



John Harvey Rountree

May 7, 1955 - April 22, 2026

John Harvey Rountree was born on May 7, 1955, in Wichita, KS. As a boy, he spent as much time as he could with his grandparents in the Wildhorse area of Osage County, OK. It was his Grandpa Cope who inspired John's love for the oil and gas industry, encouraging him to pursue his master's degree in petroleum geology at Oklahoma State University, where he graduated in 1979.

Along with being an oilman and businessman from a multigenerational oil family, John was also a rancher who cared deeply for his land, cattle, and horses, and a respected leader who believed his work was a form of service. John was a devoted family man. He was immensely proud of his daughters and grandchildren. He was rarely absent from a sporting event or school activity and never missed the opportunity to brag about the accomplishments of his children and grandchildren. As a fifth-degree black belt in Karate, John instructed and mentored countless students over the years, teaching not only discipline and skill, but respect, perseverance, and character.

Most importantly, John was a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ who lived his faith through action. He participated in international mission trips and prison ministry, using Karate demonstrations to build bridges, share hope, and spread the Gospel. He was a board member for the Omoribe Project, a ministry serving children and youth in Kenya. His life reflected servant leadership, helping the overlooked, encouraging the discouraged, and giving of himself without desire for recognition.

John was a man of deep character—tough, disciplined, and stubborn at times, yet profoundly caring, empathetic, and self-sacrificing. His faith in Jesus Christ shaped who he was at his core. He lived his beliefs quietly but boldly, showing them through humility, integrity, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to serve others. John could always be counted on to help, to listen, and to show up without hesitation. Though a man of few words, John's guidance was filled with wisdom and perception.

He always loved a good ribeye steak, had an encyclopedic knowledge of the back roads across Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas, & always knew the best restaurants in every place he traveled.

John entered the Kingdom of Heaven on April 22, 2026, survived by his daughters, Angelin Orloski and Leslie Rountree Smith; his grandsons, Zander Week, Kaden Week, and bonus granddaughter Olivia Week; his beloved aunt, Angelin Cope; his brothers, Norman and David Rountree; and many extended family members and friends whom he treated as family. He was a great father, grandfather, teacher, leader, and friend. He will be deeply missed and forever remembered by those whose lives he touched.

In lieu of flowers, the family welcomes donations to The Omoribe Project in honor of John. Contributions can be made through their website at <https://www.omoribeproject.org>.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

APR **30**. 10:00 AM (CT)

Bartlesville Community Hall at Community Center
300 SE Adams Blvd
Bartlesville, OK 74003

Tribute Wall

DD

“ Pt 1/3

The Gentle Way...of a Warrior

I was 18 years old when I met John Rountree. Denny Holzbauer was the chief instructor at Cornerstone ABKA and Dave Logsdon was the assistant torturer, lol. Dale Slone, Tad Bohlen, John Rountree and I were all brothers in a fighting family that gathered Tuesday nights. I drove over an hour to be a punching bag for men that would shape more than just my body. In hindsight, these beasts impacted my soul. I was a durable target, I suppose, and happy to bring something to the table. Each of these men quickly became spiritual pillars of accountability in my life.

Tad was an overachiever and reached black belt first. Dale had a few setbacks due to injuries but John and I tested together all the way thru to black. We were blood brothers, literally, and because of my collegiate schedule I missed a few promotions. John chose to wait and move up when we could test together, one of many sacrifices he made for not just me but many others. If Denny was our karate grandfather, Logsdon was our father. I'll never forget Nidan. John and I trained 100s of hours with Dave. I knew we were in trouble when he asked us to perform Heian Shodan and Dave stopped us on the first stance/block. He demanded perfection and over the next year he fine tuned everything, right down to our breath. I have never been more tired, more sore in my life. John never complained, not once. He might have been shorter than me but he was like my Big Brother.

I don't know if John Rountree's mentor was John Wayne, but our John, was a real cowboy. He practiced 360 kicks on bulls, seriously. From the way he told the story, they deserved it. Over the years, John and I went on many mission trips together, mainly to Guatemala a place near to John's heart. I will never forget one trip where Hurricane Stan, I believe, created mud slides and flooded one of the villages that we had planned to do a youth karate camp, if I recall. Well, the plans changed in terms of karate camp but with plane tickets purchased we went down together to join Nathan

Hardeman on a humanitarian effort. It was a mess and we understood we were the mules or muscle on this trip. Our destination was Quetzaltenango but the Mayans call it Xela (She-la) because the city was located in the mountains, surrounded by volcanoes. Nathan showed up before the sun rose in a pickup that was mounded like the Beverly Hillbillies wagon full of supplies. With photocopies of our passports in our shoes, a disposable camera and about \$60US we headed out on the adventure. I say adventure because John, Nathan and I in the tiny 40 year old Toyota driving thru the Guatemalan mountain pass looked like we were on the pages of National Geographic. It was cramped and while I don't scare easy watching Nathan back up on a one lane road because the road was washed out in front of us was terrifying. John never seemed to worry. A geologist by training, an oil and gas man in Oklahoma, he was loving the formations as I was checking my pants after staring down the 1000 foot cliff with no guard railing. We were the first team into the city and when we got out of the tiny truck it was like we were giants among kids. We may have looked tough but hauling 50lb sacks of beans and crates of water and bleach and coffee will take it out of most men at elevation...but John was just a different breed.

Danny DeMoss - April 30 at 03:07 PM

DD

“ Pt 2/3

Again, he never complained and did twice what the rest of us did while wearing cowboy boots. When I asked him if he was tired or sore, he just smiled. I remember lying outside that night looking at the stars and thinking that guy has to be tired but he woke up before me the next morning and when I got up at 6am he joked he didn't know we were sleeping in, lol. John had a phone that worked off of satellites before I knew that was a thing because he could check all his wells from some of the most remote parts of the world.

John kept me out of trouble. I remember a time that Tom locked the food pantry. We missed dinner one evening because John had taken the time to help Nathan. I can't remember the exact project but I think we jumped over on the construction team to build a small house/shanty for a woman with small children whose husband had kicked her out leaving her and the kids homeless. John had Nathan drive to a lumber yard and next thing I know he is telling me where to dig a hole for a support beam. John always had a heart for people and if somebody needed a hand he was going to see that they got back on their feet, personally. He would give you the shirt off his back and that day, he changed our plans just so some woman that we had never met had a roof over her head that evening. Well, we missed dinner and now the food was locked up. I was upset (to put it politely) and I told John do you want me to drag Tom out of bed by the feet to get the keys to the pantry or do you have a better idea. John said in his gentleman way, "why don't you let me handle it." Let's just say he was more diplomatic than I and negotiated a cold sandwich for us both. John was tough as nails but I never saw him raise his voice, not once in 32 years. He was famous for "well, here's the deal, the way I see it there's one of two things that are going to happen..."

Over the years, John walked several of our karate students down the aisle serving as a surrogate Dad to those who didn't have one. He helped pay for college for another student that was struggling. John had a barrel chest because God could barely fit the heart he gave him in his body is the way I see it. The way of the warrior is

thrown around in martial arts lore but when I think of John Rountree I can't help but think in his case it was the gentle way of a warrior. His mentorship and love he had for me as a brother helped make me into the man and father I am today....and I was not alone. He loved so many others. He was compassionate, giving, and kind which were so uncommon and foreign to me considering his cowboy like toughness. His skin was like the leather of a saddle but you would never meet a more gentle and kind man that was so passionate about helping those less fortunate.

Danny DeMoss - April 30 at 03:06 PM

“ Pt 1/2

A tribute to a life well lived. I met John Rountree when he walked into Denny Holzbauers dojo in 1995. He was a cowboy and I was a biker. Two of a kind in some ways yet total opposites in others. My first thoughts were this is going to be a problem. Besides As it turned out we thought a lot alike and became good brothers. I had doubts about John as well as myself as neither had any flexibility, talent or natural abilities not counting I had just turned 40 and John was only about a year behind me. We were just fighters at heart. Fortunately that is where Mr. Holzbauer was the inspiration as he had 7 years on me and could still run circles around us. One of my better memories of John was on our first prison trip together with Denny. We were working through Bill Glass Ministries at Amarillo Texas. I got sent to Dalhart medium security prison in Dalhart Texas where I came face to face with my own prejudices and where the Holy Spirit came over me. That Sunday afternoon when I got back to the situation room where we would meet before heading home. When I walked in the door my wife and John both said at the same time that I walked/floated in that door and both said I looked like I had a glow. That is where my life changed and will never forget John not only got to be a part of that but helped me so many times to keep going forward and let God do his work. From that point we were both hooked because we knew that was where God wanted us. Denny Holzbauer trained us not only in karate, but in mission work and life in general. Because they both shared a birthday I saw the true heart of God in both men yet they also showed grace in abundance. As I said in an earlier post I would have never gotten to black belt if John hadn't been there every Tuesday night encouraging me, pushing me, punching me in the head (yea he is one reason why I started having seizures. Too many concussions), but I would not trade that time for anything. We spent many hours together through the years between karate prisons, and missions John was always there encouraging in his smooth sort of way. John never quit. No matter how hard it got he showed a true heart for God and his friends. The biggest regret I have is the last few years we didn't spend more time together, but God took us in different

directions. John is one of a few special people that God chose to bring into my life. I feel special just because I got that privilege. For those who shared a part of his life count it as a major blessing from God.

Dale Slone - April 30 at 01:59 AM

DS

“ Pt 2/2

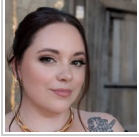
One of the things I didn't mention about John Rountree I think is very important. Shortly after John started in karate. Can't remember exact time but I remember the Tuesday evening when John came to class it was one of the few times I saw John down. He obviously had something heavy on his mind. He had passed out in class a couple weeks before but he just wrote it off as too long of days not enough sleep. What he told us broke our hearts. His doctor diagnosed him with Atrial defibulation, heart flutters, inconsistent blood flow. A death sentence in karate. I remember Mr. Holzbauer did not even hesitate he told us to gather around and lay hands on him and pray for God's divine healing. I was a brand new Christian, but I felt God move and I know there was a storehouse of emotions that night. See John had been around long enough because of his infectious nature we were all drawn to him. I don't know what went on in the hearts of all the brothers and sisters that prayed for John that night but I know mine was I want you to heal him God but I can't say I believed He would. Well we all know God chose to heal him for all the years he gave to all of us. True believers know that everything happens for a reason, even when we don't understand the reason. God gave John a brand new heart that night and he used it to glorify God without hesitation for the rest of his life. Sadly it was his time no matter how we wanted to look at it. God was ready to bring John home. He did his work here well. I have no doubt that one day John will hear the words directly out of Jesus' Mouth "Well done my good and faithful servant. My heart is breaking as I write this and I can't quit the tears, but most of all I can't say enough about how John touched so many lives, mine included. I love you brother and I miss you. You have left an empty spot in so many hearts, but that's for Jesus to fill us up more. Thank you brother until I see you again.

Dale Slone - April 30 at 01:58 AM

RT

“ Dear friends and family of Mr. John Rountree: Every Thursday night for perhaps 7 or 8 years I sat on a bench, watching the class as our son Jeremiah took instruction from Mr. Rountree and his black and brown belts. Mr. Rountree was a fine Christian man, an inspiration and role model for hundreds, maybe thousands of young people. And I praise God that he knew the meaning of "John 3:16." Dear Mr. Rountree, I look forward to seeing you again one day--thanks to our Lord and Savior who washed all our sins away. + Rev. Chris Tiews and family.

Rev. Dr. Christian Tiews - April 29 at 03:44 PM



“ There are people who come into your life for a season, and then there are those rare ones who quietly shape the entire course of it. Mr. John Rountree was that person for me.

My family and I were part of his very first karate class when he opened his dojo in 2001, and from that moment on, he became far more than just a Sensei. He was a steady presence through my childhood and teenage years. Someone who taught discipline, strength, respect, and faith, but more importantly, showed us what the way of the warrior can truly look like.

Through the ABKA karate program, I was given opportunities I never would have had otherwise. My sister and I were able to go on many mission trips including multiple to Guatemala and Nicaragua. Experiences that shaped how I see the world and my place in it. It's only now, as an adult, that I realize how much he quietly sacrificed and gave so others could go. That was who he was, never seeking credit, just paving the way and quietly funding opportunities.

Those mission trips didn't just impact my worldview, they helped define my future. Having the opportunity to travel with him to Nicaragua on veterinary mission trips was where I saw firsthand the impact of even the most basic veterinary care has in people's lives. Those experiences became a cornerstone of my journey into veterinary medicine.

When I was in high school, he opened another door for me, one that would ultimately shape my entire career. Knowing I had no experience with large animals especially cattle, he introduced me to Dr. Terry Hargis and helped create an opportunity for me to get my first job in a mixed animal veterinary clinic. That job carried me through the end of high school, undergrad, into veterinary school, and eventually brought me back after graduation.

When I look at my life and my career, I can clearly see the path and where he laid the first stones.

Mr. Rountree also shaped the way I understand education and success. I grew up being told that pursuing wealth was something worldly, and even wrong. But he quietly showed me that building a career isn't about personal gain. It's about what it allows you to give and build. He lived that out with humility, using what he had to serve

others and create opportunities without ever seeking recognition.

That example has stayed with me.

Beyond all of that, Mr. Rountree gave me something even more meaningful. Growing up, life wasn't always easy, and I didn't always have the best examples of what a healthy life lived by faith should look like, but through him I witnessed it firsthand.

He lived his faith in a way that was undeniable. He wasn't loud or performative, he was present, kind, and steady. He showed what the love of Christ looks like in action, not just words. Because of him, I understand what true faith looks like, not spoken loudly, but lived consistently.

He didn't just teach karate.

He didn't just mentor students.

He built people. He changed lives. He changed mine.

There's no way to fully express the gratitude I have for the role he played in shaping who I am today. But I hope he knew that through the lives he touched, the paths he helped create, and the people who carry his lessons forward that his impact was immeasurable.

A truly one-of-a-kind man.

A true cowboy, geologist, sensei, and a quiet example of faith done right.

"A saddle sits empty," as Chris LeDoux once said... but I have no doubt heaven gained one hell of a cowboy.



Michelle Marlow - April 28 at 06:14 PM

CV

“ A non-verbatim conversation that sums up a core facet of John Rountree's character and toughness.

Me at the beginning of karate class: "Why is your leg bandaged?"

Mr. Rountree, taking off his boots: "Got bit by a snake in the field."

Me: (somewhat alarmed) "Did you go to the doctor?"

Mr. R: "No, we weren't done working."

Me: "What kind of snake got you?"

Mr. R: "Rattlesnake"

Me: (visible bewilderment)

Mr. R: (unconcerned)

Me: "Those are the venomous, right?"

Mr. R: "....well....yeah"

Me: (visible bewilderment mixed with concern)

Mr. R: ".....it'll be fine. It's usually fine." (still unconcerned and smirking)

Sensei Rountree mode to the whole class: "Line up!"

....just a day in the life of a rancher/oilman/karate guy.

As another student reminded me, this didn't happen only once.

Christa Vance - April 28 at 12:55 PM

“ I started in the first class of his first dojo on 9/19/2001. He taught me SO MUCH and set the gold standard for martial arts instructors, mentors, and men of God.

He was powerful, kind, patient, and humble. A man of faith. Any of the ego driven, power tripping "Senseis" I have ran across since just cannot compete. One of a kind, a true cowboy Sensei.

Power: I remember him stepping in and fighting a much higher ranking, larger student who was honestly just sparring WAY too hard for my age, rank, and size. He didn't break his ribs or anything, but that young man was gassed and humbled.

Kind: "suffer the children". There was no problem too great or too small to bring to him. If it was important to you, if it hurt your heart he would listen. It takes a special kind of heart to listen to the trials and tribulations of a teenager.

Patient: He ran a dojo with other black belts, many who we know and love for their strong personalities. He navigated these often stormy waters with his own classic brand of patience.

Humble: He quietly paid for me and my sister, and other students' mission trip fees, never said it was him. Just a simple, "You can go now".

*Faith: He was a man of a quiet, powerful faith, the kind that swept the entire skyline his favorite country artist, Chris Ledoux, loved to sing about. A faith which could move mountains. He would testify to anyone, but perhaps more importantly he *embodied* it. He lived it day to day, breath to breath.*

To paraphrase Chris Ledoux, today a saddle sits empty, and there's one hell of a cowboy in heaven at that big rodeo in the sky.

Goodbye, sir, until we meet again.

Jane - April 28 at 09:56 AM

GI

“ 34 files added to the tribute wall



Garrison Infield - April 27 at 07:37 PM

CV

“ 30 files added to the tribute wall



Christa Vance - April 27 at 06:14 PM

“There are a handful of people who have altered the trajectory of my life and Mr. Rountree, my beloved instructor, is one of them.

I was part of the Eastwood karate class when it first started, almost 25 years ago (September 2001) and his few well-timed words helped change the course of the next two decades, and I'm not the only one for whom that is true.

"I'm proud of you because you did something hard. (pause, focused like I was the only one there) Your best is always good enough." Mr. Rountree stated this on the heels of a notable all-eyes-on-me failure in class as a beginner, with tears blurring my vision, wishing to disappear.

Instead of adding martial arts to the list of things I failed at, Mr. Rountree countered my humiliation with respect. That moment solidified my commitment to the sport, class, and organization. Had he responded differently, the next 20+ years may have unfolded differently as well.

Attached are photos from mission teams in Nicaragua, Guatemala, China, and Palestine/Israel. Story time...

Nicaragua: As an experienced rancher, he was the farm animal vaccinator at each rural home around the villages. Consequently, whole families would listen to the Gospel. At the end of the first trip, if memory serves me, his small vet team recorded almost as many positive responses to the Gospel as all the other teams combined. Mr. Rountree would stick 'em then Dale Slone would share. They even treated a monkey once!

The "helicopter bull" is a favorite piece of mission lore. A bull was secured to a semi-dead tree to be treated. The bull pulled it out of the ground in protest, but with the rope still holding fast, the trunk gave a propeller-like impression as the bull tried to free himself of the unwelcome accessory.

Mr. Rountree, your best is far more than "good enough". You are missed and loved, and we are all so proud of you. Thank you for living Jesus so well.

Christa Vance - April 27 at 06:14 PM