



## John W. Shirley

August 18, 1931 - October 7, 2025

### John W. Shirley

Jock Shirley died peacefully on October 7. Born in 1931 in Hailsham, England of an American father and English mother, he was sent from the age of six to boarding schools in France, Croatia, and Hungary. He and his father spent the war years in Hungary, where they were trapped after the Hungarian declaration of war against the US. Despite being “enemy aliens” they were treated with consideration. With the German occupation of Hungary in 1944, they went into hiding, surviving the siege of Budapest and the early months of Soviet occupation. These experiences gave him a lifelong hatred of extremism of the left and the right. Returning to the US he graduated from the Augusta Military Academy and Georgetown University School of Foreign Service. Following four years in the US Air Force, stationed in Germany, he joined the Foreign Service. During a thirty-year career at the US Information Agency, posted overseas and in Washington, he was a legendary figure among his colleagues and, for six months in 1981, served as acting Director of USIA. He spoke six foreign languages at a professional level. In 1984 he was named US Ambassador to Tanzania, retiring in 1986. Eventually he and his wife Kathy moved to Stonington, CT, where he pursued his lifelong passions for riding, sailing, and rowing. In retirement he founded and then shepherded a scholarship program, still flourishing 34 years later, at Sarospatak, the school he attended in Hungary. In 2016 he moved to the Waverly Heights retirement community in Gladwyne, PA. Jock is survived by his wife of 57 years

Katherine, his daughters Pamela and Jeanie Shirley, seven grandchildren, and seven great-grandchildren. Jock Shirley lived a life of integrity and honor. He was amusing, kind, and chivalrous. Unforgettable to all who knew him. Service will be private.

# Tribute Wall

SB

“ Although we saw Kathy and Jack rarely in recent years, knowing that he's not there any more is profoundly saddening. I'll try no fancy writing nor amusing anecdotes because my memory of Jock is so simple. He was the best diplomat I ever saw in action, and a reliable and wise friend. The times we worked together were also the greatest fun imaginable.

*Stan Burnett*

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**stan burnett** - March 14 at 08:32 PM

CH

“ Jock was one of the people I admired most in the Foreign Service. I believe he mentored many younger officers, certainly me among them. Thank you, Jock, for your guidance and encouragement and for steering our Agency as Counselor through thick and thin. One could not ask for a better role model. With gratitude, Chris Henze

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**Christopher Henze** - January 29 at 06:29 AM

KA

“ Kathy – I'm so sorry for your loss. Jock was the last of an elegant, honorable generation – a true gentleman, statesman and friend. I mourn his loss because he was a walking history book who could make sense of things and then give his thoughts on the matter. I loved his writing – it managed to be eloquent and insightful at the same time. Jock - thank you for helping my dad and me with his memoirs. When we spoke last, you said you weren't too religious, but you looked forward to attending that big cocktail party in heaven. Gini and I discussed that at 94, you would be arriving fashionably late. Say hello to my Aunt Pat and my dad for me! I'll raise a glass to you this evening. Love, Karen

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**Karen Ahearn** - October 10, 2025 at 01:54 PM