



John Swalec

May 19, 1938 - November 22, 2020

John Swalec, a husband, father, grandfather, retired teacher and metro Detroiter, died Nov. 22, 2020 at age 82. He was one of a kind.

John told strangers he was a “Polish prince in exile,” threatened to show misbehaving students a photo of him in his “sumo wrestling outfit,” and spelled his last name on the phone by beginning, “S as in Sam, W as in wonderful.” He called his loved ones “honey bunny,” cooked a kielbasa dish he called Polish Revenge and was a voracious reader of mystery novels and news. He loved taking road trips and aimlessly leaving home to run errands and “go bummin’,” one of his many signature sayings. He loved basketball, getting Coney Island hot dogs with his brothers and funny greeting cards, which he signed with a one-toothed smiley face. John had a big heart, was a lifelong Catholic, and was quick to help anyone who needed a meal, clothing or a ride.

John was born on the east side of Detroit in 1938 and was the oldest of six brothers. He attended Orchard Lake St. Mary's Preparatory High School and graduated from St. Stanislaus Catholic High School in 1956. He served in the U.S. Army as a medical specialist from 1957 to 1963. He was a proud Wayne State University graduate and earned a master's degree in education.

He became the father of five children earlier in life and two children later, and loved to call them and say, “Tell me something good.” He would have

celebrated his 43rd wedding anniversary with his wife, Doris Swalec, in December.

John taught English, history and civics in Detroit Public Schools middle schools for 25 years, from 1977 to 2002. He spent years of his retirement enjoying the mountain views of Tucson, Arizona, and had recently returned home to the Detroit area.

John had adventures planned when he was sickened with COVID-19 in the weeks before his death in Port Huron, Michigan.

He is survived by his wife, Doris Swalec; his children Renee Quiggle, Andrea Swalec, Erica Swalec, Keith Swalec, Michael Swalec, Michelle Swalec, Angela Dockstader and their families, including seven grandchildren; his brothers Phillip Swalec, Robert Swalec and Stephen Swalec and their families; and his in-laws Joan Fleetwood and John D. Johnson and their families. He was predeceased by his parents, Jean Swalec and John A. Swalec; his brothers Jerome Swalec and Lawrence Swalec, his father-in-law, John G. Johnson, and his mother-in-law, Millie Johnson.

Memorial donations can be made to the St. Bonaventure Capuchin Monastery in Detroit.

Expressions of sympathy may be shared with the family at www.wasikfuneralhome.com

Cemetery Details

Cremation

Tribute Wall

JM

“ My wife and I lived upstairs from John in 1976/77 on Charlemagne street after our landlord, his mother, decamped to Warren. He had recently gotten his teaching certificate, started at Foch Middle, and generally was re-starting his life. John was energetic, entertaining, a fine story teller and we are better for having known him. We are sorry to hear of his passing.

John and Anne Marten

John Marten - February 20, 2023 at 07:02 PM

KT

“ Dori, I am so sorry for the loss of John. 43 years is a good deal of time together! Please know that your Benedictine community, here in Tucson, is thinking of you and praying that the Holy Spirit is there with you in your grief. You are loved! Kitty Tobin

Kitty Tobin - December 12, 2020 at 06:18 PM

MS

“ Dear ol Dad. I rember all the fun times we had together and the summertime jobs/adventures that we shared. Who would have known delivering thick 5 pound yellow pages door to door in humidity would be tough? Or being soda vendors at a circus.

Spoczywaj w pokoju.

Mike

Mike Swalec - December 11, 2020 at 05:58 AM

FO

“ *John and Doris were very kind to me and very supportive of my ministry to students at the University of Arizona Newman Center in Tucson. His good humor and gentle demeanor were always welcomed when he greeted me after Mass and I was always happy to see him. May his soul and those of all the faithful departed rest in peace, and may light eternal shine upon him.*

Fr. Bart Hutcherson, OP - December 10, 2020 at 02:22 PM



“ *I recently would call my dad on the way home from work. His answer to how he was doing would always be 'fantastic'. I will think of him always when giving directions to someone. My favorite memories are just going bumming. Just get in the car and go someplace that doesn't cost money. Just be together. May he be eating coney dogs, White Castle cheeseburgers, Sander's sundaes and drinking coffee in the great beyond.*
Shelly

Michele Swalec - December 07, 2020 at 11:11 PM

RQ

“ When my parents divorced my dad had 5 children to entertain and very little money!

I remember having snow picnics - going sledding and drinking hot chocolate. Going to the penny candy place, sitting by the lake cutting off chunks of salami and cheese and passing around a box of crackers. We had all these silly songs we sang. We loved to go bumming with Dad!

I remember the best gift he got me was a windbreaker with 50 one dollar bills taped inside it! I surprised him on his birthday and baked him his favorite German chocolate cake and left it in his car. I had put it on a slant and the frosting leaked all over his car seat!

Oh the look of love and rage at the same time I will never forget.

He taught me how to shoot near perfect free throws and took me to see the Harlem globetrotters. He bought me my second car and was the first to take me to lunch after my first doomed wedding.

When I moved to California he sent me frozen white castles, kowalski kielbasa and my favorite sanders fudge topping.

As a English teacher he also sent back my letters to him corrected with red pen!

He was there to help me as a troubled teenager as well as a single mom. There for my fairytale second wedding and for my children.

We used to always meet at our favorite Jewish dinner when he was in California and catch up. He thought my younger son Connor brilliant as well as a bit crazy and full of mischief, just like my dad as a child! My daughter he loved to randomly send books and was proud of her vocabulary. He gave my older son Nick lots of advice and Detroit pistons shirts and faygo caps!

I will never forget how my dad jumped in his car when he found out I was in a bad car accident and drove 6 hours straight to the hospital. He stopped to get my favorite meal at DZ Akins (our favorite lunch

spot) and held my hand.

I hadn't held his hand in so long and it gave me so much comfort.

When he was in the hospital I desperately wanted to comfort him like he had comforted me. I stayed awake 2 nights in a row just trying with all my mental energy to hold out my hand and concentrate on him feeling it in his hospital bed miles away.

He sent me a message the next day before he passed away. An object appeared to me at work standing straight and tall and white like the cross on my church. I heard the words "Stand Tall" and knew my dad had sent them.

I replied , Dad, I'm trying . Then squared my shoulders and tried to be strong.

He passed away a couple hours later.

I started to doubt I heard the words and I opened a book a friend had given me about grieving and how spirits can contact you. A page clip was on the section about hearing voices of your loved one and not to doubt. My friend said she had taken all the book clips out before she had loaned me the book.

Dad, yet again, you find a way to help me when I need it the most. Every card ends with Enjoy! Every phone call with "I love you, thank you for calling".

I will miss you Dad and I will do my best to Stand Tall . I love you forever.



Renee Quiggle - December 07, 2020 at 10:09 PM

NG

Renee, we are so very sorry for you in the loss of your dad. He sounded like a wonderful man, and a strong influence in your life. He had to be proud of the wonderful woman that you are. We pray for God's comfort for you at this difficult time.

God bless, Nancy and Bryce Gardner (CCLG)

Nancy Gardner - December 14, 2020 at 03:59 PM

KS

“*Dad, I will miss your smart wit and debating politics with you. I'm glad you made it back to Michigan as you wanted . Wish we had more time together. Coney's will always bring back fond memory's. Rest in Peace Dear old Dad. A.K.A Polish Prince.*

Your son Keith

keith swalec - December 02, 2020 at 01:58 PM



JM

“*Shared many Polish dinners with John some he made like fresh polish sausage with barley he made and gave to me. He had beautiful blue eyes like my mom and I always told him that , he just smiled. We always talked about food and would tell me what he was making. I have wonderful memories of him in my heart 🙏 rest in the glory of God my friend.*

joann marciciak - November 30, 2020 at 03:39 PM

BC

“ On behalf of the Capuchin brothers, I offer my deepest sympathies on the passing of John. It is truly humbling to receive memorial donations in honor of John's life. Please be assured of the brother's prayers for the entire Swalec family during this great time of grief. May perpetual light shine upon John.

Br Nick Blattner Ofm Capuchin - November 30, 2020 at 01:38 PM

SA

“ So sorry to hear of John's passing. A blessing that he had time with family when he came back to Michigan

Sherman Ampey - November 29, 2020 at 06:53 PM

GP

“ So sorry to hear about John. I will remember him from our grade school days at St. Hyacinth and High School days at Saint Stanislaus where he was known as Little John. Rest in peace.
Georgeanne (Cetnar) Padot

Georgeanne Padot - November 29, 2020 at 06:21 PM

AS

Little John! That's funny. Thanks for sharing such a nice memory of my dad. -Andrea Swalec

Andrea Swalec - November 30, 2020 at 11:36 AM

JA

My condolences to the family. John often walked Wrightstown Square streets and when you met him on the road he always had a story to tell. One of our residents walked with a walker and he gave her a horn to put on her walker to let people know she was there. He had a good heart. So glad he was able to see all of his family in Michigan. Joan Adams

Joan Adams - November 30, 2020 at 10:14 PM

KP

“ We are so very sorry that John lost his battle with COVID. I know he looked forward to being in Michigan with his family and friends, and we had hoped to visit you on our next road trip. We will miss him.

May our love surround you and your family.

Kristy, Joe, Erick and Jenny

Kristin Phillips - November 28, 2020 at 10:04 PM

MS

“ Will certainly miss our visits with you over Steve’s & Theresa’s house. May Doris find strength with her family by her side. Rest In Peace John. With Love, Mary Stieber

mary Stieber - November 25, 2020 at 10:28 PM

SS

“ My brother. Miss your crazy personality, sense of humor and random texts and photos. Rest in peace John.

Love,

Steve and Theresa



stephen swalec - November 25, 2020 at 07:51 PM