



## James Stuart Simonson

November 9, 1934 - October 10, 2022

Simonson, James Stuart, 87, died peacefully surrounded by family on October 10, 2022. A former trial attorney with the Gray Plant Mooty law firm and founder and longtime coach of the Minneapolis Wesac parkboard wrestling program, Simonson was a prominent member of the Minneapolis community. Simonson was born November 9, 1934 in Deerfield, Wisconsin, the son of Alvin Theodor Simonson and Mabel (Holten) Simonson. He was raised on a farm and educated in a one-room country schoolhouse (Oak Park Country School). He attended Madison East High School, where he began wrestling, and then University of Wisconsin, where he received a liberal arts education and was a varsity letter winner in wrestling. After earning top grades in his first year of law school at Wisconsin, he transferred to the Harvard Law School, from which he was graduated in 1959. He joined the Minneapolis law firm of Cant, Taylor, Haverstock, Beardsley & Gray, which eventually became Gray Plant Mooty (now Lathrop GPM). Simonson was a well-known trial lawyer and a member of the American College of Trial Lawyers, amongst other accolades. In the late 1960s, Simonson started the Wesac wrestling program, which he coached through 2000. In the early 1990s, he moved the program from Kenwood to North Minneapolis (Phyllis Wheatley Community Center), in part as an effort to serve underprivileged youth. Despite his busy law practice, he consistently coached practices two nights a week, dual meets one night a week and tournaments on weekends. Simonson was also well known for bicycling to work (including through the winter), starting in the 1970s, well

before that form of transportation became popular in Minneapolis. He ran daily around Lake of the Isles and was an early patron of The Wedge. He loved opera and golf. He attended Plymouth Congregational Church. Simonson is predeceased by his sister Naome (Simonson) Lewis, his niece Sarah (Lewis) Pauling, and his son Shannon Simonson. He is survived by his wife, Carol (Merryman) Simonson; his sons Daniel Simonson, Kyle Simonson and Leif Simonson (Rebecca Graham); his daughter Elizabeth Simonson (Eric Miller); his sister Sonja (Simonson) Schrag; his nieces Rachel Schrag and Ellen Lewis; his grandchildren Matthew Simonson (Erica), Jared Simonson, Hollister Simonson, Jenjeela Simonson and Leopold Simonson; his grandnephew Mark Pauling II; and his great grandchildren Elliot Simonson and Margaret Simonson. A memorial service will be held on October 17 at 6:00 p.m., at Plymouth Congregational Church, 1919 LaSalle Avenue (Door 1), Minneapolis, MN 55403, with reception there to follow at 7:00 p.m.

# Cemetery Details

## Prairie Oaks Memorial Gardens

Inver Grove Heights, MN

# Previous Events

## Graveside Service

OCT **14**. 3:00 PM - 3:30 PM.

Prairie Oaks Memorial Gardens  
Inver Grove Heights, MN

## Memorial Service

OCT **17**. 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Plymouth Congregational Church  
1900 Nicollet Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403

# Tribute Wall

JK

“ From John Krenn: Carol and family, as you know, I worked with Jim for 20 years at Gray Plant Mooty. When I joined the firm as a summer clerk, Jim's reputation was firmly in place as one of the top trial lawyers in the Twin Cities. All of the judges respected him. He was always well prepared, wise, and knowledgeable of the law. But over and above that, he had a way of taking extremely complicated issues and making them understandable to the average juror. He often did this with analogies that were extremely apt and which often involved a story arising from his background as the son of a poor farmer in Wisconsin. He also had a unique gift for reading people and finding a way to get the truth out of an uncooperative witness. I learned much from his mentoring. His storytelling and sense of humor were legendary. I was privileged to know and work with Jim and I am sorry for your loss. (I am sorry but I cannot make it to the funeral due to a prior commitment.)

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**John Krenn** - October 14, 2022 at 04:34 PM