



**John D. Hawke, Jr., 28<sup>th</sup> U.S. Comptroller of the Currency**

John Daniel Hawke, Jr., son of Olga Buchbinder and John Daniel Hawke of Rockville Centre, New York, died at his home in Washington, D.C. on January 3, 2022, at the age of 88 surrounded by his family.

An accomplished lawyer who served in all three branches of the U.S. government, Hawke was once called “the Dean of American bank lawyers” by the *New York Times*.

Known to most everyone as Jerry, he was a loving father and grandfather, devoted husband and brother, loyal partner and friend, confident cook and beautiful writer. His dry wit, keen intelligence, and moral standard were evident in all he undertook.

Hawke was born in New York City on June 26, 1933, and grew up in Rockville Centre, where he attended South Side High School. As a boy, he accompanied his father, a civic leader, on his rounds as an air raid warden. A child of the Depression and the second World War, he still enjoyed a charmed childhood, taking pride in becoming an Eagle Scout and a summer camp bugler.

Hawke graduated from Yale University, where he majored in English. A member of Elihu, one of the university's senior societies, he bonded with the friends he made there, and their spouses, for life.

After college, he joined the U.S. Air Force at Eglin Field, Florida, as a second lieutenant and worked as a public information officer. He and his desk mate Hunter S. Thompson talked of becoming writers and debated literature. Years later, Thompson would telephone him by collect call in the middle of the night to inquire whether he still considered the *Great Gatsby* to be the greatest American novel. Hawke considered becoming a teacher and flirted with an offer to read English at Oxford, but chose a different path, which at times he regretted.

Graduating at the top of his law school class, he was editor-in-chief of the *Columbia Law Review*, and a law clerk to Judge E. Barrett Prettyman on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

In the early 1960s, Hawke worked as counsel to the Select Subcommittee on Education in the House of Representatives. As he set off for a trip to San Francisco in 1961 for field

hearings on the arts, staffers in Congressman Jack Shelley's office asked him to deliver a box of sugar cookies from the Longworth House Office Building cafeteria to their colleague Josephine Marie Reddan. He did, and he fell in love at first sight. They married on June 15, 1962, had four children, and enjoyed a wonderful life together until her death in 1991.

Hawke practiced law at Arnold & Porter for nearly 60 years, with intervening stints in government. He established the firm's financial institutions practice and served as chairman of the firm from 1987 until 1995. Previously, Hawke was general counsel to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System from 1975 to 1978 under Chairman Arthur Burns.

In the early 1980's, his law practice took off, attracting many of the country's largest banks and financial institutions as clients and putting Hawke at the center of some of the most consequential matters in the industry. In 1985, Hawke argued the case [\*Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve v. Dimension Financial Corporation\*](#) before the U.S. Supreme Court and secured an 8-0 victory. He authored a treatise on banking regulation and was appointed to a blue-ribbon panel to study the role of the futures market in the 1987 stock market crash. A mentor to a generation of up and coming banking lawyers within the law firm, he also taught banking law at Georgetown Law School and Boston University School of Law, where he was chairman of the Board of Advisors at the Morin Center for Banking Law Studies.

These experiences primed Hawke for two major presidential appointments at the peak of his career. President Clinton named

him Under Secretary of Treasury for Domestic Finance in 1995. He oversaw financial policy and legislation, with frequent trips to the Hill to testify, worked on the debt ceiling showdown with Congress in 1996 and helped roll out the newly redesigned twenty-dollar bill. A memorable moment was holding down the fort when the historic Treasury building caught fire in the summer of 1996 while Secretary Robert Rubin was on business abroad. When Hawke called the Secretary to brief him on the fire, he said, “Bob, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is that the building is on fire. The good news is that it wasn’t the British.”

In 2001, the Department bestowed its highest honor upon him—the Alexander Hamilton Award.

Hawke served as the country’s 28<sup>th</sup> Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) from 1998 to 2004, where he administered a network of more than 2,000 national banks, comprising more than half of the assets of the commercial banking system. He was a director of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), the Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, and the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision.

Upon leaving the OCC, Hawke returned to Arnold & Porter, staying active until well into his 80s. In April 2021, Hawke stepped down from the Board of M&T Bank, where he served as a director for nine years and as Chairman of the bank’s Risk Committee.

And yet Hawke enjoyed a deeply meaningful life outside of his work. He loved opera, Italian Renaissance painting,

photography, writing poetry, collecting Mata Ortiz pottery, summers in Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts with his children, klatching with a circle of friends over early morning coffee, and traveling the world.

He was an avid fisherman who trawled the waters off Martha's Vineyard and would fire up his aluminum smoker as soon as he'd reeled in enough blues. He brined them in a top-secret list of ingredients and earned an annual blue ribbon for his smoked bluefish at the MV Agricultural Fair.

A devotee of the Washington Opera, he took delight in holding Lawyers Committee dinners, where he'd script and emcee legal-themed parodies with Supreme Court justices playing along.

Hawke is survived by his four children, Daniel of Cabin John, Maryland, Caitlin of New York City, Anne of Washington, D.C., and Patrick of Baltimore, along with his daughter-in-law Jessica Blake Hawke, son-in-law John Kada, three grandchildren, Spencer, Camerynn and Clare, his twin siblings Roger Hawke of New York City and sister Mary Todebush of Cutchogue, New York, and his longtime companion, Beverly Baker of Washington, D.C.

A private burial will be held on Martha's Vineyard, and the family plans to convene a memorial service later this year. Gifts in his memory may be made to [Island Food Pantry](http://www.igimv.org/donate) on Martha's Vineyard ([www.igimv.org/donate](http://www.igimv.org/donate)).