



P. John Whitsett

AUG 8, 1947 - OCT 28, 2025



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HOLLY & SONS

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P. John Whitsett

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P. John Whitsett

August 8, 1947 – October 28, 2025

P. John Whitsett passed away on October 28, 2025, surrounded by the love of his family. Born on August 8, 1947, he lived a life defined by curiosity, creativity, and connection.

John was preceded in death by his beloved mother, Shirley Louise Whitsett, and is survived by his devoted wife, Sue Whitsett; his brother Stephen R. Whitsett (Charisse); children Stephen L. Whitsett (Dawn), Kimberley E. Johnson (Brent), and Jackie E. Morris (Bryan); stepchildren Kelly S. Lawler (Chad) and Greg K. Dewing (Lyndsey); and grandchildren Grant, Jordan, Jocelyn, Fiona, Vivian, Reid, Avery, Bladen, Hadley, Aiden, and Lehna, who all lovingly knew him as Papa John.

John was a lifelong teacher at heart—both in the classroom and beyond. His passion for science and discovery earned him the Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching (PAEMST), and he served as President of the National Science Teaching Association (NSTA), and President of Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers (WSST) where his enthusiasm for learning inspired countless others. We were always learning through his analytical nature as a chemist—his ability to see patterns, ask questions, and turn ordinary moments into opportunities for discovery.

A true Renaissance spirit, John found joy in many pursuits. He was a chef-level cook who believed that meals were meant to be shared—with good wine, smooth bourbon, and plenty of conversation. He loved travel, camping trips, and days on the lake with family. His handcrafted woodworking projects remain cherished reminders of his creativity, precision, and love.



Obituary

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John's humor was quick and perfectly timed; he could make anyone laugh, even in the hardest moments. His sharp mind, humble confidence, and gentle presence made him a steady and unforgettable part of every room.

To his children, John was a guiding light—a hero whose wisdom, patience, and humor shaped who they are today. He loved them deeply and took great pride in watching each of them build lives centered on family, fueled by an intellectual spark, and grounded in compassion—values he modeled every day.

He loved his family deeply—his wife, his children, and his grandchildren—and found great joy in watching his blended “Brady Bunch” grow together. He treated his stepchildren with the same love and pride he gave his own, never making distinctions between them. In everything he did, he made it clear that family was chosen as much as it was given—and he always chose love.

John and Sue shared a partnership built on laughter, deep respect, and unwavering love. They were true companions and soulmates—best friends who built a life rich with warmth, good food, and shared adventures.

Above all, John lived as a man of integrity who believed that life should be experienced fully—with love, learning, and gratitude. His legacy continues in every meal shared, every project built, every story told, and every spark of wonder passed down through his family.

A celebration of John's life will be held at a later date, where family and friends will gather to toast a man who truly knew how to live. Holly Funeral Home of Waupaca is assisting the family with arrangements.



Events

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Cemetery Details



Holly Cremation Service

Waupaca WI



Tribute Wall

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AR

Arundhati posted:

Dear Sue - Just learnt from FB about your loss. I am truly very sorry for the loss of your love, companion and cheer leader. We remember John so well from our fellowship days. My sincere and deep condolences to you and your family on this loss. In sympathy, Arundhati & Maddury

February 7 at 7:42 AM

BF

Bob Friedel posted:

Just found out yesterday. John was a true science education ambassador. Always greatly enjoyed talking with him. I will miss him. Bob Friedel

December 9 at 7:00 AM

LS

Linda Shott posted:

To the family of John W. I am sending my prayers and deepest condolences. I only knew John briefly through NSTA but working with him and Sue was an honor and privilege of a lifetime. May you have all the love and support you will ever need to see you through the loss of such a great man. Linda (and Rick) Shott

November 24 at 4:20 PM

JH

Joan Markos-Horejs posted:

I was so sorry to read about your losing John. I have good memories of times shared when we taught at Central High School. He was a dedicated educator, who made a significant contribution to his profession. Tom and I want to extend our sincere sympathy. Joan Markos Horejs

November 12 at 5:21 AM

GD

Grand View Family Dentistry planted a Memorial Tree in honor of P. John.



November 6 at 10:03 AM



Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Serene Retreat to the Whitsett family.



November 6 at 10:03 AM



Pat Shane posted:

John was such an incredible friend and mentor...and even shared the same birthday with me! He was NSTA Retiring President (but was anything but retiring!) when I was President-Elect, and he kindly showed me "the ropes." A long friendship was forged during this time and endured. I looked forward to my "John sightings" wherever they might happen. He is loved, his hugs will be missed, but he lives on in my heart.

November 4 at 4:05 PM



Mary Ellen Kanthack posted:

John is truly a special person! He was my mentor for my PAEMST awards. His encouragement, especially when I wanted to quit, his wisdom, and his insight to my own good teaching has meant the world to me. You have my deepest sympathy and know that many hearts are broken to know of his passing, but he has left the world a better place for so many. In my heart, I celebrate his life and the influence he had on me.

November 2 at 4:33 AM



Kathy Cady posted:

My deepest sympathies to you Sue and family. What an honor it was to be influenced by John's passion for science education. I feel so lucky to have crossed paths. Sending love your way. - Kathy Cady

November 1 at 9:32 AM



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MR

Mary Richards posted:

Sue and family, My sympathies go out to you with John's passing. He was truly an inspiration in the world of science, education, and living life. He touched so many lives and left many torches to carry on the love of learning. I can only imagine the new science activities being organized from the heavens above. Mary Richards

October 31 at 8:24 AM

MY

Mary Kay York November 13 at 5:21 AM

Dear Sue, I was so saddened to hear of John's passing from Al Hovey! He was a very talented leader of so many science efforts both on the State of Wisconsin and at the national level. Science World was fortunate to have him on the staff! He will certainly be missed in all his efforts in education community. Peace be with you and your family!

DM

Dennis McCulley November 3 at 6:01 AM

Dear Sue, I was saddened to hear of John's passing. He truly stood as a giant in WSST and science teaching in general. So many lives have been enriched by John and this legacy will live on for generations to come. Sending you healing, Denise McCulley

SN

Sharon Nelson October 31 at 2:24 PM

Dear Sue-I'm heartbroken over this loss of a dear friend. John will be missed by so many. Healing to you in the days ahead.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring P. John by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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