



John Anton Boll, Sr.

June 20, 1929 - August 24, 2022

John A. Boll, Sr.

John Boll, who started his American dream with a wheelbarrow and shovel and built one of the largest manufactured housing companies in the world, died on August 24, 2022. He was surrounded by his loving family in Detroit. He was 93.

All along, Boll tried to build a legacy by living his life for Christ and pointing people toward Him. For anyone who knew him, when Boll said, “Just trust me,” they knew things would get done. He lived life as an adventure and used his time, talents, and resources to glorify God, while trying to engage, empower, and love other people.

While serving in the United States Army, Boll met the love of his life, Marlene Miller, in a serendipitous encounter in Raleigh, North Carolina, in the summer of 1951. She was a beautiful, high-kicking dancer with The Roxyettes, a troupe from the Roxy Theater just off Times Square in New York. She later danced on The Ed Sullivan Show and realized her dream by performing with the Rockettes at Radio City Music Hall.

John and Marlene were married on June 19, 1954. They were a study in contrasts; he a rugged construction worker, as comfortable on a bulldozer as in a boardroom, and she a graceful and elegant dancer by profession, schooled in and appreciative of culture and the arts.

Mr. Boll is survived by his wife of 68 years, Marlene (Miller) Boll; his children,

John Boll, Jr. (Donna), Lora (Sergio) Mazza and Kristine (Jim) Mestdagh; eight grandchildren, Amanda (Andrei) Sandulescu, Alexandra (Nicklaus) Higgins, Abigail Boll, Anton Boll, Justin (Margot Valladon) Mazza, Giacomo Mazza, Casey Mazza, and JT Mestdagh; and three great-grandchildren, Lilly Mazza, Lucy Higgins, and Thea Sandulescu. All of these he loved and touched deeply.

Mr. Boll was preceded in death by his parents, Anton and Alberdiena Boll; and two sisters, Weya Alberdiena “Diena” Nelson, and Henderiene “Riene” Wheatley.

Following the American dream that led his parents to leave their native Holland for the United States the day after they were married, Boll built a real estate empire in the most unlikely of ways—by developing and improving manufactured home communities around the country.

Starting with a wheelbarrow and a shovel in the trunk of his powder-blue 1949 Mercury, following his military service, Boll founded Lakeview Excavating Company. In 1964, he launched Chateau Estates, a developer of manufactured housing communities that created more than 100,000 residential home sites consisting of 240 communities in thirty-six states before selling his company to the State of Washington Pension Fund. He was the first person to take a collection of manufactured housing communities to Wall Street.

Everyone who knew Boll felt his big heart and giving nature. After selling his business, he devoted his life to philanthropy and a life well lived. Active in a number of civic boards, Boll served the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) for many years and was chairman for four years. In 2005, the Boll Family YMCA opened in downtown Detroit, providing educational and athletics opportunities to families in a revitalized urban area. He was a member of Ocean Reef Chapel, Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, and Beaver Creek Chapel.

Along with his wife, Boll established the John A. and Marlene L. Boll Foundation. Together they created a legacy that enveloped hard work,

pragmatic and honest business practices, beauty, grace, concern for the poor, children, and those who deserve a break, acknowledgement of their faith in a Creator God, and a desire to improve the quality of life for the communities that they loved.

More than anything, Boll enjoyed spending time with his family and hosting friends at his homes in Key Largo, Florida; Grosse Pointe Shores, Michigan, and Beaver Creek, Colorado. He was an avid sportsman, boater, and skier. He brought many people closer to God with the way he lived his life and made them feel like part of his family.

A memorial service will be held on Thursday, September 8, 2022 at Grosse Pointe Memorial Church, 16 Lake Shore Drive, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236. Friends are welcome to gather at 10:00am, Celebration of Life at 11:00am.

A memorial service will also be held at Ocean Reef Chapel in Key Largo, Florida.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Boll Family YMCA, 1401 Broadway Street, Detroit, MI, 48226; Ocean Reef Chapel, 32 Ocean Reef Drive, Key Largo, FL, 33037 and The Helm at the Boll Life Center, 158 Ridge Road, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236.

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

SEP 8. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Grosse Pointe Memorial Church
16 Lakeshore Drive
Grosse Pointe, MI 48236

Celebration of Life

SEP 8. 11:00 AM (ET)

Grosse Pointe Memorial Church
16 Lakeshore Drive
Grosse Pointe, MI 48236

Tribute Wall

JK

“ Sorry for your lost my deep Condolences John was a VERY special person. I had a lot of good years working with him & his Company,He was one of the best & I learn a lot from him that help me grow personally and in my business life
Jim Kuhn
Suburban Homes

James kuhn - September 05, 2022 at 03:52 PM

RD

“ John Boll defined a Christian Man in the life he led. RIP John. Prayers for Marlene and the family.
Dick & Maria Danckaert

Richard E. Danckaert - August 31, 2022 at 11:09 AM

GF

“ John was truly one of a kind my friend and fellow boater I wish his wife Marilyn and the whole family with my sympathy Joe Grimaudo pass commodore

Grimaudo Joe FI - August 30, 2022 at 01:46 PM

BO

“ We hope that the hole in your hearts can be filled with pleasant family memories during your grieving process. Our community has truly lost an involved leader who was a gracious person. RIP 🙏

Bill/Dianne OKeefe - August 28, 2022 at 11:25 AM