



John Roy Oleson

October 12, 1930 - July 6, 2022

John R. Oleson, a retired US Foreign Service Officer and Development Advisor, died on July 6 in Towson, MD, of complications related to dementia. He was 91.

He was born on October 12, 1930 in Waukesha, WI, to Emil Oleson, a dairyman, and Arline Oleson (nee Wittig), and was raised with a sister, Monica Steger. His family then moved to New Jersey where he attended the public schools of Elizabeth and Cranford. He went on to attend Harvard College where he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and graduated with high honors in Economics in 1952. After attending the University of Copenhagen for a year under a Fulbright fellowship, he entered Harvard Law School where he was elected to the Board of Student Advisors and graduated with honors in 1956. He was then admitted to the Illinois bar and became an associate of a major Chicago law firm.

While at law school, he met Mary Elizabeth Russell of Saco, ME, then attending Wellesley College, and they married in 1957.

In 1958, he joined the career foreign service of the Department of State. He had assignments in the Bureau of Economic Affairs in Washington, DC, and in its overseas missions in Bilbao and Mexico City. In 1965, he transferred to the Agency for International Development. He initially was an Attorney Advisor to

the Bureau of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs and then became the regional legal advisor to the USAID Missions in Colombia and Ecuador while stationed in Bogota. He later became the Assistant Director for Operations in the USAID Mission to Colombia until his return to Washington in 1970 to attend the Department of State's Senior Seminar in Foreign Policy. Upon graduating the following year, he undertook a series of overseas assignments as Director of the USAID Missions to Paraguay (1971 - 1973), Bolivia (1973 - 1976), and Honduras (1979 - 1981) and as Deputy Director of the USAID Mission to Egypt (1976 - 1979). His time in Egypt spanned the several years leading to and just after the Camp David Accords during which time the US assistance program to Egypt was increased enormously.

John and Mary returned to the DC area early in 1982, residing in Chevy Chase, MD. After serving as Director of the Office of Central American Affairs and of the Office of Andean Affairs in USAID's Bureau of Latin American and Caribbean Affairs, he became that Bureau's Deputy Assistant Administrator for Program.

He retired from the Senior Foreign Service in 1985 with the rank of Minister Counselor. Remaining in the DC area, he undertook an active career of consulting on various aspects of development work. He was particularly active in efforts in Latin America involving reforms to the justice sector. He retired from consulting work in 2000 whereupon he and his wife moved to Baltimore.

John and Mary loved to visit museums and attend theater, concerts, and opera in Baltimore, Washington D.C., and New York City; they maintained their life-long love of travel both throughout the US and abroad; and, they delighted in attending and following the activities of their three beloved grandsons.

He has been predeceased by his parents and his sister, Monica Steger Rusk,

as well as her husband, Daniel Rusk. He is survived by his wife of sixty-four years; his daughter, Lisa Meagher, and her husband, Brendan; his sons, Neil and Eric Oleson; and his grandsons, Declan and Finnian Meagher and Jasper Davenport.

In keeping with his wishes, a memorial service will not be held. In lieu of flowers, please send a donation either to Harvard University or the educational institution of your choice or to one of his favored charities: AMFAR, AFSC, the ACLU, the Center for Constitutional Rights and the United Way.

Tribute Wall

FT

“ *RIP John. Fond memories from our Harvard Law days,*

Frank Titus - July 19, 2022 at 10:31 AM

MW

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with you as I remember John with great affection. Hugs, Maria Elena*

Maria Elena Weissman - July 12, 2022 at 12:19 PM

HA

“ *With love,*

Holly and Angus - July 11, 2022 at 08:47 PM

AO

“ *We are deeply sorry for your loss ~ Simplicity Cremation & Funeral Services*

A Memorial Tree was planted for John Roy Oleson - July 08, 2022 at 09:24 AM