



Joseph G. "Joe" Berkely

November 11, 1918 - September 9, 2016

Joseph G. "Joe" Berkely, 97, was born November 11, 1918, in Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, the son of Dr. Joseph G. and Goldye Johnson Berkely. As a young boy, Joe was raised on the south side of Chicago, near the shores of Lake Michigan, where his lifelong love of boating and sailing took hold. For protection from the alley gangs roaming the south side, Joe's father had him take boxing lessons, and he eventually entered the "Golden Gloves" program. Joe's years as a "typical Chicago kid" was anything but typical. At around 11 years old, he traveled to France with his mother and sister, attended school there for two years and learned to speak French, a language that would play a significant part in his life during World War II.

Back in Chicago, while in high school, Joe's father taught him how to sail. His first sailboat was a Snipe, invented by a man from Wichita, Kansas. Joe and his high school friends sailed up and down Lake Michigan, camping out on the beach at night, and resuming sailing the next day. It was a good life.

His college education took him to the University of Chicago, Central YMCA College, Notre Dame and the University of Valparaiso, where he completed his bachelor's degree. While at Valparaiso, he was a student of the Civilian Pilot Training Program, which ultimately determined his early path in life.

Joe was studying medicine at the Chicago Medical School when the

Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. His background as a pilot made him a natural candidate for the draft when Uncle Sam began looking for pilots. As a result, Joe spent four years in the Army Air Corps, taking him from Chicago to Bonham, San Antonio and Harlingen, Texas. He ended up at the Dodge City Army Airfield as a B-26 instructor for French pilots.

It was while he was stationed in Dodge City that a friend introduced Joe to Nancy Jane Petersen of Dodge City, at the time a student and Homecoming Queen at the University of Kansas. On weekends Joe would fly a bunch of pilots to Lawrence, Nancy would round up some girls from the Theta house, and with the "big band Era" in full swing and no men at KU at the time because of the war, the pilots were warmly welcomed.

As their friendship grew into love, Joe and Nancy became engaged. After Nancy's graduation from the University of Kansas, they were married on October 21, 1944, in St. Cornelius Episcopal Church in Dodge City. Nancy shared Joe's love of boats, flying and music and they were a favorite couple among their many friends and business associates. In 1956 their family was completed with the birth of a daughter, Nan Griffin.

Joe mustered out of the service in 1945. He served in the Army Reserve and later the National Guard where he retired as a Captain. Called back again to the Army Reserve, he flew for General Monte Parish, finally retiring in 1964 after 23 years of service.

Joe wanted a career in Dodge City and with the job opportunities limited for pilots after the war, Joe decided to buy the Dodge City Journal, a weekly newspaper. Newspaper competition was tough until the county agent convinced Joe that the farmers of the Plains needed a news and advertising medium to serve their interests and the Journal began to focus on farm issues. In 1949, a new name and identity came into being when the Dodge

City Journal was designated a farm publication and was renamed High Plains Journal.

Joe was helpful to Herb Clutter in the information of farm trade organizations like Great Plains Wheat and the Kansas Association of Wheat Growers, the National Association of Wheat Growers and Kansas Wheat Commission. In the 1950s, Joe and the Journal were also involved with early cloud seeding efforts and sponsored a helicopter spraying demonstration of 2,4-D for weed control in wheat. He also was instrumental in helping to bring hybrid grain sorghum to Western Kansas. His other developmental projects included production of fuel alcohol from farm products and farm wastes, solar energy, and production of methane fuel from farm wastes.

Joe served as Agricultural Advisor for two Kansas governors and helped form and was past president of the Great Plains Chapter of the Agricultural Publishers Association, past chairman of the Audit Bureau of Circulation Farm Publishers Advisory Committee, a former director of the Huck Boyd Institute and the former director of the Fidelity State Bank in Dodge City.

He served as President/CEO of High Plains Publishers, Inc. and publisher of High Plains Journal until his retirement in 1993. He remained a stockholder and trusted advisor to the company to the end. Joe was particularly fond of his friendships made throughout his life, and those who knew him appreciated his creativeness, wisdom and generosity. He will be deeply missed by many friends and colleagues.

Joe eventually moved to Longboat Key, Florida, with his wife, Nancy, to enjoy his retirement years where they enjoyed the beautiful waters, the good boating, the yacht club and all the many things that Sarasota and Longboat Key offered. He was a member of St. Cornelius Episcopal Church, Dodge

City, Kansas and All Angels by the Sea Episcopal Church, Longboat Key, Florida.

Joe was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Nancy; his parents, one sister, Harriet Frankel; and one brother, Ryan Berkely. Joe is survived by his daughter, Nan Griffin, and husband Bob, Myakka City, Florida; one grandson, Kyle Griffin, and wife Anne, and their two children, Kate and Hayes, of Trumbull, Connecticut.

Tribute Wall

ST

“ I just learned from Duane Ross of Joe's passing. I remember him well through business with Audit Bureau of Circulations. He was so respected in the industry. And reading the obit, I now know more about him and what made him the great man he was. Congratulations on a life well lived! May his actions have been an inspiration for so many others.

Susan Thomas - December 28, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ Sorry to hear about your loss. Joe was an outstanding citizen of Dodge City and gave so much to others.

Mary Burrichter - September 14, 2016 at 12:00 AM

MB

“ My sympathy to Nan and Kyle and family. May God's peace help you through this difficult time. Joe was an extraordinary person. He was the one who gave me my nickname of Mad. He said Madeleine was too long!! Long live the High Plains Journal and Joe's legacy.

Madeleine "Mad" Speer Black - September 14, 2016 at 12:00 AM

TR

“ Hi Nan & family. Wanted to say sorry for your loss! Did not realize your Dad started the HPJ!! I married a farmer from Plains Kansas! So his paper has been in our family for a very long time!! His life story is very interesting!! Lots of great men have settled in our area because of the war! God Bless all of you at this time! Trudy Gillette Reiss

Trudy Gillette Reiss - September 14, 2016 at 12:00 AM