



John W. Jensen

May 19, 1942 - September 7, 2024

John Walter Jensen, age 82, a longtime resident of Plymouth, MI and Deerfield Beach, FL; and a deeply-loved husband, father, grandfather, advisor, and friend, passed away peacefully at home, surrounded by family and his favorite music, on September 7, 2024, after experiencing kidney issues and complications from surgery.

Throughout his medical ups and downs over the past few months, John always kept his sense of humor and philosophical, pragmatic outlook. Every nurse and doctor who helped try to heal him loved him. He was so strong; his determination to bounce back for his family worked after each setback, until his body told him, “No more.”

Throughout his life, he was quietly funny, loved by little kids and animals, and a real gentleman. He taught his kids a love for the natural environment, equality and respect for people of all backgrounds, and that truth, ethics, and devotion to family are the paramount ways to live a quality life.

He loved a good laugh, a great meal, and a gin and tonic during “attitude adjustment hour” (A.K.A. “happy hour”). John was an excellent swimmer, at one point mastering the skill of holding his breath while pulling himself underwater for three lengths of the pool in a row, much to the awe of his children. In addition, being the son of one of the best cooks ever, John was a

grill master, making the best fall-off-the-bone ribs (coated in his homemade barbeque sauce) regularly over the years for friends and family, among many, many other wonderful dishes. In addition, he enjoyed reading, keeping up with the news, history, college football, following the stock market, and trying new restaurants.

His family cherishes all the memory-building trips they took together: from the Leelanau Peninsula each summer to Seattle countless times, from Lake Ogemaw to Deerfield Beach, and from Knoxville to California over the years.

He and his devoted wife of 57 years, Arlene, were proud to meet and keep so many wonderful friends, including those they met during their first years as Michiganders, excellent neighbors, the Plymouth "First Friday" revelers, the gang at Sommer Dorf in West Branch, and good friends at the Cove Beach Club during the winters.

In terms of his life story, John grew up in Knoxville, TN, the son of Chicago transplants, and attended college at Miami University in Ohio, where he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity, graduating in 1964. After college, he served a two-year stint as a naval officer, stationed in Long Beach, CA, before shipping off to the Philippines and Hong Kong, and later to the coasts of Vietnam. His Navy days gave him a lifelong love of the sea, ships, and nautical navigation.

While in Long Beach, he noticed a Los Angeles public school teacher named Arlene, and they began their lives together, marrying in 1967 and moving to Michigan after he was hired by the Ford Motor Company, from which he retired in 1998 after a 32-year career as a Purchasing Manager. He enjoyed many wonderful years of retirement, devoting much time to his adoring grandchildren as well as his hobbies.

John is preceded in death by his parents Walter A. and Bertha L. Jensen and

is survived by his beloved wife, Arlene M. (nee Shestak) Jensen, son Erik (Leilani) of Seattle, WA, daughter Julie of Plymouth, cherished grandchildren Lila and Tate, loyal grand-dog Ryker the Great Dane (who spent many-a-day by his side in the skilled nursing center as well as in John's last moments), sister Barbara (William) Flanagan of Coral Springs, FL, and nieces Chris, Kelly, and Erin.

Memorial contributions may be made to the Capuchin Soup Kitchen of Detroit or Gleaners Community Food Bank of Southeastern Michigan.

To share a memory, please use the share a memory tab on this webpage.

Tribute Wall

JM

“ I am deeply saddened to learn of John’s passing. I sorrow for his family and all those that knew and loved him. I sorrow, too, for the lost opportunities his fraternity brothers and I experience by not maintaining a closer, more aware, relationship; for John was loved and greatly appreciated during his years at Miami University and his residence in the Sigma Chi house that we all shared. We all enjoyed a deep and enduring brotherhood which Swede embodied with the belief that all people should act with warmth and equality toward one another. He is remembered as being rather quiet yet friendly and giving of his time for others. As another has said – the word “gentleman” well describes him.

I remember John’s Knoxville connection to Jack Ruggles (another fraternity brother) and his expressed grieve at learning that Jack was KIA in Vietnam. John was the primary force that ensured that a grandfather’s clock that had been donated to the fraternity in Jack’s memory was perpetually maintained and its booming announcement of every hour would never cease – in similitude to the remembrance of others. In short, John (“Swede”) was just a really good guy -- with whom I sincerely wish I had had greater opportunity to spend more time with – for, surely, he had the ability to cause others to become better.

Jim Morrison

Jim Morrison - October 03, 2024 at 02:43 AM

JJ

Thank you so much. The whole family is so very touched by your tribute to him. We, too, are sorry for YOUR loss of The Swede💔💔

Julie Jensen - October 03, 2024 at 04:35 PM

BM

“ John "Swede" Jensen was a Sigma Chi fraternity brother of mine at Miami of Ohio, class of 1964. Unfortunately, we rarely crossed paths after graduation, but I well remember Swede as a good friend and a brother who was always quick to lend a hand around our fraternity house.

Our junior year I was the chapter's social chairman which often required cleaning up the house before a party or open house (i.e. dates allowed). Swede would always be the first one to help me....even before I asked anyone for assistance. I wish we had lived closer so I could have continued to enjoy his valued friendship in our post college years. Rest in peace, Brother John. Brian Moriarty. Cincinnati, Ohio.

Brian Moriarty - October 02, 2024 at 07:54 PM

TR

In addition to sharing the fraternity connection, we were both midshipmen in the NROTC unit at Miami University. John was a breath of fresh air, always fun to be around and quick to lend a hand. I especially remember his wonderful sense of humor. As we were planning

a 60th reunion of our Miami graduation this spring I was blessed with the task of following up with some of the brother who indicated that they would not be participating in the reunion. As a result I had a couple of delightful and enjoyable phone conversations with John. While it was a treat for me I do not believe John fully disclosed the extent or seriousness of his health issues. I only wish that he could have had a few more years so all of the brother at the reunion could share my joy of reconnecting with our good buddy and brother, Swede. In Hoc Tom "TR"

Rogers

Tom Rogers - October 03, 2024 at 12:03 AM

JJ

This was so lovely of you to post. We, like you, cherished him and miss him deeply. Thank you for your fond remembrance....

Julie Jensen - October 03, 2024 at 04:36 PM

GS

“ To Arlene, Erik, Julie and family.
It was an honor to have JW as a true friend of 57 years.
He was a man of character with a great sense of humor and intelligence...
From Murray Lake to backyard bbqs, holiday brunch at Fox Hills, numerous dining adventures, John was always fun and engaging.
In the business world, John was highly respected as a man of integrity.
He was truly one of the good guys in this world.
Love and peace to all of the Jensen family.
Greg

Gregory Siemasz - September 23, 2024 at 07:35 PM

JJ

Thank you so much for this. We whole-heartedly agree with your sentiments. Thank you both for being such great friends. Love to you!

Julie Jensen - October 03, 2024 at 04:38 PM

LV

“ I second Larry with the great memories of John as we grew up. That summer in Knoxville was a stressful one for my family and John lightened things up and kept us laughing.
Visits to Plymouth always meant lots of shared laughter, lots of shared stories, and the famous "Jensen Special".
Whenever I picture John, it is with a twinkle in his eye.
He made the world a better place with his love, laughter, and actions.
Much Love, Linda Varone

Linda Varone - September 20, 2024 at 02:30 PM

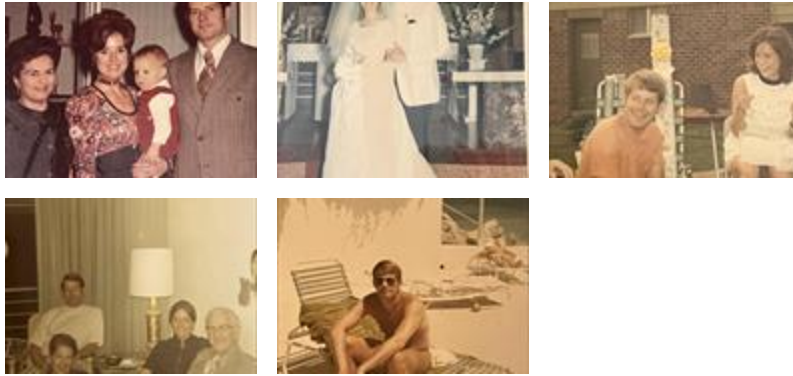
JJ

Thank you, Aunt Linda. Your words are so true and very special to us.
Love you 💔

Julie Jensen - October 03, 2024 at 04:39 PM

EJ

“ 16 files added to the tribute wall



Erik Jensen - September 13, 2024 at 02:24 PM

EJ

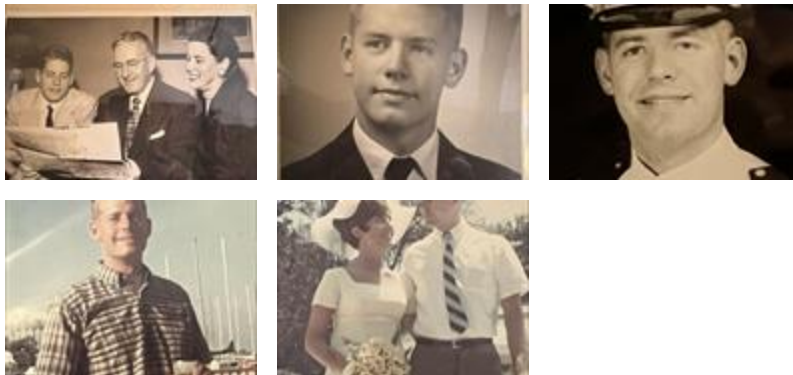
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Erik Jensen - September 13, 2024 at 02:22 PM

EJ

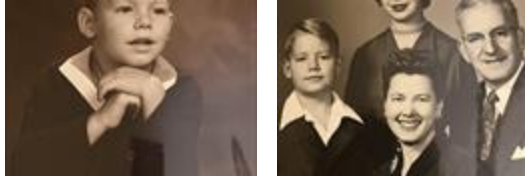
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Erik Jensen - September 13, 2024 at 02:18 PM

EJ

“ 2 files added to the tribute wall



Erik Jensen - September 13, 2024 at 02:16 PM

EJ

“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Erik Jensen - September 13, 2024 at 02:15 PM

LV

“ I was very lucky to have known John my entire life. He was much more than a cousin to me. When John was 16 and I was seven, I spent most of the summer with John and his parents in Knoxville. While there, John taught me how to shoot a basketball, go on exciting rides with him to the store, and getting over my fear of dogs by getting know his dog, Jet. John's sense of humor started early, he would introduce my sister and I to his friends as Zeke and Zelda, his cousins from Chicago.

Shortly after moving to Michigan, John came to our home in Ann Arbor to watch the first Super Bowl; all these years later I still remember watching that game with John. John and Arlene came to both my high school and college graduations and John gave me some great guidance and advice when I was a senior at Michigan that eventually led to my 21 year career at Ford Motor.

Even after moving to California, when my wife and I would travel back to Michigan for football games or class reunions, we always made a point of visiting with John and his family. His easy going sense of humor always made me feel better (along with his "Jensen Special" Manhattans).

We will miss John, but always cherish the times that we spent with him and our many memories.

Larry & Karen Varone

Larry Varone - September 13, 2024 at 11:19 AM

JJ

Love these memories and you! We are all together in missing this great man.💔

Julie Jensen - October 03, 2024 at 04:41 PM

LC

“ Oh, so many wonderful memories from our childhoods! We all loved John and had such good fam jam times with the Jensen family. All these years I have looked forward to the John and Ar update from Dee & Greg ;) Our parents have been so lucky to have such wonderful, life long friends and know John will be missed greatly. Love and hugs to the entire Jensen family. He fought the good fight and I know he is resting in peace. ❤️ Love to you all during this hard time. - Lisa

lisa siemasz chasey - September 12, 2024 at 08:53 PM

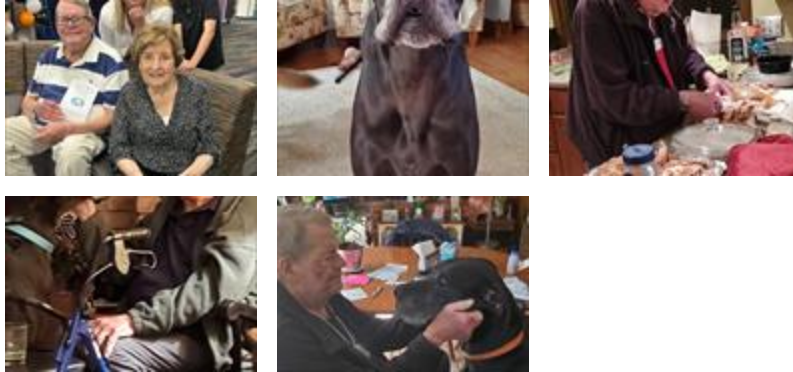
JU

Love you! Thanks for that.

Julie - September 12, 2024 at 09:12 PM

JJ

“ 13 files added to the tribute wall



Julie Jensen - September 12, 2024 at 07:41 PM