

# John Francis Kennedy

## U.S. Navy



**John France Kennedy**  
U.S. Navy  
Pilot-Bombing Squadron 17

John Frances Kennedy was born 3 October 1924, the son of Lester and Katharine Kennedy of Peoria, Illinois. John graduated from high school in Decatur, Illinois. He attended St. Mary's College in Winona, Minnesota majoring in mathematics and physics. He joined the Navy for training as a pilot and torpedo bomber. John Kennedy completed advanced training at Corpus Christi, Texas where he received his wings and was commissioned on April 4, 1945. He received operational training in TBM's at Miami, Florida and qualified in carrier landings at Glenview, Illinois. John was a Naval Reserve Aviator and Photographic Officer stationed at USNAB, 12th Naval District, Fallon, Nevada with other Navy test pilots assigned to Bombing Squadron 17. John's training period carried through the end of World War II. He never saw combat. With a back-log of equipment, aircraft and trained personnel, the military looked for ways to promote service during peacetime. John was home on leave at Christmas 1945. He was looking forward to his assignment as a skilled pilot flying in air shows, the precursor to the Navy's "Blue Angels" performances. He returned to base in January 1946 to fly in an air show in California.

John's younger brother Robert was serving with General Patton's Third Army in Europe. Robert saw combat in three campaigns including the Battle of the Bulge. He was in Berlin during the post war division of Germany and eastern Europe. The war was over and the family was safe from this world-shattering conflict. Robert was on base at Erlangen, Germany when he got the news that his brother, John, had been killed in an airplane crash on January 10, 1946. John Kennedy was returning home from an air show when his plane suddenly and tragically crashed in the desert at Carson Sink, about 25 miles from his base at Fallon, Nevada. Robert did not get notice of his brother's death until 10 days later due to a telegraph strike. He remembers going to the Red Cross to telegraph home. As the sole surviving son in his family, Robert started the long trip home aboard the Liberty Ship out of Le Havre, France arriving home in March, 1945.

A memorial service was held in Decatur, Illinois and a Mass was celebrated at St. Cecilia Church in Peoria. He was survived by his parents, two sisters, Mary and Patricia, his brother Robert and Mary Ellen Lang of Decatur, a close friend. No one knows the cause of the accident. John was posthumously awarded the World War II Victory Medal and the American Area Campaign Medal. John's story was submitted by his brother Robert Kennedy and Robert's daughter, Laura Kennedy Juras, Peoria, Illinois.

Submitted by: Robert B. Kennedy and daughters Laura Juras and Susan Laue