

DECEMBER 2017

# HEAVEN'S LANDING

*Like no place on Earth*



- HONORING JOHN "COOK" COKINOGENIS
- HEAVENLY SNOW DAYS
- CHRISTMAS PARTY
- SERVICES & LINKS

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## REMEMBERING

## John "Cook" Cokinogenis

HE LIVED, HE LAUGHED, HE LOVED, WILL BE MISSED!

Diamondi John Cokinogenis was born in Pretoria, South Africa on February 24th, 1956. His father was a machinist, and that relationship likely contributed to John's mechanical prowess. Just like his father, John was a workaholic, chronic insomniac, and an insatiable perfectionist.

As you'll soon see if you chose to read forward, John was a cross between Forrest Gump and James Bond. If you met John, you would instantly like him, and if you spent any time around him at all, you couldn't help but love him! The Dos Equis beer brand has their marketing campaign completely wrong, because

John Cokinogenis truly was the most interesting man in the world!

John's interest in aviation began early in his life, and never wavered. Living near an airport as a young boy, John would stand on top of a makeshift airplane in his backyard and wave to planes as they passed overhead, hoping to be noticed and perhaps be offered a ride, but it never happened.

In 1974 John graduated from Pretoria Technical High School and entered into the South Africa Air Force for a year of mandatory service. He worked at Stein's Ford as a diesel mechanic from 1976 to 1981.

In September of 1981 on a blind date suggested by a friend, John met a beautiful young lady named Susan Wessels. The date apparently went very well, as 2 weeks later the new couple got engaged, and 2 weeks after that on October 2nd, 1981 they were married. Total courtship 4 weeks! Susan says, "John was in a hurry because he didn't want her to get away", but John always said, "It was the only way that Susan was ever going to let him get lucky!" Good for you Susan!!!

The new couple then started Automotive Engineering, Inc. where they worked day and night to save up enough money to finally purchase their very first "aircraft" in 1983. It was a rear engine single seat tilt wing ultra-lite, or "micro-lite" in the South African vernacular. With no money for lessons, John taught himself to fly it!

In 1985 the couple moved up in the aviation world when they purchased a Piper Tri-Pacer. With no "fixed wing" experience, John once again taught himself how to fly it. This time however he decided to take Susan with him on the very first flight. Being a quick learner, John merely read the aircraft owner's manual and told Susan to "get in". Being a slow learner, Susan obeyed, and the two went on a very exciting ride. John said that on the takeoff roll, "The only time we were on the centerline of the runway was when we were crossing it!" Somehow they managed to get the plane into the air, and that is when the praying really started! "God, if you'll just help us to land this plane safely without killing ourselves, I promise that I will never fly again", said John. He apparently lied, as John finally got his pilot's license in a Twin Comanche in 1987, and went on to become one of the most avid and accomplished pilots in the world.





In 1988 John & Susan moved to Texas and started a flight school, a dream business for someone so enthralled with aviation, but in 1990 they were abruptly deported and forced to sell the business. They returned to South Africa and started Diemech South Africa, Inc. where they worked on heavy equipment and ran a trucking company.

In 1992, John spotted a Soviet built Lett 410 twin turboprop at the Johannesburg Airport. It had been sitting in need of repair for some time, so in true John Cokinogenesis fashion, he bought it, repaired it, taught himself to fly it, and started his own airline. They would fly people, cargo, wild animals, seafood, livestock, you name it! If it needed to go somewhere and you were willing to pay them to fly it there, then John was your guy! John and Susan ultimately ended up owning seven Lett 410 aircraft, and it is there that John learned the nuances of maintaining and rebuilding the Walters Turbine engines.



John was also shot down by rebel AK-47 fire in 1994 while flying in a helicopter over Mozambique. The chopper crashed into the canopy of the deep jungle, John's back was severely broken in multiple places, and his pilot was left paralyzed. Unable to move and expecting that both would soon die, John and the pilot laid in the bush for over 48 hours in unimaginable pain.

As John told the story, "We were both just asking God to put us out of our misery". After two days of absolute crippled survival, John awoke to the sound of a machete slashing through the nearby brush. Was this someone coming to kill them? Machete piñata was not uncommon in this part of Africa, and they had of course already been shot down by somebody! Fortunately God had other plans for the wounded pair, and the man that found them went for reinforcements who ultimately carried them out of the jungle. John then laid in a hospital for another 6 months before they could do surgery on his broken back, because he had an infection caused by an undetected spider bite.



**All in all, John broke his back 4 separate times in his life. Once in a motorcycle crash, once in an ultra-lite crash, once in a helicopter crash, and once in a Yak 52 crash while performing aerobatics. Talk about nine lives!!! John used up every one of them, and then some!**



In 2000, John and Susan returned to the U.S. after 10 years of diligent and expensive effort, and started Diemech U.S.A. It is here that John left an indelible mark on experimental aviation by introducing and mating the Walters turbine engine with several experimental aircraft types. Included on this list of airframes are the Turbine Legend, the Lancair IV-PT, the Comp Air, and several crop dusters. In 2006, Diemech U.S.A. was sold, and John helped his son Quentin start Turbine Power Technologies, Inc. Collectively they have over 800 Walters turbines in service worldwide, and Quentin continues to be the standard bearer for quality service and repair on the Walters power plant.



John's passion for aviation was insatiable. He loved being in his plane, working on his plane, and living with his plane. So it was only natural for he and Susan to have an interest in fly-in communities. They looked at options for several years to no avail, until one day while surfing the internet Susan saw an ad for Heaven's Landing. She called us immediately, and we just happened to be exhibiting at Sun-N-Fun. The very next day John and Susan came to Lakeland and made a deposit on a hangar and lot. I sure wish that all of our sales were that easy!

One of John's proudest moments occurred on January 9th, 2015 when after years of effort and legal red tape, he finally received his United States citizenship. We were fortunate enough to be able to attend the naturalization ceremony in Orlando, and it was the only time that I ever saw John cry. He wasn't alone though, and the experience was one that we will cherish forever.



John and Susan have since built a dream home on Lot #115, and it is everything that one would expect from an airplane lover. The living room has a huge 20' x 20' picture window, but instead of looking out at the beautifully pristine mountains, it looks into the most immaculate 80' x 80' hangar known to man, and it is meticulously organized with all of John's flying treasures. Plans are to keep ownership of the home in the family, as both Susan and Quentin continue John's legacy and cherish his memory.

John was diagnosed with brain cancer in February of 2017, and had surgery in March. John battled this disease silently and inconspicuously. Most of his friends did not even know that he was ill, and the ones that did were either sworn to secrecy or lead to believe that he just had a bug. John handled it this way because he didn't want pity, sympathy, or attention, but most of all, John didn't want anyone to take away his pilot's license.

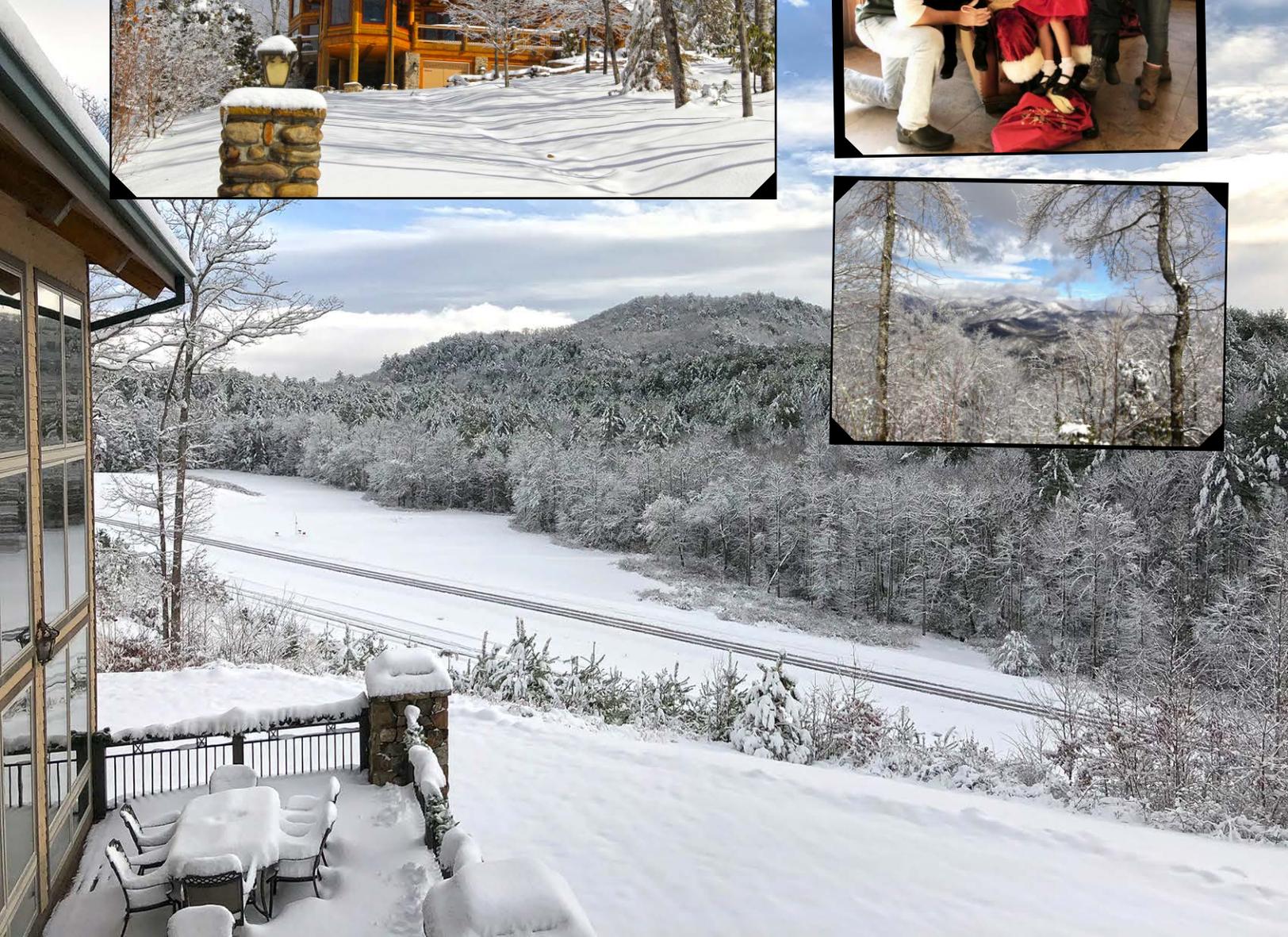


John passed away on the morning of November 18th, 2017 in Deland, Florida. He was at his hangar among some of his favorite toys when he passed. I visited with John a few days earlier while he and Susan were still here at Heaven's Landing. Though he was visibly ill, and the words didn't come out as easily as usual, he still maintained his trademark smile. He told me at the time that "Susan deserved better than him". I'm here to tell you, "There is no better than him."

**Rest in peace brother. You are loved, you are missed, and you will forever be remembered, until we meet again in a much better place with a similar name. Godspeed.**

# Merry Christmas to All

The Heaven's Landing Christmas Party planned for the evening of December 9th was delayed by a day due to some amazingly beautiful and highly unusual early winter snowfall. Santa however still managed to find his way to our community clubhouse on Sunday afternoon, December 10th and brought all of the kids a special gift. Catered Italian cuisine was provided by the Amore Bistro, and a great time was had by all that attended. **Merry Christmas!**



# HEAVEN'S LANDING

## CONCIERGE SERVICES

Heaven's Landing Concierge Services is on call for our truly unique and mobile owners. The Heaven's Landing staff is pleased to provide clients with a vast array of services.

Please call the office at 706-212-0017 for pricing information and other consultations. Please note that due to offering a vast array of services to our owners, all requests for assistance will be billed at a per-arranged fee.

Some of our commonly requested services include the following:

- Interior Cleaning
- Holding Postal Mail
- Personnel Landscaping
- Pressure Washing
- Scheduling Party Staff
- Transportation Needs
- Window Washing
- Receiving Furniture, Appliances, and Packages
- Alarm/Security Checks
- Receiving Service
- Lot and Yard Maintenance
- Tree Removal
- Maintenance Services
- Shopping
- Gutter Cleaning

### Quick Links:

- Weather Link — Stay up to date on the Clayton, GA conditions and forecast from [NOAA](#)
- Heaven's Landing Facebook Page — [“Heaven's Landing Residential Airpark”](#)
- Rabun County Tourism Development Authority — [ExploreRabun.com](#), (706) 212-0241.
- Marina and Boating Information — [Anchorage Boat Rentals](#) at (706) 782-5193
- Local Events and Information — [Rabun County Chamber of Commerce](#) at (706) 782-4812 and [Rabun County Visitors Bureau](#) at (706) 212-0241.
- Facebook “Likes” — Exploring the back woods: [Waterfall of Western North Carolina](#), [Waterfall and Back Roads of North Georgia](#), and [The Wayward Traveler](#)

### Airfield Fuel Prices

#### Self Serve Pumps

AV GAS \$3.99 / gal\* JET A \$2.99 / gal\*

\*Prices Subject to Change. Prices as of December 2, 2016