



Thomas J. Schwarz

October 28, 1949 - May 15, 2025

Thomas J. Schwarz, 75, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by his wife and four children on Thursday, May 15, 2025.

Tom was born October 28, 1949 in Traverse City, Michigan to William and Shirley (Grosvenor) Schwarz.

He grew up in Leland, Michigan and as a first generation college student, graduated from Michigan State University with his Bachelor's Degree in social work. Tom devoted his career to helping people, especially children. He believed in providing services in a way that ensured the dignity of all. With his profound empathy, integrity and leadership, Tom advanced his career and the family welfare work he so deeply believed in as the Director of the Family Independence Agency in Ontonagon, Missaukee and Wexford counties. He retired as Out State Operations Administrator after 36 years with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Although Tom was proud of his career, his greatest pride came from his loving family and marriage of 56 years. He met his beautiful wife JoAnn at a summer dance and, by 18 years of age, they were married. Tom and JoAnn had four children who they raised to be empathetic and kind, all having successful careers of their own. Tom was a devoted and adoring husband, dad and grandpa. Whether it be through summer trips to South Manitou Island,

campfire singalongs or walks in nature, he loved nothing more than enjoying time together with all “his chickens home to roost.”

Tom had a love of music that he brought to others playing with Duck Soup, Mulligan Stew, and his most recent band, the Inland String Band. He was a great vocalist and string player, gathering family and friends to enjoy folktales and songs of the Great Lakes. Tom was an avid sailor and loved time on the water. Michigan’s Upper Peninsula and the Manitou Islands held a special spot in Tom’s heart. He appreciated the simple things like wind in the trees, a catchy melody, and the comfort of a loyal pup at his side. He loved to travel, especially visiting the National Parks.

Tom’s incredible kindness, gentle nature, love of all critters, tremendous sense of humor and steadfast loyalty will be part of the lasting legacy that he was proud to instill in his children and family. He will be so lovingly and sweetly remembered by all who knew him, and his music will forever live on in our hearts and the songs we sing.

He is survived by his wife, JoAnn; children: Tommy (Sara Soderstrom) Schwarz, Jessica Schwarz, Katie (Justin) Burger, Megan (Kevin Koester) Schwarz; grandchildren: Mira, Isaac, Martin, Owen, Nora, and Finn and his sister, Tracy Scott.

We will gather all those who knew and loved Tom on Friday, May 23rd from 4:00 to 7:00 pm at Peterson Funeral & Cremation Services, 205 E Cass St., Cadillac, MI 49601. In lieu of flowers memorial contributions may be made to the After 26 Project, www.after26project.org or any charity of your choice serving children and families. An online guestbook is available at www.petersonfh.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

MAY 23. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Peterson Funeral and Cremation Services
205 East Cass Street
Cadillac, MI 49601
info@petersonfh.com

Tribute Wall

SB

“ I was lucky enough to work in the Cadillac office for few years when Tom Schwarz was the Director at Wexford/Missaukee. I transferred closer to home, but was lucky enough to work for him again as my Regional boss in the Family to Family program. I am so grateful to have been able to work for him. Tom had the ability to take risks and always with helping children and their families. I am sure you are in heaven working to make that an even better place!❤️

Sherie Bailey - August 11, 2025 at 09:12 PM



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

May 22, 2025 at 12:55 PM



“ Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



May 22, 2025 at 12:55 PM

KH

“ Kyle, Nadine, William, & Nicholas Hogg planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas J. Schwarz.

Kyle, Nadine, William, & Nicholas Hogg - May 22, 2025 at 09:26 AM

KH

“ Kyle, Nadine, William, & Nicholas Hogg purchased the *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



Kyle, Nadine, William, & Nicholas Hogg - May 22, 2025 at 09:26 AM



“ Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



May 21, 2025 at 08:24 PM



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

May 21, 2025 at 08:24 PM

SF

“ Scott and Tammi Forster purchased the *Florist Choice Bouquet* for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



Scott and Tammi Forster - May 21, 2025 at 01:57 PM



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

May 21, 2025 at 01:10 PM



“ Loving Lilies and Roses Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



May 21, 2025 at 01:10 PM



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

May 21, 2025 at 10:31 AM



“ Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



May 21, 2025 at 10:31 AM



“ Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.



May 20, 2025 at 08:55 AM

TD

“ *The Salty Dogs purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.*



The Salty Dogs - May 19, 2025 at 07:27 PM

SM

“ *Stephanie and David Miller purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Thomas J. Schwarz.*



Stephanie and David Miller - May 19, 2025 at 12:58 PM

AB

“ *Tom took a chance on me when I was in my final stages of getting my counseling degree. He allowed me to do my internship in Child Protection Services. Tom placed me with workers that would cultivate my skills and build a support network with me for over 30 years. I will be ever grateful for this experience. The world has a lost a very kind and caring man. Fortunately his legacy lives on in his family. Prayers for all of you Schwarz Family.*

Ann Bush - May 17, 2025 at 09:48 PM

JS

Tom was an amazing leader. I served on the DHS board under Tom's leadership for several terms. He was a wonderful, caring human being with heart for the children and families living in the margins. I learned a lot from Tom as a person and as a leader. Thank you, Tom, for making a difference in this place we call home.

Jackie Soltman - May 19, 2025 at 03:29 AM

MS

“ *JoAnn and Family~please accept our warmest, most sincere condolences. We are profoundly saddened that Tom has passed. He has left a very special mark on this earth and is sorely missed by many.*

Warmly, Barry Lempe and MaryJo Stratman

MaryJo Stratman - May 17, 2025 at 05:14 PM