



John Shosky

November 1, 1955 - May 6, 2024

John Shosky passed away in Alexandria, Virginia, where he resided. John was an accomplished speechwriter and author. As a national high school debate champion, he had the gift of eloquently presenting his ideas to the world.

He earned his PhD in Law and Philosophy and became a speech writer for five presidential administrations and numerous cabinet members. Dr. Shosky has served in the Reagan, Bush (41), and Bush (43) Administrations, working in the Executive Office of the President, White House Public Affairs, The Department of Health and Human Services, The Department of Education, and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Throughout his illustrious career, John poured his heart and soul into his work, crafting over 2800 speeches for government officials, political candidates, university presidents, and public interest advocates. This dedication amounted to roughly seven million words on the public record, a testament to his unwavering commitment to his craft.

He has also worked extensively for clients in the private sector as the president of Roncalli Communications, Inc.

In addition, Dr. Shosky has published more than seventy articles or editorials.

He authored two books: *Speaking to Lead*, London: Bite Back Publishing 2010, and *The Words of our Time*, London: Bite Back Publishing 2012.

John was also an accomplished educator. He taught more than 200 university undergraduate and graduate-level courses. Most recently, Dr. Shosky was a professor at American University in Washington, D.C., and a visiting senior member at Linacre College, University of Oxford. He also served as a visiting fellow at the Institute of Logic, Czech Academy of Science, throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s.

His educational experiences include:

Ph.D. Philosophy, American University
MA Philosophy, University of Wyoming
B.A. Political Science, Colorado College

John's love for his friends was as deep as his passion for travel, dining, fine art, and excellent literature. His mother's early encouragement to explore the world of books led him to become incredibly well-read, with a vast library of the greatest books on earth. This love for literature was just one facet of his rich and diverse personality.

For over thirty years, John maintained a strong friendship with his neighbors. He was known to be kind, supportive, and interested in those who lived around him. He loved walking his dog Oxford, a neighborhood favorite and was always happy to stop and chat. His presence in the neighborhood will surely be missed.

He is survived by his sister, Dr. Carole Ricotta.

He was predeceased by his father, Alexander "Babe" Shosky, brother Donald

Shosky (Shirley), sister Deborah “Debbie” (Shosky) Billings (Dan), Dr. Frank J. Ricotta Sr. (brother-in-law), and his mother Barbara Shosky.

He is also survived by two lifelong friends, David Quayle and Mark Carmel, who will forever cherish the memories they shared with him.

Tribute Wall

KM

“ John and I dated in college. He introduced me to Bertrand Russell and The Rolling Stones. I moved to Berkeley and we lost touch. It's shocking he died so young. Condolences to John's family and friends.

Karen Meckstroth - March 21 at 06:33 PM

TG

“ I just learned my cousin John Shosky passed away. I wondered why my birthday cards came back. We share the same birthday Nov 1st. When I was a small child he would speed read to me. He tried to teach me. He would say just pick out the important words Traci, that's all it is. John was the sweetest, kindness man. He had such a big heart. His mom my aunt , would always say John says hi in all the cards she sent to me. John I so loved you. Love you your cousin (Traci Gale)Traci MIDDELKAMP

traci Gale - February 09 at 02:38 PM

PB

“ I have just found out about John's passing. He was a generous, charming, super-smart gentleman. We had common interests - dogs, communication, and coaching. We sometimes followed each other when giving storytelling classes in the U.K. - which meant that this giant of a person often - very generously - introduced ME: meanwhile I was the one who learned from HIM. He loved dogs and always asked after my Jack Russell Buster. He loved his jazz and got us front row seats at his beloved Blues Alley Club in Georgetown. He loved the town of Oxford - visiting and enjoying it as well as working in it. He at least knew he made my life richer - for which I am hugely thankful. Without him it is poorer. RIP gentle generous man.

Peter Botting - July 13, 2025 at 03:01 PM

KF

“ I just learned of John Shosky’s passing. He is the single most influential person in my life, and I so wish I could have shared more time with him. I had him as a professor in 2009 and 2010. He mentored me and taught me how to navigate the complex world of DC and government. I thank him for his support in my career, finding my passion in life, and the many others I have passed his lessons on to. My only hope is that he knew how special and profoundly impactful his teachings were. Thank you Professor Shosky.

Katie F. - June 28, 2025 at 10:41 PM

DS

He was my great uncle. I never met him but how was he influential too your life

Danny Shosky - March 05 at 02:22 PM



“ Condolences to his family



Carson Loveless - May 07, 2025 at 05:37 AM

GR

“ I met John in Grad School in 1981. He introduced me to Flash, Allen Ginsberg, and so much more. Over the years, whenever I was in DC we'd get together. I was gutted yesterday when I couldn't reach him about my upcoming visit. He was such an interesting person who loved books, travel, learning, debating almost anything, music, and laughter. My last trip, and the last time I saw him, he took me to the Blues Alley Club. A wonderful evening I will now treasure. I will say, that whatever he introduced me to, it was something I wouldn't have thought of myself. I will miss him beyond measure. I hope has found comfort.

Geri Rhoades - January 11, 2025 at 07:54 AM

KG

“ During an exchange with another student during class at American University, John Shosky said something about Wittgenstein's Tractatus I believed was factually incorrect. I lingered after class, waiting for other students to fade away, and quietly showed him the passage saying exactly the opposite. “Why didn't you say something?” he asked, emphatic and perplexed. I wouldn't challenge somebody I respected, and risk embarrassing him. He encouraged me to be assertive - one of many lessons I take from him, his Philosophy classes, and his mentorship of our Philosophy club. I was terrified asking him to write me a grad school letter, but his reaction felt genuinely joyful. I admire the depth of his classes and his passion for Philosophy. It's many years later, I'm a Professor of Psychology, and I thought of writing him another thank you, but just discovered he passed. I wish I got to know him better. My condolences to his family and friends. Rest in peace, Dr. Shosky. ~ Katie 🌸💚

Katie Hope Grobman - January 04, 2025 at 09:37 PM

DE

“ I was just notified of Dr. Shosky's passing. Way back in 2016, as a new staffer, I took his public speaking training. We had a great and memorable back and forth over my style (or lack there of). I have presented over 800 times since then. I have never forgotten his lessons. He made me a better speaker and presenter.

Dena Espenscheid - August 28, 2024 at 07:02 PM

LA

“ He was attentive to those he taught, and was able to bring out the best in people, and help them see a path to success.

Lauren - June 15, 2024 at 11:30 PM

KT

“ I've known John Shosky since early childhood in Colorado and I don't ever remember hearing him speak ill of or to someone. He will be greatly and sadly missed.

Ken Thompson - May 17, 2024 at 05:12 PM

MM

I only knew John for several years, However I saw him often and we spoke together a lot. I truly treasure to be able to call a person of his caliber my friend. The most outstanding feature in his character was his humility. For his scholarship, he was so so humble. I will say something that might be hard on his kin and closest friends - he lived a very difficult life in his last few years because of his health. believe it or not he is happy now. I never thought saying this was appropriate but I think he would want for those who care to know that!
Massoud Medghalchi

Massoud Medghalchi - May 21, 2024 at 04:55 PM

PD

I grew up with John Shosky in Colorado. He was always kind and respectful. Was hoping he would be at the class reunion this fall. Rest in peace, John. We will miss you.

PAULA DEMCHUK - May 22, 2024 at 08:31 AM

RF

John and I were graduate students in philosophy together at The American University. I am sorry to learn of his passing.

Robin Friedman - May 07, 2025 at 08:07 PM