



John Kastner

November 21, 2019

Internationally-renowned Canadian documentarian, died at home Thursday night, November 21, 2019 in the arms of his loving partner Susan Teskey. The world has lost a unique, brilliant and profoundly humanist documentary voice; we have lost our unique most loving, funny, devoted, irreplaceable partner, father, grandfather, uncle, brother.

The third of the privileged children of joyous creators Martin and Rose Kastner, winner of an unprecedented four Emmys and innumerable other international awards during his five decade career, John produced a body of work that touched hearts and shook preconceptions and policies in medical and legal fields, most particularly with his recent series of films about mental health. His range was prodigious, from the most comic to most moving; he took his work seriously but never himself - despite his enormous success as a filmmaker, he dreamed of returning to his first love, acting.

Forever grieved by his partner Susan Teskey, children Danny (Christine), Gabe and Kira; grandchildren Laila and Theo, nephew Jamie and wife Laura, great-nephew Max, nieces Jessika and Julie, and sisters Susan and Kathy and brother-in-law Marvin. And, those whose lives he touched and altered in his films and with whom he had relationships going back decades.

Predeceased by his parents, his dear wife Renee, mother of their children; and by his brother Peter. Funeral arrangements are private; a remembrance

and celebration of his exceptional life will be announced later.

Tribute Wall

MJ

“ Susan -I am so sorry for your loss. John had a profound impact on my life and that of my family. Professionally and personally his character was unlike any person I have met. Through the lens he took us (my family) down a life path gave us a perspective to start to heal and reflect. Through John's eyes he taught me to see things in a different way and helped me to become a better human being. We shared many special moments during and after our filming. He made me laugh and cry and he held me accountable. Our last conversation was discussing his plan for a visit as well as his plan to take some time to rest. We both chuckled about John resting and relaxing and taking time. Rest now John and know you had a positive impact on the world you revolved around. My life has been forever changed by knowing you.

*Respectfully
Mason J Jenkins*

Mason Jenkins - December 19, 2019 at 07:07 PM

LJ

“ Susan I was saddened to just now learn of John 's passing. There are not enough words to describe the impact he had on our family. When we first met I had no idea what he did or how renowned he was. What I do know is we learned he kind, compassionate, caring, humble patient and had a wonderful sense of humour, He certainly left his mark on our .lives. My thoughts of him always make me smile. Despite the painful story we shared, he was so thoughtful and kind and helped us in our healing. He will forever be in our hearts.

Leslie Jenkins

Leslie Jenkins - December 15, 2019 at 06:15 PM

ST

Leslie I just realized you had tried to reach John and had not heard. Im sorry - I will call you. It must be a terrible shock. I know how much you meant to him and how much he enjoyed spending time with you (and the fun you had) despite the painful story you shared with him. Like everyone who gave so much of themselves in the documentaries John made, you were family.

Susan Teskey - December 16, 2019 at 04:07 PM

“ John was a talented documentarian who turned his focus to the Correctional Service of Canada for several films. He created *House of Secrets* and *Hunting Bobby Oatway* at the Keele Centre in Toronto, a halfway house for 40 violent offenders. This is where we met, as I was the Director.

The correctional world is very insulated, quickly deflecting media and outside interest as it is too often self-serving – politicians searching for quick votes by “getting tough on crime”, law enforcers looking to bolster budgets by fearmongering. But John was different. He had a sincere interest in promoting, understanding and informing, capturing life in a system full of moral and ethical dilemmas, tragedy and sometimes comedy, human interest and always fascinating stories of lives gone amuck. He had a sincerity and honesty about him that garnered trust and a willingness for those not used to being in the spotlight, to allow this intrusion. He was a ground breaker, and with his documentaries promoted empathy and a greater understanding of the reviled and often feared elements of our society. He opened eyes and hearts and minds to what normally people would prefer not to see.

His works have been used around the world for educational purposes and were made with integrity and compassion, never sensational, not exploitative...but compelling, as life often is.

For the correctional staff, he generated pride and self-reflection of our work, when the normal reaction is to be apologetic, sorry to be associated with the indefensible, the pariahs of society. Correctional work is unpopular and poorly understood, but those who make a career of it are passionate about the importance for the community, for victims, and for the individuals who find themselves mired in a complex system that is ever-changing, depending on political winds.

John’s interest and humanity have made a significant difference to the correctional world and he will always be remembered through his body of works that will live on. It is difficult to come to terms with

the loss of someone so gifted, intelligent and humane.

My sincere condolences.

Shelley Hassard

Shelley Hassard - December 04, 2019 at 11:40 PM

ST

Dear Shelley, thank you for your magnificent tribute to John, his work and the difference he made to so many individuals and institutions. He was forever in your debt for the support and assistance you gave him at Keele Centre. Without it he would not have been able to make Hunting Bobby Oatway. - a dark masterpiece that brilliantly captured the dilemmas you know all too well. I know he stayed in touch. Will write soon.

Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - December 06, 2019 at 05:22 PM

JM

“*In the summer of '62 or '63, I met John, bobbing in Gull Lake with a buddy, conducting an experiment on getting the much-feared at the time stomach cramps. Careful researcher that he would become, he was wearing a lifejacket.*

We bumped into each other a few times at the lake, met for coffee once in Toronto. I remember wit and intelligence and a big smile.

J Sandy Matheson

Kitchener, on

j saandy matheson - December 04, 2019 at 06:23 PM

JS

“ Dear Danny, Gabe ,Kira and Kastner sisters- so very sorry to hear of John's passing. I didn't know John very well, as I was friends with my beloved friend Renee, his late wife. I do remember his sly humour, and kind voice. I remember visiting your home many times, and always felt comfortable an happy being there. My heart grieves for you. John left a legacy through his work, and made a big imprint in the Canadian film industry. My sincere condolences. - Joan Sokoloff~

joan sokoloff - December 03, 2019 at 09:59 AM

WB

“ I did not know John Kastner, but two of his documentaries have stayed with me for the past forty odd years. I still remember how affected I was by his films concerning children with leukaemia and women with breast cancer.
Artists do not die; they live on through their work. My condolences to the family of this talented and influential artist.
Wendy Bonus

Wendy Bonus - December 01, 2019 at 11:38 AM

FB

“ I had the great privilege to share four years of high school with John in "The Language Class". I thought him the most sophisticated person I knew, as he seemed to know something about everything, and his family life seemed quite enchanted. He was always very quick and funny, and I loved sharing a desk with him in Grade 11 Physics. The supply teacher was not exactly in charge the day John arrived with a small paper bag full of candy blackballs, which John claimed to love. The teacher's consternation when John "accidentally" dropped the bag on the floor amused us all immensely. I'm not sure we ever picked them up. It's lovely to read that John maintained his sense of fun throughout his life. I'm sure he was an enchanting parent too. I'm sure you will miss him terribly.
Fran Silverberg Bleviss

Fran Silverberg Bleviss - November 30, 2019 at 11:21 AM

ST

“ A heartfelt tribute for the caregivers who always brought a smile to John's face and mischief to his eyes. They cared, and coaxed and coddled him, sang and danced for him, during those final weeks. To Donnabella, Marichu, Dahlia, Luke, (who revealed a heretofore unknown love of reggae in John) and finally Lexina for being there. Thank you forever for bringing love and support to us both.

Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - November 29, 2019 at 12:50 PM

 Priya Singh

“ I remember meeting John last year around this time in Bahamas least year. He taught and spoke of forgiveness and I will never forget him. Thank you John for sharing your light through your work.

Priya Singh - November 28, 2019 at 10:05 PM

AM

“ *This is very sad news to hear of losing John. Susan, I send my warm thoughts to you. Anne Martin*

Anne Martin - November 28, 2019 at 09:10 AM

ST

Anne, its been a while. So very kind of you. Thank you ST.

Susan Teskey - November 28, 2019 at 04:07 PM

MA

“ *Dear Susan and the entire Kastner family please accept my deepest condolences.*

John was a mentor to so many of us. I asked his advice and valued his guidance. John also sought and appreciated the insights of fellow members of the independent documentary community. He was a rare person who could give so generously and also receive.

John was a gem in this industry who showed compassion at every turn.

May his spirit continue to guide us all.

*In sympathy,
Mary Anne Alton, Toronto*

Mary Anne Alton - November 27, 2019 at 05:17 PM

JT

“Where does one start to write about such a humble and talented man!

I cannot speak to his past, but I can speak about the John the Teskey family came to know and love.

I can speak to the twinkle in his eye and his boyish grin as he ran out the door to get wine for our dinners, to his modest demeanor and passion for his work, to watching old movies and his storytelling, to wonderful dinners full of lively discussions and laughter, to his love of his work and his worry over the people in his films, to his inclusiveness and kindness.

I can speak to the John who would get up in the middle of the night and go for walks, the man who would whip out a notepad and pencil and start writing things down no matter what was going on or where you were. Of the man who made my elderly and sickly aunt laugh and smile, of songs being sung and of falling asleep by the fire. A man who was so thankful for others' kindness and help. To the delight clearly written on his face when he would sit at the head of our table, open an excellent bubbly and say, “You are probably wondering why I have asked you all here today” and then giggle at our smiles. Childlike in his delight and happiness.

To his deep gratitude to our friend Alison Clayton who put forward the NCR project to Rogers Telefund and obtained the funding. To his incredible journey on that project and the deep connection he had to the Bouvier family and to Sean Clifton. John was never boastful or one for the spotlight but loved a good discussion over a fine meal and company. I am honoured to have been included in so many.

And I can speak to the love that was so apparent between my sister Susan Teskey and her “Johnny”. The incredible support they gave each other every day in all aspects of life and work. To the passion of common interests and love they had for each other. My sister and

John were inseparable especially over the last year.

To all that knew John, the sorrow will be great. To the Kastner family who have been so lucky to have such a wonderful father and brother my heartfelt condolences.

To my sister all my love.

Julie Teskey

Julie Teskey - November 27, 2019 at 04:13 PM

“ My parents were among the many friends of Rose and Martin who formed a creative circle of writers, artists, academics, journalists, etc. in mid-century Toronto. My childhood memories include occasions in the company of the Kastners. I may not have understood much of it, but I could tell from the adults' highly animated exchanges that fascinating things were being discussed.

My mother treasured her friendship with the Kastners; one of Martin's sculptures hangs on the wall above me as I write, his gift to her bequeathed to me. She was likewise very proud of the accomplishments of the Kastner children and her enthusiasm was quite infectious.

As a young boy, it was Peter's work that first made an impression upon me, with "Time of Your Life", "Nobody Waved Goodbye" and "... Big Boy Now". After all, anybody who was in a movie with a Lovin' Spoonful soundtrack was just fine with me. As for the TV series, what can be said? It was the same age that gave us "My Mother The Car".

However, it was John that I came to know for a time. In the early Seventies, when I was about 17, John was producing short "human-interest" pieces for a local CBC program called "Video One". He featured my family twice. On the first occasion he produced an episode about my brother Graham's hippie wedding in a barn somewhere north of Toronto, complete with livestock and folk musicians.

A little while later, he enlisted me to help him fake a documentary about "freebies" (the term was new at the time and he rather liked it). The idea was that he and his camera would tag along with a couple of teenagers who lived by scrounging about the city for their needs. Kim Elkington, a friend of my sister Kathleen, volunteered to be our accomplice. We were actually a couple of Rosedale kids who lived at home with our respective parents. John wasn't about to let such things get in the way of a good story.

He took us to our first location, a dumpster behind the old CBC building on Jarvis Street. Kim and I acted excited as we "discovered" that it contained an old chair from the CBC prop department. John had scripted a brief interview. One of us was supposed to say that such "freebies" were a great way to furnish "our pad". It was hard to keep a straight face with dialogue like that.

Next, we went around to another side of the building where someone had placed some boxes beside an old steel door. John took a piece of chalk from his pocket and wrote "BAKERY" on the door. Another great "find" lay inside one of the boxes, a large loaf of stale bread. The script had one of us explaining that stale bread freshens up when heated in the oven.

And so it went. It was a truly memorable day in that it was such enormous fun. I never actually saw the finished episode when it aired, but some of my friends did and had quite a good laugh. Alas, there were no home VCRs in those days.

In the years since I have seen and admired most of John's later work; running the gamut from humorous street gags to poignant documentaries. His professionalism shone in all his efforts and this has been repeatedly recognized by his peers with praise and awards. He produced important thought-provoking explorations into the lives of the marginalized. He made a difference.

And I'm certain there may have been the occasional time when adjustments had to be made to accommodate his narrative. Such is the creative impulse.

I know that John will be greatly missed by all who knew him. My heart goes out to Susan and Susan and Kathy and their families. I also know that many wonderful reminiscences of John will continue to enrich your lives forever.

*Stephen Beattie
Ottawa*

Stephen Beattie - November 27, 2019 at 04:13 AM

SK

Dear Stephen - thank you so much for these wonderful memories. I remember your parents Earl and Gwen well, they were kindred spirits who were a big part of my parents' lives. very best, Susan K.

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:03 AM

DK

“ Susan, sending you condolences on the death of your partner John. May your memories sustain you during this time of loss. Donna Korchinski

Donna Korchinski - November 26, 2019 at 09:45 PM

ST

Donna, Lovely to hear from you even at this sad time. Thank you. Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - December 03, 2019 at 09:23 PM

DS

“ We were saddened to learn of John's death. He brought much to the community at large, in Canada and beyond. He brought our family understandings and insights we wouldn't have had without him. A measure of his caring is that he kept in touch with Michael over the years. The Stewarts.

David Stewart - November 26, 2019 at 06:31 PM

ST

David, it means so much to hear from you. All the Stewart family were very special to him. Unlike many filmmakers John's documentaries never said A Film by John Kastner. Aside from the pomposity which he hated I think he felt the films were by the people in them. The people like Michael and Sean and Carole and Martin and Ron who shared their lives and their stories. John listened to them and believed in them when no one else did. And told their stories to others. Of course he was a master storyteller but I think thats how John would see it!. Its why he honoured all the them so much. I havent spoken directly to Michael yet, but will. Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - November 27, 2019 at 12:20 PM

AN

“ *To Susan and the Kastner family,*

It brought tears to my eyes when I learned of John's passing. He was a brilliant, humourous and special person whom I was fortunate to work with on numerous projects and shows.

Our relationship grew over many years. We shared late night edits and many laughs together.

I will miss him and my thoughts are with you at this time.

Alf Norris

Alf Norris - November 26, 2019 at 06:21 PM

ST

Alfie, thank you so much for this. He was all the things you say to the nth degree. He loved spending time with you - it was never "work" for Johnny - and often spoke very fondly of you and your great times together. I too remember you fondly from our days on the infamous 6th floor of 790 Bay and wish you and yours all the very best. Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - November 27, 2019 at 12:07 PM



“ *Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of John Kastner.*



November 26, 2019 at 05:12 PM



“ *I was fortunate to have been a friend of John and Peter in the early 50's. Having just immigrated to Canada we had moved in across the street from the Kastner home on Glenholme Ave. and my brother and me were readily accepted by John, Peter and the whole Kastner family. I'm sure this helped us in our assimilation into a new country.*

I remember Johnny {as I knew him} as being a live wire high energy kid. Fun to be with.

My condolences to all he was close to.

Blessings, Frank Ford, Nanaimo B.C.

Frank Ford - November 26, 2019 at 04:06 PM



*Frank, thanks so much for taking the time to share this. Back then he was just my little brother and I didn't pay sufficient attention, but the brother I miss is very much the person you remember, and then some.
Best, Susan K*

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:06 AM



LOL

Jenny Kastner - March 17, 2025 at 06:11 PM

AC

“ *Deepest sympathy to the Kastner family.sincerely.....Aileen Cowan*

Aileen Cowan - November 26, 2019 at 03:05 PM

SK

very dear Aileen, who was so much a part of our lives and my father's art...thinking of you, as you are of us. love, SK

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:08 AM

LT

“ *My deepest condolences to John's family and friends. I had the pleasure of meeting John when his NCR documentary was being screened and I sat on a panel (mother of a son murdered by a mentally ill offender found NCR). His documentary helped many, including my family, come to understand NCR and mental illness. I continue to reference and praise his work, and always will. John will be forever remembered by many.
May gentle memories of John help ease the unbearable pain of his death.
With Warmest Regards, Lori Triano-Antidormi*

Lori Triano-Antidormi - November 26, 2019 at 11:46 AM

SK

Lori, thanks from all our hearts for this remembrance. Compassion was my brother John's motor, It meant the world to him to open hearts , all the more if changing perceptions could help ease pain for people who have gone through what you have. Fondest regards, all sympathy and good wishes. Susan Kastner

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:13 AM

RC

“ My first meeting with John was in 1982 at Collins Bay Penitentiary where I was serving a life sentence. Despite my resistance his mother Rose and John after many visits convinced me to take part in a documentary that they were filming at the time on the subject of women who were visiting men in prison. The documentary evolved into his Emmy Award winning “Lifer and the Lady”. Over the life span of the shooting I got to know John well, his kindness, his generous heart, and his fascinating sense of humour. So many funny, and lasting memories.

John was instrumental in setting me on the right path, and a great role model. We developed a bond of respectful friendship which has lasted for 37 years. I will be forever grateful to have known him, and to have been able to call him my friend. My heart is broken right now. Such a tragic loss for us all.

My condolences to his loving partner Susan, the Kastner clan, and extended family.

John you will always live in my memory .. Ron Cooney

Ron Cooney - November 26, 2019 at 12:03 AM

SK

Very dear Ron, you always live in our hearts too; you and your courage and heart were an inspiration to John and to my beloved mother. Be well, think of you often. love, Susan Kastner

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:16 AM

JH

“ I worked with John on several projects/stories here at the Toronto Star. He was passionate about his causes, and always kind and generous with his time. So sorry to hear of his death. My condolences to his family.

Janet Hurley

Janet Hurley - November 25, 2019 at 02:45 PM

KK

“ *My wonderful, funny, silly, oh so smart and generous to a fault brother was always looking to be a help: whether helping his documentary 'stars' get their proper due, or at the ready whenever and whatever this sis needed it. He was a huge help every step of the way in my career journey and life journey. I will cherish these memories.*

I very much appreciate reading these lovely tributes: that he meant so much to so many is a comfort, along with the 'can't believe he's gone' reality.

John's younger sis Kathy

kathy kastner - November 25, 2019 at 02:28 PM

RE

Dear Gigi, I am so sorry to hear about John's passing. Whenever Hy and I would bump into him, he was always so warm, so interested in what was going on in our lives, and so humble about what was going on in his. Hy thoroughly enjoyed working with him on his documentaries and for me, that connection to him was an extension of our decades long history. He was a lovely human being. Sending you my sincere condolences and my love. Resa

Resa Eisen - November 26, 2019 at 11:48 PM

BB

“ *Barbara and I send our deepest and heartfelt sympathies to John's family. Danny, Gabe and Kira, and sisters Susan and Kathy and nephew Jaimie, you can all be so proud of the man who loved you dearly. Witty, funny and so brilliant, John's presence will grace this world for a very, very long time to come.*

Barbara and I came to know John and Renee, through our mutual friend John Martin. We came closer, as John and I shared responsibility and care of seeing our dear friend (John Martin) through his months-long illness and passing. Through those sad and dark months, John's graciousness and caring character became a shining light for both Barbara and myself.

Needless to say, John will most certainly be missed. We send our love to all those so close to John, especially to Susan and Renee, and of course all the children and sisters.

I will miss our occasional glass of wine and chat to catch up. Rest well, friend.

Bill Bobek and Barbara Collier

Bill Bobek - November 25, 2019 at 02:14 PM

SK

Thanks, dear Bill and Barbara, he felt the same way about you two - the time you shared with John Martin was so important to him. The way he'd champion everyone he cared for, his love and generous tireless steadfast involvement - and the way he made his 'chicken face' to laugh you out of the blues - were only some of the things we can never replace.
fondly, Susan K

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:27 AM

SK

“ Thank you all for your thoughts and your memories. Thank you, friends who date back to our long-ago past, for remembering him with such warmth. It's incredibly cruel and we will never get over his loss; your memories help ease the heartsickness.
Susan Kastner

Susan Kastner - November 25, 2019 at 09:01 AM



“ *Written in the Stars* was purchased for the family of John Kastner.



November 24, 2019 at 09:48 PM

SK

“ Thank you thank you, for your appreciation of what our John was and your memories of him; lovely to hear from so many dating from his/our long-distant past, like Doug Pike, Cathy Chilco, Morty Doran, Judith Thompson - just for instance...all of your memories help ease the heartsickness.
Susan Kastner

Susan Kastner - November 24, 2019 at 07:08 PM

JN

“ *My wife and I loved John. Whenever I would meet him he was all smiles and warmly*

laughing.

Our children went to school together, and we remember Renee as a lovely

person.

In recent years, I became reacquainted with Peter and I will miss him as well.

It has been said before, but a bright light has been extinguished in the world.

We say of people with stature, that he was a Shem Tov, A good name.

A good heart, John.

Jack Newman - November 24, 2019 at 06:29 PM

SK

thanks dear Jack for your own good heart. xoSK

Susan Kastner - November 28, 2019 at 09:28 AM

PR

“ It was with shock and sadness that I learned today of the passing of John. I have known John off-and-on for decades and worked with him on a few of his brilliant projects. He was a delightful man; extremely talented, very kind and very very funny. I enjoyed every project and every meeting. He was unique. I never met his children but my thoughts go out to them. Susan has been a co-worker and friend over many years and many many projects. My thoughts, sympathy and love are with her.

Patrick Russell - November 24, 2019 at 04:52 PM

BN

“ I first worked with John as a warm-up man for the CTV series "Just Kidding". He immediately saw that there was a potential for more than just entertaining the crowd and he gave me a chance to work on production. The next year he invited me to become a member of the production staff for a CBC hidden-camera special "Street Comedy" and working with him, I learned a great deal which was the foundation of my latter career in television writing and producing. Besides being a brilliant film maker, John was a kind, and generous man and whenever we would meet up, he would be sure to ask me how I was doing. He sure will be missed.

Briane Nasimok - November 24, 2019 at 02:28 PM

SK

briane boychik! xoxo

Susan Kastner - November 24, 2019 at 07:39 PM

AP

“ We have all lost a kind, passionate and brilliant man. Our warmest condolences to Susan and his entire family. Anne Pick and Bill Spahic.

Anne Pick - November 24, 2019 at 01:57 PM

“ John and I worked together for many years and on many shows. John had two families his non work family but also his Film Crew Family which I come from.

You are a family for a day , a week and even longer.

You share the closeness of being together and witness life experiences as a fly on the wall but also the intimate revelations unfolding before your eyes but fully there and not as a fly on the wall.

You work together to share the Directors vision and work as a crew to make it happen.

This is a unique Family.

You are serious .

Laugh together and cry together.

John was a master story teller in Words ,Actions and Pictures.

His story ideas changed with every film.

His directed cinematic moments during shooting can be seen in his collection of films "Bunny and Leona " , " Sinners in Paradise" , " Rage against the Darkness " , and "Chicken are People to" shows us the Genius of John Kastner.

There is an old feeling that stories on the road stay on the road. I cannot resist telling a few stories of my time spent working with John.

The first shoot I did with John was a taste testing set up at Scarborough Mall. He wanted to show that people will agree to almost anything.

John had put Cayenne Pepper in the soft drink and the chocolate cake. Everyone agreed that they loved the cake and drink . He was not getting the facial expression he needed so he added more pepper. The next taster was allergic to Cayenne Pepper. After some medical intervention all was well.

As we were packing up after the shoot I asked John if he got the shot he was looking for?

With a smile ,yes. That was John.

When I see the commercial for Paradise Island Resort in Nassau I see a kid coming down the Water Chute, straight down. When we

were filming "Sinners in Paradise" we stood at the bottom of this Water Chute debating whether John would go to the top and down the chute for a shot. Laughing as to whether I would get my normal "Two Takes".

John without hesitation made his way to the top.

The first and only take worked great. John showed us his finest moment. Childish Facial Glee front and center in the shot.

The Kid in the commercial always reminds me of the " KID JOHN KASTNER ".

There is a bond when you work together with someone.

John was a joy and privilege to work with.

His Creative Genius was shown in all his films.

The World of Documentary Film Making has lost one of it's Greatest.

The advantage of your creative work preserved on film is that 100 years from now someone can sit and watch " A FILM by JOHN KASTNER "

To Susan and John's Family my thoughts are with you .

He was a was a True and Wonderful person.

Douglas Pike

Douglas Pike - November 24, 2019 at 01:49 PM

CC

“ So very sad to hear of John's passing. He and I were in theatre together in Toronto many years ago. Whistling Grieg's Morning Song, John would show up Saturday mornings in the laneway of my U ofT student digs and we would go off for breakfast at some local diner. It is actually because of John that I made the move into television production, so I owe him a lot for my long career. We saw each other over the years at industry events---I was always warmed by John's humour...still the same guy who could make me laugh ...great silly conversations! My most sincere condolences to his family and many friends.
Cathy Chilco

Cathy Chilco - November 24, 2019 at 10:52 AM

JG

“ Dearest Gigi, Jeff and I want to send our sincere condolences to you and your family. Much love, Kathy Berg Greenstein

Jeff Greenstein - November 24, 2019 at 09:07 AM

MD

“ My condolences to the Kastner family on John's passing. I lived next door to the Kastners on Lonsmount Drive in the 1950's, and knew John only peripherally, as I was his sister Susan's age and knew Susan and Peter better. Though I left Toronto in 1965, I would periodically see John's name (as well as Peter's and Susan's) in the newspapers or in the credits on TV or movies as their careers evolved. Such an incredibly talented family!

Morton Doran
Fairmont BC

Morton Doran - November 23, 2019 at 08:52 PM



Margaret
Konopack

“ *It is with a heavy heart I write about the most incredible, compassionate and kind, witty and funny -- John Kastner-- a man who I held in the upmost esteem and regard and who I admired so very very much.. John you will never be forgotten by your fans like myself who were lucky enough to be invited into your family -- - always with open arms and incredible heart .*

Your unique and beautiful children Danny, Gabe and Kira and the always present and talented sisters Susan and Kathy and nephew -- wonderful Jaimie, made this heart always feel included in the musings and stories surrounding all of our lives. You were a just and selfless man. You always inspired and uplifted -- especially those who needed more love and were misunderstood.

Your deep care of the people that are marginalized in our society woke me up and made me really see more clearly the workings of the world. John you were so fair and your wit so incredible... You were so very easy to love dear John.

I am thinking about your family during this most difficult time because I have to say that I dont know a closer clan..... Unique, and so incredibly gifted but more importantly -- so loving towards others. You never looked away when it took courage to lead.

John I will never forget you and I know you will be looking over your clan from somewhere most beautiful. Sending love to the Kastner clan and thank you

Margaret Konopacki - November 23, 2019 at 07:47 PM

ST

“ Thank you to everyone for the kindness, love and appreciation you have shown here and elsewhere for my beloved Johnny. His death is a tragedy not just for his family and friends, not just for the documentary world, but for the powerless and forgotten, the marginalized and reviled. He cared when no one else did. To lose his voice is a tragedy for all Canadians.

He is utterly special and unique. I will miss him and mourn him forever. And say goodbye with these words from Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet,

"When he shall die take him and cut him out into stars and he shall make the face of heaven so fine that all the world will be in love with night and pay no worship to the garish sun."

Susan Teskey

Susan Teskey - November 23, 2019 at 05:20 PM

JC

thinking of you all Susan - Jackie

Jackie Carlos - November 25, 2019 at 09:00 PM

NK

“ Dear Kastner Family.
I am devastated to realize John is gone. He was so special to me. We had known each other from when we were in our late teens (and therefore Martin, Rose, Kathy, Susan and Peter) We had shared some crazy adventures and were what I call “ CBC babies”. Brilliant, eccentric as hell - what a legacy. Will never forget ya Johnny. Neeners.

Nina Keogh - November 23, 2019 at 02:50 PM

CB

“ Thank you John for all you did.

cynthia banks - November 23, 2019 at 11:44 AM



“ Garden of Memories was purchased for the family of John Kastner.



November 23, 2019 at 10:03 AM

PK

“ So sad to hear we lost one of our bright Canadian lights. Susan, Leah and I send you and Jamie our deepest condolences for your loss. I knew John for a short time, but my admiration for him was and is far from abbreviated. Life and our contribution to it is so relatively short in time, but John made his time here a bigger and better picture for us all. Best to your whole family.

Peter Keleghan - November 23, 2019 at 09:46 AM

JS

“ Joanne Smale lit a candle in memory of John Kastner



joanne smale - November 23, 2019 at 09:42 AM

JT

“ To Susan and John's adored family,
I am devastated to read of John's passing. He was a brilliant mentor to me as I wrote the television movie *Turning to Stone*, and I learned from him every day. John cared deeply about injustice, and those who are caught and tangled in the web of corrupt institutions. He was also so much fun to work with! We would work and laugh and work all day. More recently, I invited John and his beloved Susan to two of our RARE theatre productions, featuring marginalized theatre artists. He opened his heart to their work and he gave them the admiration and love of a peer, despite all his incredible accomplishments and honours. John, may you rest in peace, and I think I join all who knew you in resolving to continue your fight for justice.

Judith Thompson - November 23, 2019 at 09:28 AM

“ I am so saddened by this news. And I know that is a sentiment which will be shared by everyone who had the honour of working with John or anyone who saw the brilliant work of one of Canada's greatest filmmakers. Many of us pride ourselves on our journalistic instincts and storytelling skills. But John Kastner took the art of video storytelling to levels we had not seen before. For him it was a true art form, and no one was better at it.

I know he cleverly employed lessons from his drama training when he was young. But John's beautiful, compelling films came from other deep wells. He had a huge heart which created a powerful sense of injustice. And when he witnessed people wronged by society or being denied their human rights he was fearless in exposing the institutions and individuals responsible. Whatever the possible price there was no stopping John. He had a legendary sense of humour and mastered something which eluded most...films which were hilarious and yet illuminating at the same time. With his remarkable skills John always managed to structure his films in intriguing ways, tell stories which surprised us, had revelations which left us gasping.

The Canadian film and media community has lost a rare talent. The of us who crossed paths with him have lost a cherished colleague and a dear friend. And a master teacher.

My Deepest Sympathies to his partner, Susan , and all the Kastner family.

Bob Culbert

Bob Culbert - November 23, 2019 at 08:47 AM

SK

dearest bob, forever kindred spirit, thanks from the bottom of my heart...susan k

Susan Kastner - November 24, 2019 at 07:06 PM

AB

“ *Dear Susan and the Kastner family,*

We were deeply saddened to hear of John's passing. Sending our deepest condolences to you Susan and to the Kastner family. We will always have wonderful memories of John as he was a special friend who was so thoughtful, caring, kind and for being so sensitive to our story and our family. What a wonderful man he was. We always enjoyed our time together with him; we were blessed to have him in our lives.

Our hope is that you will all find inner strength to get you through this very sad and difficult time.

*Yours in sympathy,
The Bouvier Family*

Andy & Noella Bouvier - November 22, 2019 at 09:09 PM

SC

For the two Susans and the Kastner family, Shocked and saddened to hear about John. To be in his company was always a warm, interesting and revelatory experience. He was thoughtful, savvy and smart, a man with a singular interest in other people. We will cherish the memories of our talks and our walks along the beach at the yoga camp for the rest of our lives. With great affection, Susan and Patrick

susan swan and patrick crean - November 24, 2019 at 12:30 AM

DC

Only now catching up with the sad news, as I had not seen John in years. Worked with him briefly at the CBC in the early 1970s and greatly admired his talent (and was awed and rather jealous of the loving support he got from the other members of an abundantly talented family). Above all, I recall his humour. One day I came into the office wearing shades and carrying a sports bag. John instantly ID'd me as a member of the mafia bowling team. I have since tried to carry myself in a manner that would live up to this compliment, though I never knowingly met anybody from the mafia and never cared for bowling.

Don Cumming - November 22, 2020 at 04:58 PM