



Joel Anthony Swanson, Sr.

March 29, 1948 - January 3, 2026

Joel Swanson, Sr., 77, passed away unexpectedly from a heart attack on January 3, 2026, after a day spent celebrating the holidays with children and grandchildren. A supportive and loving brother, husband, father, and grandfather, his larger-than-life personality helped him befriend everyone he met.

The eldest of eight children, Joel grew up on a farm outside Morris, MN, where he graduated high school and met his wife, Donna (Pasche) Swanson, who preceded him in death Dec 21, 2022, after a 53-year marriage filled with love, laughter, and community.

Joel was a natural leader and joined the Marine Corps right out of college. Throughout his life, he was an active member of the Knights of Columbus, Rotary Club, several Chamber of Commerces, and more. But he took his Dad and Grandpa duties even more seriously, supporting his children and grandchildren in every performance, sporting event, and professional success he could attend.

He led turnarounds for radio stations in Thief River Falls, Detroit Lakes, and others, and had a very successful career in radio over the course of forty years. Joel's drive to contribute kept him active, and he was still working as Parish Administrator at Guardian Angels Catholic Church in Chaska, MN,

when he died.

He and his wife were devoted fans of the Minnesota Twins, Vikings, and Gophers, as well as any college team where his children or grandchildren attended.

Joel is survived by his children: Joel II (Heidi), Wendy, Michael (Shelly), Teresa (Tyler Bitker), and Amanda (John Meuwissen); and 13 grandsons: Ryker, Joel III (Ulysses), Daniel, Deklin, Gunner, Benjamin, Gannon, Zander, Owen, Micah, Grady, Korbin, and McKoy. In addition, he is survived by his five brothers, Keith, Ken, Chad, Rod, and Tod Swanson; and two sisters, Patricia Kilanowski and Angela Nelson. He was preceded in death by his wife, Donna, and his parents, Douglas and Edell Swanson.

Memorials preferred to Wounded Warrior Project here:

Veterans Charity - Non Profit Organization for Veterans -
<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org/>

Or Tunnels to Towers here:

Tunnel to Towers Foundation -
<https://t2t.org/>

A celebration of life will be held Saturday, Jan 17, at 10:30 a.m. at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in New Brighton, with an open casket viewing at 9 a.m., and reception following in the church hall.

Previous Events

Visitation

JAN 17. 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (CT)

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
835 2nd Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112

Mass of Christian Burial

JAN 17. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
835 2nd Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112

Reception

JAN 17. 11:30 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
835 2nd Avenue NW
New Brighton, MN 55112

Tribute Wall

BW

“ To the Swanson Family. Joel was a really nice person. I used to be involved with Thief River Falls Jaycees when Joel managed KTRF. He always supported our cause in many ways. Very sorry for your loss. Brent Waale

Brent Waale - January 17 at 07:48 PM

RL

“ Dear Joel, Wendy, Michael, Teresa, Amanda, spouses and grandsons. Our sympathy for the loss of your dad, grandpa and Joel in your lives. He was missing Donna a lot, glad you had the chance to gather for the holidays for one last memory. We have a lot of memories going back to KTRF radio days and our continued friendship over many years. With sympathy and love, Larry and Robin.



Robin Langevin - January 16 at 05:30 PM

MA

“ I had the pleasure of working with Joel in Bemidji. He knew radio well and treated his employees fairly. He also had my back (or literally his hand firmly on my shoulder) when I was being confronted by an angry out of control officer accusing me of something at a station event in Bemidji that I clearly had nothing to do with. I will remember our brief time together fondly.

Mark Anderson - January 15 at 09:48 PM

HM

“ *Harstad, Larson, Cin, Kraker, McDaniels purchased the Blue Caribbean Bouquet for the family of Joel Anthony Swanson, Sr..*



Harstad, Larson, Cin, Kraker, McDaniels - January 15 at 07:55 PM



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



January 13 at 07:27 PM

DH

“ *Hendrickson family sends condolences. Clark "Big Red" enjoyed working with Joel at KTRF and I became more acquainted with Joel when in the DL area. Greatly appreciated when Joel attended Clark's funeral. Bless his service in radio land and his memories/ Dr. Paul H. and Clark's family.*

Dr. Paul Hendrickson - January 12 at 09:29 AM

JF

“ *Joe and Renate Voigt Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Joel Anthony Swanson, Sr..*



Joe and Renate Voigt Family - January 09 at 08:53 PM

BS

“ *Our condolences and prayers to Joel's family.*

Brad Storck - January 09 at 04:53 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Joel Anthony Swanson, Sr..*



January 09 at 01:10 PM



“ *Joyful Memory was purchased for the family of Joel Anthony Swanson, Sr..*



January 09 at 12:11 PM

BN

“ *I got to know Joel when i worked in Radio. My first station was KTRF.. i also kept in contact with Joel during my years in the MN Legislature. He will be missed..*

Bud Nornes - January 08 at 11:22 PM