



Dr. John E. Riski Jr.

June 19, 1948 - December 23, 2023

John Edward “Jay” Riski Jr. was born: June 19, 1948 in Chicago, Illinois, and passed away

December 23, 2023 in Sandy Springs at the age of 75.

Anyone who met Jay knew of his love for his family, the outdoors, and his immense passion for

his patients and colleagues. Jay leaves a powerful legacy in the Speech Pathology community

and continues to be a part of our world. He will be missed beyond measure.

Jay is survived by Maureen Cassidy Riski, his wife of 31 years, his two daughters Madison

Camille Riski and Meredith Cassidy Riski. Other survivors are Jesse I Wood IV, son-in-law,

Janice Eleanor Bennafield, sister, Suzanne Camille Chandler, sister, Eveann Marie McBride,

sister, Mercita Adrienne Ramos, sister, Gregory Thomas Riski, brother, as well as a multitude of

nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his parents, John Edward Riski Sr., and Virginia May

Riski. Jay is also predeceased by Jerome Nicholas Riski, brother and Virginia May Cadenhead,

sister.

Jay began his education in the primary school, Christ the King, and graduated

from Tampa

Catholic High school, both in Tampa, Florida. He began his higher education at St. Petersburg

Jr. College (Florida), then earning his M.S. at the University of South Florida (Tampa), then his

Ph.D. at the University of Florida (Gainesville).

His career lead him to Duke University, Medical Center (1978 - 1994) then Children's

Healthcare of Atlanta, Scottish Rite , where he was Clinical director of the Craniofacial center

(1994 - 2022). Some of his many work highlights were Contributions to ACPA, Team

Coordinators Forum Committee. 1980-1982, Interprofessional Programs Committee, 1981-1982,

Task Force in Financial Resources of Cleft Lip and Palate Patients, 1982-84, Editorial Consultant

to Cleft Palate Journal, 1983, Velopharyngeal Competence, Symposium Co-chair, 1987-1988,

Time and Place Committee, 1985-87, Symposium Committee, 1986-88, Interdisciplinary

Advisory Board, 1988, Audio-Visual Committee (Chair) 1989-1991, Editor Search Committee

1990, Program Committee (Chair, Study Sessions) 1991-1994, Symposia Committee,

1991-1993, Continuing Medical Education Committee, 1992-1995, Education Committee, 1994,

Executive Council. 1993-1996, Database Committee (Member), 1991 – 1995, Board of Directors

(Committee Member), 1995 – 1996, Vice President, 1997 – 1998,

Management and Finance

Committee (Member), 1999 – 2000, Co-Chair, Local Arrangements

Committee (2000 Meeting),
President-Elect, 1999 – 2000, President, 2000 – 2001, Education Committee,
Committee
Member, 1992 – 2001, CPCJ Editorial Board, Section Editor, Speech
Pathology, 2000 – 2001,
Infrastructure Task Force (Committee Member), 2001-2002, Past-President,
2001-2002, Honors
and Awards Committee, (Committee Member), 2001 – 2002, Clinical
Outcomes Research
Council (Member), 1997 – 2003, Database Committee (Chair), 1995 – 2005,
Preconference 2008
Faculty (Member), 2008, Clinical Trials/Outcomes Studies Task Force,
Member, 2004 – 2010,
Database Committee, Member 2006 – 2010, Preconference 2011 Faculty
(Member), 2011, Data
Standards Committee (Member). 2009 – 2012 and Parameters Committee
(Member), 2011 –
2014.

Other leadership and service contributions of Jay's were North Carolina
Speech, Hearing and
Language Association, Professional Standards and Review Organization
Committee, 1980-1983,
Convention Planning Committee, 1981 and 1982, Parliamentarian, 1981,
Research Committee
(Chair), 1985-86, Finance Committee, 1988-89, Convention (Vice-Chair)
1988-89, Convention
(Chair) 1989-90, Finance Committee, 1990-1991, Membership Committee
(Chair) 1990-1991,
President Elect, 1990-1991, President, 1991-1992, Past-President, 1992-
1993, Velocardiofacial

Syndrome Educational Foundation, Board of Directors, Georgia Speech-Language-Hearing Association, Taskforce on Treatment Effectiveness (Co-chair) 1995 – 1999, and Legislative Committee, 1996 – 1997. He also provided Service to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association with these contributions: Program Committee, Speech Disorders-I subcommittee, 1984, Congressional Action Contact, District 4, North Carolina, 1978-1982, Congressional Action Contact, District 2, North Carolina, 1983-1988, Educational Technology Committee, 1981-1985, Program Committee, Speech Disorders-I subcommittee, 1986, Congressional Action Contact, Senator Terry Sanford (D), North Carolina, 1988-1992, Congressional Action Contact, Senator Lauch Faircloth (R), North Carolina, 1993-1994, Program Committee, Speech Disorders-II subcommittee, 1993, Special Interest Division 3: Voice, Special Interest Division 5: Speech Science and Orofacial Disorders, 1996, Present Chair Special Interest Division 13: Dysphagia Special Interest Division Consensus Conference on Medical Speech Pathology (7/95), Section Editor for Voice and Resonance, and American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology 1996 -1999.

Editorial Responsibilities for Jay were: Section Editor, Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Journal, Speech Pathology, 1999-2000, Section Editor, American Journal of Speech Language Pathology,

1996-1999, Associate Editor, NC Speech Hearing Language Assoc.
Communiqué and
Newsletter, 1981-85, Section Editor, American Journal of Speech-Language
Pathology, Editorial
Consultant and Book Reviewer to Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Journal, Section
Editor for Speech,
Cleft Palate-Craniofacial Journal 2000, Reviewer and Discussant, Plastic and
Reconstructive
Surgery Journal, Reviewer, Journal of Medical Speech Language Pathology,
Reviewer, Language
Hearing and Language Services in the Schools. Jay earned the following
awards and honors:
Clinical Achievement Award, North Carolina Speech-Hearing-Language
Association, 1985,
Fellow, American-Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 1992, Clinician of
the Year Award,
Georgia Speech Language and Hearing Association, 2005, Visiting Speech
Pathologist and
Lecturer, Smiles International Foundation, 2016, and he evaluated over
17,500 individual
children at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta 1993 – 2021.
Jay found time for his hobbies and activities, such as, work in the yard, play
with his beloved
yellow lab Jerry, coach his girls in softball, spend time with Maureen and
smoke a nice cigar and
watch any college sporting event.

A celebration of life service will be held on Saturday, January 13, 2024 at
11AM in the funeral home chapel. The family will receive friends from 10AM
until the time of service at Northside Chapel Funeral Directors. The service
will be livestreamed via the funeral home website [https://www.northsidechape
l.com/obituaries/John-Riski/#!/TributeWall](https://www.northsidechapel.com/obituaries/John-Riski/#!/TributeWall). The Riski family will have a

reception after the service at their home. In lieu of flowers, the family asks that donations be made to the ACPA John Riski Speech Scholarship Fund: <https://acpa.app.neoncrm.com/forms/15>

Cemetery Details

Cremation - Northside Chapel Crematory

12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 13. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Northside Chapel Funeral Directors & Crematory
12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Memorial Service

JAN 13. 11:00 AM (ET)

Northside Chapel Funeral Directors & Crematory
12050 Crabapple Road
Roswell, GA

Tribute Wall



“ Northside Chapel Funeral Directors and Crematory created a <https://view.oneromstreaming.com/index.php?data=MTcwNDc1NzQ4Njl4OTQ5NCZvbmVyb29tLWFkbWluJmNvcHlft> in memory of Dr. John E. Riski Jr.



Northside Chapel - January 08, 2024 at 01:46 PM

CE

“ I am deeply saddened to hear of Dr Riski’s passing. In 2005 we adopted a toddler from China with a cleft palate. Dr Riski worked tirelessly with her to improve her speech. He educated us and the school based SLPs on the best therapies for our sweet girl. Our daughter loved seeing him and he spoiled her with treats and quarters for the gum machine! He didn’t always agree with us, nor the surgeon, but supported our decisions. He always had our daughter’s best interests. We knew his dissent came from a place of care. We did get to celebrate our daughter’s exit from speech and visited him when we could. Our older daughter went to school to become an SLP and credits her interest to her sister and the care she received from Dr. Riski. I’m sad that I had not heard of his passing sooner. My thoughts and prayers are with his family.
Tina, Dave, and Analiese Evans

Christina Evans - July 14, 2025 at 08:57 PM

DO

“ I am deeply saddened to hear of Dr. Riski's passing. He was not only a skilled and compassionate doctor but also someone who truly made each child feel unique and seen. I will forever be grateful for the care he provided my daughter during her surgeries at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. His kindness, patience, and dedication to his patients made such a difference in our lives. He left an indelible imprint on my daughter's life, and she still remembers him to this day. What a loss to the medical profession. My thoughts are with his family during this difficult time. I feel fortunate to have known him. I'm in shock.

Dr. Frank Ortega - March 13, 2025 at 03:58 PM

BW

“ To the family I offer my condolences. I just found out that Dr. Riski passed last year. I want you to hear from a parent the impact he made in our lives. We first came to meet him almost 29 years ago. We had a baby girl, Brooke, who was born with a cleft palate. We first met him when she was 6 days old. We made many a trips to the carnio-facial clinic over the years. First for cleft palate and then she was found to have velopharyngeal incompetence. He was so patient and kind. He worked so hard to help Brooke to develop good speech. Well unfortunately we never got to see him and tell him how much he meant to us. Just a side note during one of our earlier visits I told him I also was born with a cleft palate. He asked who did my surgery and I told him the chief of plastics at Duke University Dr. Pickrell back in 1963. He told me he had worked him many years later. So we had a unique bond. Please know how much he meant to all of us parents and patients. Just so you know how he impacted our daughter. She graduated from Emory a year ago with her Masters of Divinity. She now works with children mainly as she works toward becoming an ordained minister. As you know that requires the ability to speak clearly. So thank you for for his love of what he did.

Blessings. Beth, Randy and Brooke Wagner

Beth Wagner - August 03, 2024 at 10:02 AM

MP

“ I am deeply saddened to learn about the passing of Dr. Riski. My heart goes out to his family and everyone who has been touched by his incredible loss. Please accept my sincere condolences during this difficult time.

Dr. Riski was not just a healthcare provider; he was a beacon of compassion, expertise, and unwavering dedication. His impact on the lives of patients and the community is immeasurable, and his loss is felt deeply by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

In times of sorrow, it's challenging to find the right words, but please know that my thoughts and prayers are with you. May you find strength in the memories of Dr. Riski and the positive impact he had on countless lives.

Wishing you and everyone affected by his loss the strength to navigate through this difficult time.

With heartfelt sympathy, Palsana Family

Manisha Palsana - January 25, 2024 at 10:25 AM

AN

“ Jay was truly one of giants on whose shoulders we stood in the specialty of cleft-craniofacial conditions within the profession of speech-language pathology. I worked with him on several committees through ASHA and ACPA. He never tired of working in any capacity to broaden our education and service. He will be missed. Anne Bedwinek, PhD, CCC-SLP

Anne - January 14, 2024 at 03:58 PM

DC

“ Dr. Riski believed in me when I was starting out in my career as an SLP and helped me build so much confidence and knowledge that I still carry with me today. I was lucky enough to be one of his fellows and it shaped me both as a person and a clinician. I still strive to love being at work every day as much as he did :) But more than anything he loved his family. He always talked about his daughters and wife with such pride. Just an all around wonderful human. Rest easy, Dr. Riski, you will be missed.

Danielle Corneille - January 13, 2024 at 03:51 PM

ES

“ Dr. Riski showed me what it meant to pour his life out for his patients. He didn't see his patients like patients, he cared for them like he would a member of his family. That forever will remain with me and played a critical role in how I have learned to work with my patients and families as an SLP. I am so honored and thankful to have been his student!

Eshan Schleif - January 13, 2024 at 03:25 PM

KK

“ While I was fortunate to be just one of Jay’s many students, he was one of the most significant mentors in my life.

Jay wrote the book on career mentorship. He knew how to provoke thought without being condescending, to encourage others without being pushy, and to meet everyone in the exact place where they needed support. Jay had high expectations, but the level of kindness, humility, and generosity he demonstrated was always higher. Because of this delicate balance, Jay was able to impact the lives of countless SLPs and improve the care of the patients they serve to this day.

Jay never missed an opportunity to help further someone’s career or communicate his pride. His iconic quotes still pass through my mind daily, proving encouragement and perspective. Words cannot fully summarize the influence Jay has had on my life. His legacy will live on through the work of so many, and he will be greatly missed.

Katelyn Kotlarek - January 13, 2024 at 12:51 PM

JS

“ Dr. Riski was the best CF supervisor and mentor I could have asked for. I would not be the SLP I am today without him and his mentorship and support throughout my fellowship year at CHOA. I feel so lucky to have known him and gotten to learn from him - he was truly the best of the best. The speech /cleft and craniofacial world will truly, truly miss him and all he did for our field and our patients. Sending love and prayers to his friends and family.

Jillian Nyswonger Sugg - January 13, 2024 at 10:53 AM

KH

“ Kathleen H. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John E. Riski Jr..

Kathleen H. - January 13, 2024 at 09:58 AM

IH

“ Dr. Riski and I met through letter writing. I actually wrote him a letter in response to an ad placed in the newspaper for a job in the Speech Lab! My how times have changed. He responded and I ended up working for him for several years; 'just you and I in the Speech Lab!' he would say. He was my introduction to CHOA, my first teacher in how to work hard and work well in an institution, and set me up for success there now over 20 years later. Thank you, Dr. Riski, for the patience, tutelage and love you've always shown. It was an honor to know you and I'll miss talking with you. Thank you also Maureen for always being welcoming and loving to me and my family.

India Harrison - January 12, 2024 at 12:52 PM

MH

“ I feel fortunate to have had Dr. Riski as my clinical supervisor during my fellowship year right after completing graduate school. Working with him was truly a delight, especially given his genuine enthusiasm for teaching. Dr. Riski not only imparted knowledge but also ignited a lasting passion for the field within me. Dr. Riski's personal touch stood out as he would check in on my well-being and always enjoyed catching up. He really did leave a legacy through his exceptional work and through inspiring others. My heart goes out to his family during this difficult time. I extend my heartfelt condolences to those closest to him.

Marissa Habeshy

Marissa Habeshy - January 11, 2024 at 08:42 PM



“ *Dr. Riski was a kind hearted and knowledgeable clinician who touched the lives of so many children and their families. May he rest in peace and condolences to his wife, Maureen, and daughters!*
Anna Scalise Drost - retired SLP

Anna Drost - January 09, 2024 at 05:41 PM

“ I have known Jay Riski for 45 years. Jay and I worked happily together at Duke Medical Center for 17 years prior to his leaving for his long tenure at CHOA. Jay and I would often joke that we were more like brothers than just colleagues.

At Duke, a door at the back of my clinic was immediately adjacent to Jay's lab in the speech and hearing clinic. Jay and I had many daily contacts about patients, or we would just spend time with one another.

I watched Jay expand his lab to include instrumentation capable of documenting every clinical observation he would make with patients. He was one of the first clinicians to incorporate Don Warren's PERCI airflow instrumentation into his patient evaluations. He was also one of the first to teach others about the PERCI, giving several enthusiastic short courses at ACPA conventions about this useful clinical instrument.

Jay also made me a better clinician. It was common for Jay to push me beyond what I thought I could do for patients. I can still recall his voice, telling me "Bob, I have a cooperative 4-year-old who needs a palatal lift appliance". Jay often had more confidence in my abilities than I had at the time. I am grateful for having grown as a clinician because of Jay.

I am proud of what Jay accomplished at Duke and then as well at CHOA. I have followed his career closely and am proud of what he accomplished in serving others as a clinician, teacher, clinical researcher, author, and friend to so many. Jay Riski was, in my opinion, the finest craniofacial speech clinician in this country, and perhaps everywhere else.

Expressing a relationship in words is very difficult. I have lost a brother.

Bob Mason

Bob Mason - January 09, 2024 at 09:26 AM

PA

“ We are so sorry for your loss. Barry and Patsy Chalfant



Patsy - January 07, 2024 at 09:40 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dr. John E. Riski Jr..



January 07, 2024 at 08:14 PM

YS

“ Your brother and sisters planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Dr. John E. Riski Jr..

Your brother and sisters - January 05, 2024 at 06:04 PM



“ Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Dr. John E. Riski Jr..



January 05, 2024 at 06:04 PM

ST

“*Dr. Riski was truly a wonderful mentor and role model. His vast knowledge of the cleft and craniofacial population has always inspired me to strive for better in my career. Dr. Riski gave his all with each and every one of his patients. His passion for all of his kiddos was always evident in his clinical work. Dr. Riski expected a lot from his students and fellows, but rightfully so as we were entering into the realm of his life’s work. He made you strive to be a better student, clinician, researcher and human. Dr. Riski always found a way to brighten the room, mostly with his dry sense of humor.*

I hope he’s relaxing in one of his many Hawaiian shirts. He will not be forgotten and neither will his legacy. Many SLPs to come will learn from his example and knowledge.

Scott Tye - January 05, 2024 at 03:47 PM

AL

“*Dr. Riski or "speech doctor," as he would introduce himself to the kids, truly made me into the clinician I am today and I am forever grateful for his commitment to excellence and dedication to teaching. He usually was sporting a Hawaiian shirt with his row of ducklings behind him eager to learn his ways. His reach was far and wide in the cleft and craniofacial field with immense impact on research, his patients, and his students. He made everyday brighter with his Riski-isms students would track in his very own quote book.*

His legacy continues to live on in the profound ways he impacted each one of us that were lucky enough to be shaped and molded by him. There are now countless of SLPs he trained on various cleft teams scattered across the country continuing to utilize the skills he taught us. There continues to be a partnership with a medical mission group sending SLPs he trained twice a year.

His passion and commitment to this field were contagious. Because of Dr. Riski, I love that I do and the patients I get to serve. I am committed to carrying on his mentorship to train up other specialists in this field.

Dr. Riski, you are missed and never forgotten. Praying for your family and celebrating the life you lived and the impact you made!

Angela LaGambina - January 04, 2024 at 04:58 PM

KD

“ *The impact of Dr. Riski was striking. As one of his many students turned colleagues, he had a profound influence on my life and career. He was an exemplar of clinical care, giving countless children a voice. He inspired his students to become teachers and established a legacy of mentorship. His battery of publications left a footprint of foundational contributions to our field. There isn't a patient, student, or colleague who doesn't have immense gratitude for his work and wouldn't greet him with a smile. Not a day passed over 70 degrees where he wasn't sporting a Hawaiian shirt. He had incredible pride in his wife and daughters and touched so many lives. Most of all, his joy was contagious. It was an honor to know and work alongside him.*

You're at the beach Dr. Riski. There is no shortage of what continues in your honor. You are loved and missed dearly.

Katie Dillon - January 02, 2024 at 09:56 AM

HJ

“*Dr. Riski was more than just a college professor and mentor to me; he was the embodiment of wisdom and passion in the field of speech pathology, particularly with the complexities of his specific focus in our field of cleft and resonance. From our first meeting in college as my professor, his dedication and innovative approach to teaching left an indelible mark on my career. Over 20 years later, the lessons he imparted still resonate in my work, guiding me and my colleagues in helping countless children. Dr. Riski's legacy is vast, and his shoes are big to fill. As I reflect on his profound influence, I am filled with a sense of gratitude and a continuing desire to embody his commitment to excellence. His passing is a great loss...*

We need to ensure that his teachings will live on, continuing inspiring me and, I hope, all speech pathologists, to strive for the best in our lifelong careers. Dr. Riski's passion and expertise were gifts to the world, and his impact will continue to ripple through the lives of those he touched.

Heather Jones - December 29, 2023 at 08:16 PM

HB

“*Dr. Riski made a remarkable impact on patients and their families at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta through his expertise in speech pathology, but his influence extended beyond. As his practice manager, I learned valuable lessons and shared laughter with him. Also, I admired how he highlighted the joy of his wife and two daughters. His positive influence resonated with all people who were lucky enough to know him.*

Heather S. Balberde - December 28, 2023 at 08:00 PM

LF

I am heartbroken for Maureen and his girls as well as for all of us who knew him. Jay was the best of the best. I consider the day I interviewed with him for an early career position at Duke the luckiest day of my career. He made it his priority to pass on his wealth of knowledge and experience in craniofacial care to me so the clinic and the patients would be well cared for once he moved on to Atlanta. All these years, Jay has been one of my biggest supporters. He is the reason I am in this field and the best part is that I am one of so many who can say the same thing. His legacy will live on as long as each one of us who was lucky enough to benefit from Jay's vast knowledge and his undeterred focus on the patient above all else passes this on to others in the craniofacial community. You taught us well, Jay. Rest easy, my friend and mentor. We will never forget you.

Lynn Fox - January 08, 2024 at 11:00 AM