daddy died in 1968. Yet you stopped speaking to her when she could not make good on a car loan that you had co-signed for her. Yeah, that's a real wonderful legacy you left. Mom never heard from her oldest son for at least 30 years, and died in 2005 having never seen you again. Yes, you played guitar. Yes, you made candles. Yes, you had a sense of humor. Yes, you could be heartless when you wanted to be. I miss you anyway, I was your little sister. You know, the one you asked not so nicely to leave your home when I was living with you. Great memories, John. I love you anyway.

Linda Forgiarini - October 03, 2021 at 04:55 PM