



John H. Otenasek

June 19, 1965 - October 31, 2025

John Hayes Otenasek passed away peacefully on October 31, 2025. Born in Baltimore on June 19, 1965, John was the fifth of the six children of Dr. Richard J. and Margaret “Peggy” B. Otenasek, Jr. John grew up in a loving, busy family. His outgoing, fun-loving personality made him a favorite among family, friends, and neighbors. John’s childhood antics inspired many funny stories, retold with laughter over the years. A graduate of Loyola Blakefield High School, he briefly attended the University of Delaware. He was on the staff at Gould Farm, a residential therapeutic community in rural western Massachusetts, where he had earlier been a guest. Later, John served as the Director of VOCAL (Virginia Organization of Consumers Assisting Leadership) where he trained people with mental illness as a WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) facilitator. After working as the Executive Director of On Our Own of Howard County, he was a Peer Support Specialist at Sheppard Pratt Hospital. John’s long and difficult battle with his own mental health made him a compassionate, insightful, and dedicated advocate for those bearing similar burdens. He worked tirelessly and courageously to maintain his own health while supporting those in need and crisis. Over the years, John’s struggles took a greater and greater toll on him. Through the ravages of mental illness, our beloved John became truly lost to his family and friends. We are eternally grateful for the “angels” John met along his lonely and desolate way. These were kind healthcare workers, compassionate street missionaries, and generous and anonymous men and women that John randomly encountered.

We are blessed to be able to bring our dear brother home to rest with his parents and his sister, Anne Lindsey Otenasek, who was killed in the 1988 bombing of Pan Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. John is survived by his loving siblings, Catherine O. Levitas (Michael), E. Page Kozak (Mark), Richard J. Otenasek III (Sallie), and Francis H. Otenasek (Courtney); his cherished nieces and nephews Anne L. Kozak, Michael E. Kozak (Nushi), David T. Kozak (Megan), Daniel Levitas Deabler (Gabrielle), Matthew P. Levitas (Morgan), Benjamin D. Levitas (Melanie), R. Joseph Otenasek IV, Chase M. Otenasek, Jeffrey D. Otenasek, Heath S. Otenasek, Blake W. Otenasek, and Drue C. Otenasek; and four great nieces and nephews.

A funeral mass will be held on Saturday, November 15 at 11 am at Cathedral of Mary our Queen, with visitation from 10 am - 10:50 am. The family kindly asks that in place of flowers, donations be made in John's name to Gould Farm, Attn: Development, 100 Gould Road, PO Box 157, Monterey, MA 01245.

Cemetery Details

St. Mary's Homeland

233 Homeland Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21212

Previous Events

Visitation

NOV 15. 10:00 AM - 10:50 AM (ET)

Cathedral Mary Our Queen
5200 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21210

Funeral Mass

NOV 15. 11:00 AM (ET)

Cathedral Mary Our Queen
5200 N. Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21210

Tribute Wall

DB

“ John and I led the farm department together for more than a year. He gave his best through the easy and the hard times. I have good memories of our work with the people, animals and machines of our daily lives.

I'm sad that his illness took such a toll on John and on all you dear ones in the family as he kept his journey. We wanted so much to be there with you today. We prayed into the 11 o'clock hour with you.

Thanks for your family's extreme generosity to Gould Farm and good will to us as we made that work our life.

Peace now to John, peace to each of you,

Wayne and Donna Burkhart

Donna and Wayne Burkhart - November 15, 2025 at 09:49 PM

WB

“ I last saw John about seven years ago. I was at University Midtown hospital to conduct hearings. I walked onto the ward and a voice said. “I know you!” When I turned to look at the face, I recognized it despite the long hair and longer beard. I said, “Yes you do!” We spoke for a few minutes and despite his illness, I knew he had the same heart and the same kindness. I know this has been a difficult journey for John and the entire family. But I am glad he is at peace with Lindsey and their parents. May the Angels lead John into paradise. One more angel in heaven watching over us.

Willis Gunther Baker - November 12, 2025 at 04:41 PM

MQ

“ *A truly kind soul / rest in peace John*

Maureen Quinn - November 06, 2025 at 09:21 PM

SK

“ I had not seen John for a very long time. My recollections of him date back to our days at the Cathedral School, where he often spent time with my brother Laszlo. My abiding memories are of John’s decency, intelligence and fun. He had a quiet dignity. Even though he was four years younger than me—just a kid in my eighth-grade eyes—I always enjoyed having him around.

I don’t recall seeing him since. He went off to Loyola, my brother and I to Calvert Hall, and from there all of us went our own separate ways to college. Looking back now fifty years, I am struck by the ordinariness of it all, that we took our grade-school friendships with an ease and casualness that was oblivious to the passage of time and the fates which would ultimately befall us. It was nothing extraordinary; we simply hung out together after school.

I knew nothing of John’s life after Cathedral. My connections with the Otenasek family were renewed only by Lindsey’s tragic death on Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie. Lindsey was too young to register during my Cathedral days. I saw her a few times at the Otenaseks, but I didn’t know her. Still, I find I can’t quite relegate that tragedy to the past, almost forty years later. These sorts of events claim a little piece of you, even at a distance.

When I knew John, he was full of promise, someone I suppose I assumed would become a doctor or lawyer. There was no sign at the time of his trials to come. I knew nothing of it until the obituary. I recall him as a wonderful boy and a good friend to my brother and one of the kids in the neighborhood who formed our daily realities. Those are good memories.

With that, let me express my condolences to the Otenasek family. We mourn with you.

*Steve Kopits
Wellfleet, Massachusetts*

Steven Kopits - November 05, 2025 at 12:16 PM

JE

“ *John, first met you in Kindergarten at St. Mary’s, then as freshmen at LHS. You were always kind to others, and a source of cheer (and we definitely borrowed forgotten books from each other a few times!)*

When we caught up as adults, you shared your struggles but also how you were helping others overcome theirs.

Wishing you peace my friend!

Jerry Egan - November 04, 2025 at 10:58 PM

SS

“ *News of John's passing came as a blow to what I call the pantheon of great Gould Farmers. His particular mixture of dedication, competence, wit and compassion made him a valued and cherished member of the community. It is difficult to think of him no longer walking among us but memories of his presence will endure fondly among all who were privileged to know him.*

Steve Snyder - November 04, 2025 at 07:17 PM

MG

“ Cathy, Paige, Rick and Frank,
We are so sorry for your loss and thankful that John is home again and at peace. I have such wonderful and vivid memories of all us playing together as kids. He was such a kind big brother to Lindsey and her friends. He really was such an example to us of what kind and compassionate friendship meant. And he was so sweet and so fun. The last time I saw him was at an annual mass for Lindsay and he was such a kind and gentle soul. We are all thinking of the family. And praying for John.

All our love Martha and the gang.

Martha Brune Gaines - November 04, 2025 at 05:26 PM

LK

“ John and I were good friends in our early years at the Cathedral School, and some of my fondest memories are of the times I spent with the wonderful Otenasek clan on Tunbridge Road -- including the time a bunch of us disturbed a bee hive near their house and had to sprint to my house a block away, steps ahead of an angry swarm. (Trip Burch's recollection of that incident may be less fond.) John -- kind, generous, good looking -- was always the natural leader of whatever group he was in. A world without him is a poorer place. Rest in peace.

Laszlo (Les) Kopits

Laszlo Kopits - November 04, 2025 at 04:19 PM

CD

“ I’m so sorry to read this news. I’ll always have fond memories of John, growing up together in Homeland in the early ‘70’s. John was my best friend for years. We had a great time playing baseball in Trip Burch’s back yard, riding bikes, and playing basketball and tag with the other kids in the neighborhood. It seemed like the ideal way to grow up. We lost touch during college, but I thought of him often. My condolences to the Otenasek clan. I wish I could make it up to Baltimore for his service. I’ll be there in spirit. RIP, my old friend.
-Chip

Chip Dopman - November 03, 2025 at 08:02 PM

VS

“ This is sad news, indeed! We knew John during his first experience as a guest to Gould Farm; Lis remembers particularly well the days that she spent with him in the weaving studio, teaching him how to weave a scarf, actually for his sister Anne who died in the Lockerbie plane crash.

We also saw him occasionally in and around Gould Farm while also enjoying his visits to CooperRiis. At one point, he considered working with us there, but stayed instead with the other projects he was involved with. I always admired his courage, his smile, his effort to help others, all of which he offered to the world while he, too, was also struggling.

What a lovely and kind man. We and our children have fond memories of him that will live on. He was an inspiration.

Retired Gould Farmers Lia and Virgil Stucker (VirgilStucker@icloud.com)

Virgil Stucker - November 03, 2025 at 07:24 PM