

# John W. Bushey



John Bushey died on February 8, 2018 in St. Luke's Hospital at the age of 56. John was born in Duluth on December 6, 1961, and was the eldest son of Judy and Dale Bushey. As a child, he enjoyed regular singalongs at the house, with his uncle Ray on the guitar and his father singing and yodeling. This may have inspired John's celebrated love of music and performing. He was an accomplished pianist and played trombone in East High Jazz Ensemble. He graduated from Duluth East High School in 1980, and majored in geology at the University of Minnesota Duluth. He first worked for the minerals division of the DNR in Hibbing before returning to college to get a degree in teaching.

John was a man of many interests, all of which he pursued with great passion. It was never enough for him to just dabble in anything he really cared about. He strove to be among the best of the best at whatever he did, while never seeking recognition.

At an early age, he discovered his love of magic tricks. He became a student and lifelong friend of Terry Roses, the founder of the Duluth Mystics magic club. Terry is an expert magician, magic historian, gambling expert, locksmith, and inventor, and John apprenticed himself to him to learn as much as he could. Another local magician, Doug Fox, was a steam engine builder and master wood and metal worker, and John continued soaking up as much knowledge as possible. Nationally and internationally, he performed as a magician and escape artist. Some of his favorite shows were the annual all-night high school graduation parties around the region, which kept the new graduates off the roads and gave John a chance to perform magic all night long. He could do it all: close-up and stage magic, and even impossible escapes. He generously shared his extensive knowledge and skills in both formal and informal settings, and especially loved mentoring young magicians.

Over the years, John amassed one of the largest Harry Houdini collections in the world and authored many books and articles about the legendary magician and escape artist. He lectured and wrote about repairing, collecting and even replicating extremely rare and/or unusual locks and handcuffs. His work on ancient and obscure locks brought him consulting work from all over the world, in part because, in many cases, he could create working keys for the rarest handcuffs from memory.

Locally, John will be most remembered as a renowned and revered expert on all things related to Bob Dylan. He collected Dylan albums, "field recordings", books, and other memorabilia for years. At one point, he sold a major portion of his collection to the City of Hibbing. Dylan fans in the Northland – and far beyond – heard John as the voice of the weekly radio show Highway 61 Revisited, which he hosted on KUMD for 26 years.

John was such an authority on Bob Dylan that on the occasion of Dylan's Nobel Prize in Literature, he received calls from journalists around the world asking him for commentary. John attended over 30 Bob Dylan concerts and was a driving force behind the annual Duluth Dylan Fest.

One of John's greatest discoveries was his love of teaching. He spent 15 years as an elementary school teacher in the Duluth school district. He loved teaching 4th, 5th and 6th grade students and seeing them learn. By sharing his own passions with his students, he inspired them to share their interests with the rest of the class. He taught his students the importance of rigor, practice and planning. This recipe of a safe environment to share ideas, work hard on specific techniques, and improve performance over time, often had amazing results in his students.

John earned his Eagle as a boy scout, completing an extensive hiking trail around Hawk Ridge for his service project. John was an avid outdoorsman from his scouting days, and he shared this joy by leading hundreds of school kids to Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center each year – one of his favorite places in the world. John worked diligently every year, raising funds and coordinating chaperones, to provide every student the opportunity to experience Wolf Ridge.

In 2003, John was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma, a rare type of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. He dealt with his cancer by doing research, meticulously tracking his medical results, and being his own best advocate. He was near death many times in the past several years and repeatedly surprised one and all – his physicians included – with his incredible ability to recover and to remain productive despite enduring great discomfort for extended periods. His general positive attitude was an inspiration to all who knew and loved him. Special thanks to John's medical team – Dr. Homam Alkaied, and staff at St. Luke's Hospital, and Dr. Grzegorz Nowakowski and staff of the Mayo Clinic – for their excellent care. The family would like to thank some of John's close friends for their outstanding, non-stop help and support these past couple of years: Zane Bail, Terry and Mary Roses, Jody and Michelle Leblanc, Mark and Susanna Mitton, Mark Lundblad, Theresa Sheehy, Marc Percansky. The family also extends their gratitude to the manager and staff at the London Road Taco John's who went above and beyond, as well the many friends who have supported John.

John was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his brother Jim (Jodi) Bushey of Faribault; sister Barbara Bushey of Esko; nieces Danielle Bushey, Samantha (Ryan) Khuon, and Caitlin Bushey; and nephew Jacob Bushey, as well as his cats Carmen and Copernicus. One of John's favorite quotes, "My brain is the key that sets me free" ~ Harry Houdini.

A memorial service will be held on Monday, February 19, 2018 at the Clyde Iron Works Event Center at 1 o'clock.