



Joseph I. Chapo

September 18, 1924 - August 21, 2020

Chapo, Joseph I.

Joseph I. Chapo (1924-2020) passed away peacefully at his home in Clayton on August 21, 2020, just one month shy of his 96th birthday, with his loving wife of 67 years, Anna Chapo, by his side. In addition to Anna, Joe is survived by his children, Eva (Terry) Dean, Anna/"Toots" Zavradinos, Martha/"Marty" Chapo, Joe Chapo, Jr., Paul (Chrissy) Chapo, his grandchildren, Nikki Zavradinos, Morgan (Joel Habermehl) Dean, Joshua (Lindsay) Koch, Dallas Dean, Brian Koch, Grace Chapo, Nicholas Chapo, Tom Chapo, and Michael Chapo, and great-grandchildren, Jackson Koch, Kane Zavradinos, and Stephen Zavradinos. Joseph is also survived by his nieces and nephews, Gabe (Pat) Csengody, Julius (Mary) Csengody, Tom, (Susan) Csengody, Agnes (Dan) Csengody Keating, and Judi (Greg) Csengody Mattingly and their families. Joseph is predeceased by his father, Joseph Chapo, his mother, Irene Mundbrod Chapo, his brother, Julius (Marika) Chapo, his sister, Mary (Julius) Csengody, his nephew Dennis Csengody, and his granddaughter, Stacy Zavradinos.

Joe was born in Szerencs, Hungary in 1924. He left Hungary at the age of 18 during WWII. Over the next few years, he moved about Europe, living in Paris, France and Fribourg, Germany. Although some of his time in Germany was as a prisoner of war under American-occupied territory, he lived comfortably and

enjoyed the lifestyle of a sought-after water polo player. Initially uninterested in leaving this part of his life behind, he eventually realized there was more for him in the US. St Louis was, during that post-war period, a “gateway city” for Hungarian refugees. Joe was reunited in St. Louis with his mother, brother and sister who had already emigrated in the years prior. Not long after, Joe met Anna von Matyas, herself a Hungarian refugee and immigrant, who had come to the US in 1949 to study at Stephens College, with her family soon following. Despite having grown up 60 miles from one another in Hungary, it took a night out at the Esquire Bowl in Clayton for them to meet.

Joe was an athlete who, over the course of his life, played semi-pro European handball, soccer, water polo, and tennis (well into his 70s). He enjoyed an expansive circle of friends, many of whom he met while playing tennis around St. Louis. Joe had a reputation on the courts as a strong competitor from opponents of all ages. As much as he enjoyed a great match on the tennis court, he lived for the comradery found after matches – enjoying a beer or two, along with friendly conversation on many subjects ... politics, religion, jokes (oftentimes rolled into one).

Joe graduated from St. Louis Business College in the 1950s, which led to a very successful career in accounting and operations at numerous local businesses, including Meletio’s Sea Pass, People’s Liquor, and 905 Liquor, where he was VP of Operations. Joe also worked as the general manager of St. Louis Produce Row until his “first” retirement. After Produce Row, Joe continued working as a consultant, providing accounting, bookkeeping, and tax preparation services to small businesses and individuals. He did this more for the love of the work and interaction than for financial gain. He worked more hours than prior to retiring, although making the dining room table his desk was not Anna’s favorite new home décor.

After Joe and Anna wed in 1953, they lived in East St. Louis where they

started their family. By the time they moved to Brentwood in 1958 they had two daughters, Eva and Toots, and Marty on the way. Four years later, Joseph Jr. was born, and then, five years after that, Paul. Joe and Anna raised the family in Brentwood, and only sold their house, to their granddaughter, Nikki, when they made the decision to move into a retirement community in 2009. The Chapo Family loved their home and life in Brentwood, enjoying the Brentwood Swim Club and many lifelong friends met in the neighborhood and at St. Mary Magdalen Parish. Anna and the kids recall nights around the dinner table where Joe would challenge them with pop quizzes on wide-ranging subjects. Math pop quizzes still evoke a shuddering response from all the kids to this day.

Joe helped coach various CYC teams over the years while the kids were in grade school. He loved teaching the fundamentals as well as finer points of the game, in particular with soccer. One friend recalls, "I'll never forget the ball going out of bounds and Mr. Chapo would juggle it 5-6 times before giving it back to us to continue the game." The man loved sports, and in particular, he loved watching soccer. His children have many fond memories attending St. Louis Stars, Steamers and early-era local club soccer games with Dad. A Sunday morning favorite was Soccer Made in Germany. He learned to love the St. Louis Cardinals, and attended his first Cardinal games at Sportsman's Park. In his later years, when he could no longer attend games in person, Dad tuned in to soccer matches broadcast in Spanish (although he did not speak the language), as well as tennis, baseball, football, and although he never played it, even golf, because it was a sport...and that was good enough for him.

Never one to decline a party invitation, Joe was drawn to being with people. He never met a stranger, was a charmer, loved music, and was an expert joke/storyteller. True to his European roots, Joe could be found at the old

Strassenfest celebrations, no matter where they took place. There he would find old friends and make new ones while singing songs, playing games, and of course having a beer.

He had a discriminating palate – awarding his favorite dishes and libations with the Joe Chapo “Excellent Good!” seal of approval. He was softhearted always and strong-willed at times. He could laugh at himself, or cheer someone up who was feeling low. He was organized and strategic in his thinking. He sympathetically shared his concerns for loved ones who might be suffering one of life’s challenges. His empathy ran deep. And his humor was endless.

Joe and Anna lived, very happily in Bethesda Barclay House in Clayton since moving from Brentwood. Joe, who so valued connecting with people, was known to go down to dinner in advance of Anna, in order to warmly greet and visit with friends as they entered the dining room.

Our family is grateful that Joe was able to continue living at home, at Barclay House, as his Alzheimer’s and loss of mobility progressed. We wish to extend our deep gratitude to the numerous loving caregivers who provided care for Joe over the past few years. We thank Mario Tucker of Private Home Care and his team, in particular Joan Rodriguez and most recently, Juanita Smith and Felicia Bunting.

A celebration of Joseph’s life will take place at a date to be announced in the future. In memory of Joe please consider a donation to St. Mary of Victories Church (The Hungarian Church in St. Louis), St. Louis Children’s Hospital, The Alzheimer’s Association or The International Institute of St. Louis.

Tribute Wall

MR

“ Dear Anna and Family....So sorry you lost Joe! He had a great long life and was always a pleasure to be around...well remember the great 80th Birthday at the amazing historic Maplewood bowling alley...our thoughts and prayers are with you...

Mary and Zsolt Rummy

Mary Rummy - August 30, 2020 at 09:16 PM



Marty Chapo

*Thank you, Mary and Zsolt. So sweet of you to recall the bowling party. Dad always enjoyed your company. Your kindness is appreciated.
~Marty Chapo*

Marty Chapo - September 07, 2020 at 06:11 PM

RC

“ To the entire Chapo Family: John and I are so sorry to hear of Joe's passing. He was a wonderful family man, among other beautiful virtues. Joe always had a smile on his face, and a great story to tell. He and Anna have raised a BEAUTIFUL family. We will always fondly remember him. He will be remembered in our prayers.
With love,

Rosie and John Cowlen

Rosemary Cowlen - August 25, 2020 at 02:16 PM

AZ

Thank you John and Rosie. Dad always loved spending time with you both.

Anna (Tootsie) Zavrados - August 28, 2020 at 01:16 PM

FW

Joe was a good boss, neighbor and friend. May God grant him eternal rest and comfort and peace to Anna and his family.

Fred Weckenmann - August 30, 2020 at 09:52 AM

Marty Chapo

“ 15 files added to the album Joe Chapo



Marty Chapo - August 25, 2020 at 10:17 AM

MF

“ Tootsie,

So sorry for your loss - we will have you in our thoughts and prayers.

Mary and Chris Fava

Mary Fava - August 24, 2020 at 06:38 PM