



Joseph Hovorka

August 21, 1939 - March 9, 2026

Joseph Jerome Hovorka, 86, of Topeka, Kansas passed away in the early hours of Monday, March 9, 2026, after receiving last rites. Born on August 21, 1939, Joe was the fourth child of Dr. Joseph John Hovorka and Edmonia Lee “Eddie Lee” (Colvin). His father, a surgeon, met Eddie Lee while working at the Hertzler Clinic in Halstead, Kansas in the 1920s; the family later moved to Emporia where Joe was born. His parents’ deep commitment to community and the Catholic Church shaped Joe’s life. He grew up alongside his older siblings Mary, Sally, and Jack. Joe was an avid hunter, Boy Scout, altar server, and active in sports and school plays. Joe often recalled childhood years in Destin, Florida, where his father was stationed as a military surgeon during WWII. At age 16, he had a unique opportunity to tour Alaska, where he wrestled mountain lions, surveyed the Arctic Circle, and had many other adventures over a course of six weeks.

Joe attended Emporia State University, joining Sigma Phi Epsilon, Navy ROTC, and the Newman Club. He began in law but found his true calling in history. Through the Newman Club, he met Ruth Julane Wells whose warmth and spirit he won with sincerity, humor, and charm. They married on June 22, 1963, in Julane's hometown of Pratt, Kansas, and spent a romantic honeymoon on Bemidji Lake, Minnesota before beginning teaching careers in Topeka. Shortly after, Joe and Julane spent a memorable summer-long honeymoon in Europe cementing their shared love of travel. Mementos and

photos from that trip remain family treasures. Their shared faith and love of family sustained a marriage of more than 62 years.

Joe and Julane raised four children — John (Wendy) Hovorka, Anna (Michael) Ramirez, Susan (Scott) Martin, and Mary (Mark) Brazier — and were active parishioners at Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church. He and Julane were active in Marriage Encounter and Light of the World church ministries. Additionally, Joe was a member of the Knights of Columbus, served as an altar server with his son, and was a faithful Eucharistic adorer. Joe was active in numerous community organizations, including the stewardship of the Shunganunga Creek that bordered his backyard as an elected board member of the creek Drainage Board. He put his family first, sharing household duties and modeling equality and devotion.

A lifelong learner and devoted teacher, Joe loved history — especially the Civil War and WWII — and brought stories to life for students and his children. He loved woodworking and furniture refinishing projects. He loved talking about his kids, especially their personal accomplishments and that they all practice their Catholic faith. He enjoyed golf, current events, movies, folk music, travel with Julane, cooking his special spaghetti sauce, and baking breads, and cookies. He and Julane loved spending time with family and guests, often hosting fondue nights, stellar steak barbecues, and rollicking game nights of bridge and charades. He doted on his twelve grandchildren, Maureen, Zach, Gus (Julia), Joseph, Jack, Max (Ale), George, Gloria, RJ, Rachel, Con, and Viggo.

Joe was known for his gregarious nature, dry wit, colorful language, irreverent humor, and a remarkable gift for conversation. In recent years he faced significant health challenges — heart disease, Type II diabetes, necrotizing fasciitis, and dementia — and was lovingly cared for by Julane, Anna, Michael, Maureen, and many devoted family members and friends. Their care

and his courage during this time were a testament to faith and family. The family wishes to express gratitude to The Gardens at Aldersgate, especially the staff on the TCU Unit.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents and siblings. He is survived by his wife; children; grandchildren; and extended family and friends who will miss his storytelling and warmth. While the family is saddened by his loss and assured in his salvation, they humbly request prayers for his soul.

Joseph's family will greet friends Thursday, March 12, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. with a rosary being prayed at 6:30 p.m. at Most Pure Heart of Mary Catholic Church, 3601 SW 17th Street, Topeka KS, 66604. Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Friday, March 13, at 11 a.m. at the Church. Burial will take place at Noon on Saturday, March 14, at Greenlawn Cemetery in Pratt KS, 1402 Stout Street, Pratt KS 67124.

Memorial contributions may be made to Most Pure Heart of Mary Schola Cantorum and sent in care of Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home, 2801 SW Urish Road, Topeka KS 66614

Condolences may be send online to www.kevinbrennanfamily.com

Cemetery Details

Greenlawn Cemetery

Pratt, KS

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 12. 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM (CT)

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 SW 17th Street
Topeka, KS 66604

Rosary

MAR 12. 6:30 PM (CT)

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 SW 17th Street
Topeka, KS 66604

Mass of Christian Burial

MAR 13. 11:00 AM (CT)

Most Pure Heart of Mary Church
3601 SW 17th Street
Topeka, KS 66604

Burial

MAR 14. 12:00 PM (CT)

Greenlawn Cemetery
1402 Stout St
Pratt, KS 67124

Tribute Wall



“ Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Joseph Hovorka



Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home - March 12 at 02:44 PM

JH

“ I did my KU student teaching with Joe in 1971 in junior high.....I had been with him for a week or two when he got ill and asked if I could "take over" all his classes for him and I did, green as I was! I was an Army Veteran and also loved civil War and WWII so we got along great and I loved my experience with him so much. I've never forgotten Joe or my experience with him, now at 78 and long retired from the school administration business myself. Condolences th Joe's wonderful family.

John Hetlinger
Chapin, Lake Murray South Carolina

John Hetlinger - March 13 at 11:16 AM

BP

“ Dear Julane and family,
I am so sorry for your loss of Joe. He worked in my classroom at Topeka High School. He was a delight to work with, and his sense of humor was great. We were co-workers who also became friends. He added so much to our classroom discussions. We had many wonderful conversations and discussions, and many laughs. We enjoyed talking about our kids, and sharing stories. He was always concerned and cared about others.

I know his faith was strong, and may that be a comfort to all of you. May God wrap his loving arms around all of you.

Joe will be deeply missed. God Bless all of you,

Bev Page-Ferrell

Bev Page-Ferrell - March 12 at 05:12 PM

MM

“ Maja M. purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of Joseph Hovorka.



Maja M. - March 12 at 01:46 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Joseph Hovorka.



March 11 at 04:49 PM

TC

“ The Johns Hopkins Burn Center purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Joseph Hovorka.



The Johns Hopkins Burn Center - March 11 at 03:29 PM

TC

“ The Johns Hopkins Burn Center planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph Hovorka.

The Johns Hopkins Burn Center - March 11 at 03:29 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Joseph Hovorka.

March 11 at 01:54 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Joseph Hovorka.



March 11 at 01:54 PM

JW

“ Julane and Anna, My condolences on the loss of your husband and father. May he rest in the peace of Christ.

Janelle Wenzl - March 11 at 08:50 AM

JH

“ We are saddened to learn of the passing of your dad, my uncle and my own father's brother. I hope you can feel the love and support surrounding you now. Joe will be remembered with gratitude and how he shaped all of us. Please know we are holding each of you in our thoughts and prayers as you navigate this difficult time. With love - Jeff and family

Jeff Hovorka - March 10 at 09:28 PM

AC

“ Hovorka family:

*I am so sorry to hear of Joe's passing.
I have fond memories of many days spent with your family. A house full of activity. Joe's wit and sense of humor were always in evidence. Wishing you peace and comfort as you celebrate a life well lived.*

Adam Crouch - March 10 at 08:26 PM

SA

“ Stephanie A. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Joseph Hovorka.

Stephanie A. - March 10 at 07:12 PM

CH

“ Sending lots of love to Julane and family. Uncle Joe was a favorite among all the cousins, always making us laugh, always willing to share his great knowledge, always a bright light. We are so sorry for your loss. This photo has always been a favorite of mine. It was taken in 1961. That’s Joe, standing. Much love, Caitlin and John Hendel



Caitlin Hendel - March 10 at 06:36 PM

RM

We send condolences to your entire family. On the days Joe and I arrived for work at Topeka High School and had a short visit, the day just plain started out better. It’s a true blessing to know such a wonderful man and his family.

Ray McComas - March 10 at 07:45 PM

MW

A very fine man. Very sorry for your loss.

Mark works - March 12 at 09:14 AM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Joseph Hovorka.



March 10 at 05:55 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Joseph Hovorka.

March 10 at 05:55 PM