



Joel Swanson

January 30, 1941 - November 11, 2025

Joel E. Swanson, of Carroll, Iowa, passed away peacefully at home on Tuesday, November 11, 2025, at the age of 84.

A Funeral Mass will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, November 17, 2025, at St. John Paul II Parish, St. Lawrence Church in Carroll. The Mass will be celebrated by Father Tim Johnson. Lectors for the Mass will be Michael Greteman, Tom Liddle, and Julie Mayhall. Pianist for the Mass will be Jane Heithoff with Mary Moen, Grace Widseth, and Ignacio Cabrera as Cantors. Gift Bearers will be Anne Bitga and Patrick Greteman. The Honorary Pallbearers will be members of St. Anthony's Rock Steady Boxing Parkinson's class. Immediately following the Funeral Mass, burial will be in Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

Visitation will be held from 2:00-4:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 16th at Sharp Funeral Home with a Prayer Service at 4:00 p.m. A short visitation will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. on Monday, November 17th at St. Lawrence Church prior to the Funeral Mass.

Funeral arrangements are under the guidance of Sharp Funeral Home of Carroll and online condolences may be left for Joel's family at www.sharpfuneral.com. In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to St. Anthony's Rock Steady Boxing Parkinson's program.

Joel E. Swanson was born January 30, 1941 in Lake City, Iowa. Joel joined his brother James. His parents, Lester E. Swanson and Esther (Schwider) Swanson added a daughter, Lorene a few years later.

Joel attended Lake City schools, graduating from High School in 1959. He enrolled at the University of Iowa. While attending the U of I, he was a member of Beta Theta Pi social fraternity. He completed his education with a Law Degree in 1967. He returned to Lake City to join his father forming the firm of Swanson and Swanson. Joel ran for the position of Calhoun County Attorney, being elected for two terms. Following his father's death in 1972, Joel was a sole practitioner. During this time he was appointed Calhoun County Magistrate and served in that capacity until 1992 when he was appointed by Governor Terry Branstad as District Court Judge for the Second Judicial District of Iowa. He served in that capacity until his retirement in 2017.

Prior to commencing Law School, he married Pamela Avery and to this union two children were born, Kristin A. Swanson in 1968 and Scott M. Swanson in 1970. Pamela died in 1978.

Joel enlisted in the Iowa Army National Guard and served for six years.

In the fall of 1978, while attending an Iowa football game in Arizona, Joel became acquainted with his travel agent, Mary Greteman. The relationship grew and on March 30, 1979, Joel and Mary were married in Carroll, Iowa.

Joel was an avid Hawkeye fan. He held season football tickets and commencing in 1959, missed only three home football games. Joel had season basketball tickets when Carver-Hawkeye Arena was constructed and held them for over 10 years.

Joel and Mary were avid travelers to most countries in Europe. They traveled

to China and Cuba. They also traveled to all 50 states and Mexico.

Joel is survived by his wife Mary, daughter Kristin (Tom), son Scott (Beth), grandsons August and Joel Wifler, sister Lorene (David) Liddle, and in-laws, Mike (Cathy) Greteman, Jean (Tom) Farner, Jim (Mary) Greteman, Margie (Jim) Wegner, Susie (Phil) Leonard, Ann (Aaron) Ledet, Patty Greteman, and Nick Greteman.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Lester E. Swanson and Esther Swanson, his first wife Pamela, his brother James and his father-in-law Louis Greteman and mother-in-law Julia Greteman.

Tribute Wall

MM

“ Mary, the Rock Steady boxing group in Florida was missing Joel this winter and just found out why. He had such a great attitude and self deprecating sense of humor. We will miss his fighting spirit. We hope you are doing OK Mary. If you come to Florida we are still in the same place every Tuesday and Thursday. We would love to see you. Take care, Mary, and rest in peace. Joel. Mike McCluskey 941-979-2263

Mike McCluskey - January 23 at 08:10 PM



“ Scott, I'm so sorry to hear about your dad. Thinking of you, my friend.

Blane Beebe - December 04, 2025 at 07:54 AM

PC

“ Mary: You know how important Joel was to me. He welcomed my proposal to be a legal assistant to him in the summer of 1972 when he was Calhoun County Attorney and I was in law school. Later, he arranged for me to join him in Des Moines and in Fort Madison penitentiary on matters connected to cases I'd worked on for him. As you know, he was a special friend and colleague. Of course, I was delighted when Governor Branstad named to Iowa's judiciary and delighted to be present during his swearing in. I was happy he was able to find a partner like you who appreciated and loved him as you do. My thoughts and condolences are with you at this time of sorrow. I will always regard Joel as a special person whose friendship and counsel was invaluable to me.

Patrick Cavanaugh - November 25, 2025 at 06:49 PM

FK

“ Pam: My condolences. Although haven't seen either of you in years in years both a true friends & great individuals to have known. Loved you both. Flip.

Flip Klinger - November 21, 2025 at 03:11 PM

KJ

“ Mary & the Swanson & Greteman Families.....My sincere sympathy to you on the passing of Joel.....His bright star will shine for all to see.....May he R .I P.God's blessing to allKristi Schuler Jorgensen....



Kristi Schuler Jorgensen - November 19, 2025 at 08:59 AM

RS

“ Mary and the Swanson family: Our thoughts and prayers are with you during this difficult time. We have great memories of the Columbia River Cruise - we were the "fun" couples. Great time..Rick will have a cold beer for the Judge. Take care and God Bless. Rick and Liz Sandona

Rick and Liz Sandona - November 15, 2025 at 01:48 PM

RR

“ Scott, thinking of you, my friend. My heart goes out to you and your family.

Renee Siedhoff Roland - November 14, 2025 at 10:32 PM

RQ

“ My sincere condolences to the Swanson family.

Robin McCaulley Qualy - November 13, 2025 at 04:20 PM



“ *Small Garden Dish was purchased for the family of Joel Swanson.*



November 13, 2025 at 02:00 PM



“ *Days of Sunshine Bouquet was purchased for the family of Joel Swanson.*



November 13, 2025 at 11:19 AM



“ *Kurt and Sandy Wilke planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joel Swanson.*

Kurt and Sandy Wilke - November 13, 2025 at 09:49 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joel Swanson.*



November 13, 2025 at 09:49 AM



“ *My sympathy to the Swanson family. Great memories of mom working for Joel & Les and babysitting Kristin & Scott. Joel was a very kind man.*

Jane McCurdy - November 13, 2025 at 02:49 AM



“ *Mary, Kristin, and Scott, our deepest sympathy to you and the extended family on the death of Joel. We have many fond memories of visiting Carroll, meeting in Florida, and back on the farm in Lehigh, IA. Joel was a man of deep integrity and conviction that we cared about deeply. May he rest in peace.*

Suzanne and Jack Swanson - November 12, 2025 at 04:37 PM



He was the best adult example that a kid from Lake City could ever have. Smart with sharp humor that could disarm even my stubborn father. God did not make many like him and I am grateful to have known him.

Joel Yunek - November 12, 2025 at 11:13 PM



The Hobart and Swanson families encompass at least three generations. Les and Easter were neighbors and best friends of my parents. I'm sure that my father delivered the three Swanson children. Les probated my father's estate. After mother died, I discovered many letters written to her about dad's estate, all of them direct as only Les could be. Joel and my sister Jane went through 12 years of school together and then attended University of Iowa at the same time. Now my sister Mary Jo's children are friends of Joe's daughter! The families are Hawkeyes through and through. Joel was an excellent lawyer and judge but an even better person.

Thomas D. Hobart - November 13, 2025 at 02:15 PM

HP

There are not many benefits to Parkinson's Disease, but the fight against its progression brought us a wonderful friendship with Joel and Mary. We enjoyed Joel's sense of humor and his wry comments during conversations. He showed the perfect "eye roll" on many occasions. Harold always made sure he wore an ISU shirt to Rock Steady Boxing on those occasions when the Cyclones came out ahead of the Hawks. Joel is greatly missed already from the camaraderie of the group. We feel fortunate to have enjoyed Joel's friendship these last seven years.

Harold and Sue Peyton - November 13, 2025 at 07:07 PM

DE

John and I send our condolences to you, Mary, and to Kristin and Scott as we remember Joel.

Diane Ely - November 15, 2025 at 09:04 AM