



John Francis Phillips Jr

February 5, 2026

John Francis Phillips, Jr., age 90, of Florence, AL, passed away on February 5, 2026. A Celebration of Life will be held later this spring in Florence, AL.

John was born in Naugatuck, CT, and was the oldest of three children. He earned advanced degrees in chemistry and met the love of his life, Janelle T. Smith, while completing his Ph.D. in inorganic chemistry at Georgia Tech in 1964. John and Janelle married in 1963 and moved to Richland, Washington, where John worked at the Hanford Site until 1967.

There, he led teams and developed more efficient methods for uranium enrichment. While living out west, John and Janelle enjoyed snow skiing and camping in the desert. The Phillips later moved to Florence, AL, after John was hired as a full professor of chemistry at the University of North Alabama. He taught for several years before joining the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), where he worked at the National Fertilizer Development Center and later in the biomass division. In the late 1980s, he was hired by the Strategic Defense Initiative in Huntsville, AL.

John led large teams in advanced technology development programs supporting missile defense systems. Many of his teams' accomplishments remain in use today. He retired in 2005.

He was active in his community, volunteering as a poll worker and leading Neighborhood Watch in the Bailey Springs community. John was an excellent gardener who maintained an orchard, vineyard, vegetable gardens, and lower gardens. He enjoyed making wine and beer and sharing them with friends and family. John never met a stranger.

He loved reading science fiction, listening to Mozart and other classical composers, and studying astronomy, photography, history, and genealogy. He was a longtime member of the American Chemical Society and especially enjoyed fly fishing.

John cherished time with his family and took trips to Oregon with his children to visit the Willamette Valley. He loved walking with his grandchildren. He and Janelle enjoyed traveling and attending concerts together, especially Handel's Messiah during the Christmas season.

John was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Janelle, who passed away on February 25, 2020; his infant son, Baby Phillips; his brother, William Phillips; his sister, Mary Lou Matteo; his father, John F. Phillips, Sr.; and his mother, Mary Roche.

He is survived by his daughter, Mary C. Crowell (né e Phillips) and her husband Wesley; his son, John F. Phillips III and his wife Kayla; and his grandchildren, Liliun Crowell, Keaton Phillips, and Atley Phillips.

John was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, friend, and human being. He was kind, hardworking, intelligent, very funny, and deeply beloved by his family. He will be greatly missed.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to John & Janelle Phillips most beloved charity - SafePlace, Inc. for Domestic Violence Shelter located in Florence, Al-

P.O. Box 1456 Florence, AI 35631

Tribute Wall

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“ *I met John working out at the ymca. We always talked and I told him about ILR. He started going to those classes too. He told me about his family.*

Phil Abroms - March 26 at 10:38 AM