

Born to an aviation family in Indio, California in 1947, John Penney was raised through his childhood years near Sacramento in a small town called Elk Grove. After high school, he attended one year of college at Cal-Poly, San Luis Obispo before winning an appointment to the Air Force Academy where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant on 3 June, 1970. During his Academy years he built model airplanes, flew sailplanes, earned a degree in aeronautical engineering, and asked his now wife of 38 years, Stephanie, if she would marry him. He thinks she deserves to still wonder if she made a wise decision!...

John finished pilot training at Vance AFB in 1971, graduating number one in his class and went on to graduate from A-7D training at Davis-Monthan AFB as "Top Gun" in his class. He flew 140 missions in Southeast Asia through the end of the war, flew as an A-7D instructor afterwards and had a tour as a FAC before leaving the Air Force in 1979 to fly for United Airlines. Immediately laid off from United in 1979, John landed a job with the Lear Fan Corporation at Reno Stead Airport where he worked for the next five and a half years as an engineer and test pilot. During his tenure at Reno-Stead Airport John became associated with and joined the "Rare Bear" Air Racing Team and flew in his first National Championship Air Race in September 1985.

While living in Reno, John kept his hand in military aviation by joining the Nevada Air National Guard, flying the RF-4C Phantom II. He also started his own business, MiG Masters, flight testing and instructing in numerous types of US and foreign military surplus jets over the years including the MiG-15, MiG-17, MiG-21, T-33, F-86, Dornier Alpha-Jet, TS-11 Iskra, and L-39.

Since retiring as a Boeing 747-400 captain from United Airlines in May of 2007, John Penney stays active with his MiG Masters LLC business, examining candidates in the various jet aircraft and continues as one of many dedicated team members of the "Rare Bear" Air Racing Team for which he has won 4 Unlimited Gold National Championships at Reno and two at the Phoenix 500 Air Races.

Stephanie and John now enjoy the serenity of Evergreen, Colorado, relish the visits from their twin daughters, Jill and Heather, and treasure the time spent with their granddaughters, four year old Sierra and two year old Mercedes.