



## Captain John Anthony Pieno, USN (Ret.)

July 13, 1940 - August 26, 2023

Captain John Anthony Pieno, USN (Ret.), 83, Tallahassee, FL, passed away August 26, 2023.

John A. Pieno is a native of New Orleans, Louisiana, where he attended West Jefferson High School. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in management from Southeastern Louisiana University in 1962. Shortly after graduating, he joined the US Navy as an Aviation Officer candidate at NAS Pensacola, Florida. John earned his Naval Flight Officer wings in Corpus Christi, Texas, in April 1963. After 28 years of service, he attained the rank of Captain USN. With that, he flew over 6,000 jet hours, accumulated 1,310 aircraft carrier arrested landings and flew over 200 combat missions. During his distinguished military career, he held numerous praiseworthy positions, recognitions, and assignments in the military. After he retired from the Navy, Captain Pieno helped establish The Sterling Council in 1992.

During his service, John earned three Silver Stars from combat missions in Vietnam, Four Legions of Merit, Eight Distinguished Flying Crosses, Three Meritorious Service Medals, Eighteen Air Medals, Three Navy Commendation Medals, Navy Achievement Medal, Two Navy Unit Commendations, Five Meritorious Unit Commendations, Six Navy "E" Ribbons, and Air Force

Outstanding Unit Award. Along with the awards he earned, he also held titles of different commanding positions, flew different aircraft, and went on many deployments, including Bombardier/Navigator in the A3D Sky Warrior aircraft, Operations, Safety and Administrative Officer, Staff of Medium Attack Wing for Instructor duty as the Weapons and Tactical Officer with A6 VA-42 squadron, Executive Officer of the Attack Squadron 35 on the USS Nimitz, Commanding Officer VA35, of the A6 Attack Jet Squadron, Special Assistant for Executive Personnel to the Secretary of the Navy, Commander of the A6 replacement training squadron VA-42, Captain of the USS Savannah, Executive Officer of the USS John F. Kennedy, and Captain of the USS Forrestal.

After retirement from the U.S. Navy, he worked as a legislative director for the Grumman Corporation in Washington D.C. until he was asked to come to Tallahassee to serve as a member of Governor Lawton Chiles' cabinet. Through various encounters, John and Lawton Chiles struck up a friendship. When he was elected Governor and took office in 1991, Governor Chiles brought Captain John Pieno on board to run his Department of Administration. John proposed to Governor Chiles that we adopt the national Baldrige Criteria for the state of Florida, and this resulted in the formation of The Florida Sterling Council, which held its first meeting on June 25, 1992. John leaves a great legacy and, under his leadership, helped create a vision for the States of Florida and Georgia, which the Sterling Council oversees, to support the vision of the Sterling Council to be states of excellence and beyond. John will be missed by all who had the great pleasure of knowing him.

John enjoyed spending time with his family, especially during holidays. In recent years, he appreciated his time at their second house in Perdido Key, FL, where he could also enjoy his naval roots at the Naval Air Station Pensacola. Shortly before his passing, he flew to Myrtle Beach, SC, to spend

his last birthday with many of his extended family members and his best friend, Randy Ledbetter.

Captain John Pieno left behind his loving wife Dione, his oldest son Johnny and his wife Tammy (Wilmington, NC), his second oldest son Mike and his wife Denise (Charlottesville, VA), his daughter Nicole and her husband John (Hatteras, NC), his youngest son Greg (Virginia Beach, VA), his stepdaughters Summer (Charlotte, NC) and Cinnamon (Palm Coast, FL), 18 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

A celebration, burial, and military recognition (including a flyover) will honor John's patriotic life and will be held at Arlington National Cemetery in the near future, as is customary given his distinguished military service.

John always had a heart for The Sterling Council, a nonprofit organization improving Florida's state of excellence. In Lieu of flowers, the family asks that contributions in memory of John be made to this special "GoFundMe" <https://gofund.me/49aff499> campaign or you can send a check to the Sterling Foundation, P.O. Box 13907 Tallahassee, FL 32317.

Kelly Barber of Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193 or [www.bevisfh.com](http://www.bevisfh.com)) is assisting the Pieno family with their arrangements.

# Cemetery Details

**Arlington National Cemetery**

Arlington, VA

# Events

**Details are pending.**

# Tribute Wall

MC

“ My condolences to the family. Nevertheless, as my commanding officer Captain Pieno was aloof and arrogant. My time aboard the USS FORRESTAL was made less under his leadership. I wish he had the benefit of learning from esteemed leaders like Stephen Covey and Ken Blanchard. Unfortunately for him and those who served under him, the Navy’s leadership development in the 70’s and 80’s was quite poor. I am hopeful he changed and made a difference after his military retirement.

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**Mike Charles** - February 16 at 05:30 PM

CW

“ John was a great guy to just sit and talk with, any time I was in Tallahassee on business, we would get together. He lost his chance at a star by telling the truth.

*I Was saddened to hear of his passing.*

*Maj. (ret) Chip Wildy, Marion County Sheriff's Office*

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**Chip Wildy** - February 05, 2025 at 05:55 PM

JR

“ Was onboard Forrestal when we sailed up the river to Nola for Mardi Gras. He was the best! BZ and RIP

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**John Schaaf MMC(USN) ret** - January 01, 2025 at 11:34 AM

RD

“ I just finished watching a U-Tube video that is a Documentary on the 1983 cruise to Lebanon of the USS John F. Kennedy CVA-66. John was a Commander at the time serving as the XO. I became close to John just because I thought he had a unique management style, a real “People person”. I read the other memories posted here from others who knew and served with him. I just wanted to confirm my observations of his skills in dealing with people.

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**Robert J Davidson** - May 22, 2024 at 08:51 AM

RD

*Correction: USS John F. Kennedy CVA-67, later CV-67*

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**Robert J Davidson** - May 22, 2024 at 08:55 AM

JG

*I came to the USS Forrestal I think it was April 1988. At the time it was in port at Mayport. The ship was having repairs done. Cables and wires dangled from the over head water being pumped out from various places. In one week we got the ship squared away. I'll never forget Capt. Pieno Voice over the 1mc He said “this was maid to sail, and it's ready to sail, and that's what we're gonna do”. And by golly that's what we did. On that cruise we saw 3 ports in 6 months. I had a lot of experiences on board the Forrestal, not all of the pleasant one of those was Captains mast. I was dealing with personal problems that led to my face to face Capt. Pieno while it wasn't pleasant at the time it led to my facing my issues later. I'm saddened to hear of his passing. I saw this thing on YouTube about sailors going to sea I thought I know a little about what that fees like, I thought I'd check it for accuracy. lol. The story revolved around the USS Kennedy. Practically the first person I see on this program was Capt. Pieno, I asked my self when did he join the Kennedy? I knew him on the Forrestal. I have mixed emotions about that time in my life. This show brought it back. The bad and the good. Again I wish to express my condolences to his family. He was my Capt. Before I started writing this I read some of the other posts. I actually ran across a post from a shipmate Brian Haack just wanted to give a shout-out in case he passes this way again. RIP Capt. Pieno fair winds and following seas to all.*

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**John H Glaze** - July 15, 2024 at 01:20 AM

BL

*Strange this captain had such a stellar record of military service and never had a star. I realize cancer was possibly a factor but? I watched a video on JFK's deployment to Lebanon when he was XO and an O-6. He seemed a fair man but also All Navy and no BS. The attributes of a good Executive Order.*

**Billy Hollaway, retired LDO** - December 30, 2024 at 03:20 PM

 Brian  
Haack

“ *I was saddened to hear the news of Captain Pieno's passing. I was a young Corpsman on the Forrestal, where he was my Commanding Officer. I have often said that Forrestal was the "house where I grew up", and the direct mentorship I got from Captain Pieno and other leaders on that ship was uncommon for a person in my low pay-grade, but I had a number of responsibilities that caused me to interact directly with the Captain and his XO, and department heads. The mentorship (and sometimes spirited criticism) I got from the Captain and his Senior Officers contributed directly to my career success, yes, but also to my development as a man.*

*He always encouraged me and affirmed my work when he saw me. I know now that my work was not necessarily "better" than anyone else's, but he made me think it was--and that made me want to it better. And he always pointed out ways I COULD do it better, insisting that those improvements be reflected in my work the next time I saw him. Not wanting to disappoint him, I (almost) always succeeded.*

*May God bless all his family--and I thank them for sharing him with us. It was a privilege I will never forget, and the good work that I continue today is, in part, a tribute to a Pieno legacy that lives on, even now.*

**Brian Haack** - March 19, 2024 at 03:21 PM

MP

*Thank you for these kind words. It gives me goosebumps through the tears reading these.*

*I am one of John's grandchildren and I can't tell you how much this comment means to me and my memories of my grandpa.*

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**Michael Pieno** - September 23, 2025 at 06:17 PM

RA

“ *It was an honor to have known Captain John Peino. When I joined the Navy 1981 I was assigned to VA-35 Black Panther aboard the USS Nimitz. So many great memories. They will stay with us forever. Just like the Captain will be with us forever*

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**Ruben Reyes Arizona** - March 04, 2024 at 05:08 PM

RI

“ *VA 35 1981-1984 Med  
RIP*



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**Rick** - September 14, 2023 at 06:44 AM

RG

“ I had the honor to know Captain John Pieno during a time in my life where I contemplated military service, particularly aviation. He was very supportive and pragmatic about the life of a military aviator. I also had the pleasure to meet his family and share memories with them. He was a true American Military Hero. I am saddened to know he has left us and I pray for his family. May his life and military service remain an inspiration to many for years to come. May GOD bless his surviving family and friends. Thank you Captain John Pieno for the impression you made in my life!

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**Randall Greene** - September 06, 2023 at 07:16 PM