

Rob Phillips' full tribute to John Callos

On Tuesday, we lost another legend in our industry... John Callos was a true maverick. "One of a kind" was an understatement, and the mark he left on Phillips after more than 20 years of service to our company still shows up in what we do today. He was larger than life. For years, John held the world record for the highest solo glider flight, he was an intrepid marksman, but his true legacy in my humble opinion was the impression which he left on literally thousands of customers during his years at Phillips Industries. Industry veterans took joy in watching John present, and the poor rookies that sat in the front row of his training courses learned a quick lesson, which was that you should never show up unprepared. John was the one who was famously known throughout our industry as "the guy who'd write a part number backward on your forehead (with a black Sharpie) if you couldn't rattle it off during one of his presentations." He'd throw a pitcher of water on the crowd in order to demonstrate the importance of our parts being waterproof!" To this day, I don't know how he was able to do what he did without getting punched, but he carried himself like a king, and few people had the courage to challenge him.

So many life lessons that I learned from him... If he'd see me walking with my hands in my pocket, he'd quickly throw whatever he could at me, and say "Never walk with your hands in your pocket, Robby- it shows as weakness." I'd watch as he'd explain something I knew to be mundane to others, but as he described it, it was perceived as amazing!" He was the antithesis of mundane- he was a force. He was dramatic. He was the one everyone watched carefully, and respected, and looked up to. He was a bull in a china shop, and he made sure you knew him by the time he exited!

John's strong presence was matched with great accomplishment. He worked as an advisor to the President of the United States for the original drafting of the NAFTA Agreement. He was actively engaged with the leadership of the Port of Long Beach. He was on the Board of the Aquatics Capital of America and actively working to have the Olympics swimming and diving events held in Long Beach in 2028.

And, despite all of his impressive accomplishments, John was one of the most generous people I've ever met. He would literally give you the shirt of his back if he noticed you could use it. When I'd visit him, I had to be careful about the things in his home that I liked, because he'd practically force me to take it when I left.

In his prime, John and Rick Neill spent hundreds of hours sailing their 38' Catalina called "Wind Tamer" around Long Beach with customers, family, and friends... something John cherished.

To John Callos, we will miss you dearly, but you can smile from up there knowing that we heard your message loud and clear, and we're still practicing what you taught us generations ago, because they're in our blood, it's on the walls of our factories, and the soul of our businesses.

Rob Phillips, president and COO

Phillips Industries

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