

In Memory of John Schwetman

January 27, 1942 - January 12, 2023



Dr. John William Schwetman, 81, of Huntsville, Texas, was born on January 27, 1942 in Boston, Massachusetts and passed peacefully away with his loving family surrounding him on January 12, 2023.

He was the second of three children of Dr. Herbert DeWitt Schwetman and Mary Jean Knight of Waco, Texas.

John graduated from Waco High School in 1960. He received his BA in 1963 and MA in 1965 from Baylor University in Waco; and he received his PhD from The University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. He taught many English courses at

Central Missouri State College in Warrensburg, Missouri, as he was pursuing his PhD. John moved his family to Huntsville, Texas, in 1972 to accept a position on the faculty at Sam Houston State University. During his 30-year tenure at Sam Houston he enjoyed teaching courses in his specialties of Medieval Literature and Linguistics, as well as many other courses in the department. He traveled to Ireland and England to continue his research on 16th Century Old English War poems, which became the focus of many articles he wrote and presentations he made at professional societies. In addition, he served on the Faculty Senate at Sam Houston and was elected as Faculty Senate Chair. He received the honor of Professor Emeritus upon his retirement. Dr. Schwetman loved teaching and often remarked that if they knew how much he enjoyed it they might not want to pay him! He also was heard to say that if we do not love what we do we should find something that makes us happy and do that. Some of those things John found that made him happy were: taking a group of students on a study abroad to London; writing and publishing in many publications; being a lover of books on every subject; birding internationally and compiling an impressive life-list; and sponsoring the APO Fraternity at SHSU.

One of John's favorite activities, possibly based in the Boy Scout life, was a 425-mile trip in a canoe with his friends Bill and Tom down the Brazos River from Waco to the mouth of the River in the Gulf of Mexico. In addition, he went around the world with a group of Boy Scouts after a World Jamboree in the Philippines as a teenager. Travel continued to be a part of his life always. John and his wife Jenny traveled extensively from the St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea, to staying in a castle in France, to floating down the Amazon River, to Antarctica and just about everywhere in between, making lifetime friends with fellow travelers. John also combined his love for birds with his love of traveling and spent a great deal of time identifying birds, along with Jenny, in Texas, other states, and around the world. He served as president of the Huntsville Audubon Society and the Texas Ornithological Society. John wore his binoculars like others wear a tie.

Although John loved his career as a professor, his greatest joy was in his family. He and Jenny delighted in bringing up their two daughters with all that encompassed...nature,

travel, flying kites and (to the utter dismay of his mother-in-law Hazel) keeping snakes that he used to share knowledge about with schoolchildren as well as adults. He played basketball, Frisbee, and softball with his daughters, and he took them fishing, camping, backpacking, and on snake hunts. He even installed a turning bar and a ballet bar along with a basketball goal. His daughters' interests became his interests, and he even spent many hours helping to organize a stamp collection into books. John was very supportive of the girls as they participated in the high school band, and he and Jenny delivered a cooler of sodas for the band members after the half-time show at every home game. John and Jenny watched their girls grow up to be university professors just like him. It follows that great happiness came from watching his grandchildren grow to adulthood as he and Jenny took them to faraway places including Africa, Europe, Costa Rica, and the Galapagos Islands. He and Jenny went to every event their grandchildren participated in, including swim meets, dance competitions, school programs, and little league games. He also spent a lot of time reading to them and even helped them with homework.

Professor Emeritus Schwetman was preceded in death by his parents, his sister, Dr. Rosemary Schwetman Alexander, and his sister-in-law, Nanene Hall Schwetman.

He is survived by his wife of 61 years, who loves him eternally, Jenny Noe Schwetman; his daughters: Sondra Paige Schwetman and her husband, Patrick Williams of California; and Dr. Melinda Schwetman Miller and her husband, R. Marsh Miller, Jr. of Huntsville, TX; his grandchildren: R. Marsh Miller, III, JD and his partner, Garrett King, PA, of Houston; and Melissa Paige Miller, BCBA, of Austin; his brother, Dr. Herbert DeWitt Schwetman, Jr. and his wife, Anne Greenway of Austin; his brother-in-law, Dr. William P. Alexander III, and many cousins, nieces, nephews, friends, and former students whose lives were enriched by the experience of knowing him.

The family would like to thank our Pastor, Dr. Craig King, caregivers Pat Oliphant, Maye Ross, and others for their loving care, and also the kind ICU nurses and doctors at HMH and Memorial Hermann, The Woodlands.