



Delbert William Hoffmann

January 26, 1948 - January 14, 2025

DELBERT WILLIAM HOFFMANN

Delbert William Hoffmann, one of the inventors of the Taco Pizza, entrepreneur, adventurer, and hunter, died peacefully at home in Versailles, MO, on January 14, 2025. "Del" was born in St. Louis in 1948. He would have celebrated his 77th birthday on January 26th.

He is survived by his wife Donna, the love of his life for 43 years; his children, Dustin W. Hoffmann and Danae L. Lerew (Zachariah); his sister, Charlene Clements (Wayne) of St. Louis; sister-in-law, Sandy Hoffmann of St. Louis; step-granddaughter, Autumn Lerew; a great-grandson, Asher; and his rescue dog, Hershey, whose companionship and devotion gave him peace. He was preceded in death by his parents, Clarence and Mildred (Probst) Hoffmann; brother, Floyd C. Hoffmann and step-grandson, Zachariah Lerew Jr.

Del grew up in west St. Louis County. He attended St. Paul Lutheran Grade School in Des Peres and graduated from Parkway High School in 1966. At a young age, Del was so mischievous with such a love for life that his grandfather nicknamed him "Fireworks." He grew up in a close-knit family with lots of cousins that would meet at the old mulberry tree to plan their next adventure. He played basketball and football in school. Growing up near his grandparents' farm, he loved horses and participated in rodeos, trail riding,

even riding his horse to school.

His high school music teacher discovered his talent for singing. Voice lessons ensued and his tenor voice led him to sing in numerous operas and at weddings. He tried out for the Ted Mack Amateur Hour and even performed at The Muny. His singing of "The Lord's Prayer" touched many hearts.

At nineteen, he moved to Iowa and, from there, he headed to Virginia, where his love for pizza making was formed. He worked with the founders of Pizza Hut, learning the company while it was still young. He returned to Iowa, where he met Joe Whitey, of Happy Joe's Pizza and Ice Cream Parlors. He worked with Joe building company stores, which was when the Taco Pizza was born. Del even had a pizza on the menu named after him: Taco Del Grande. Del left Iowa when Joe gave him the Wisconsin and Illinois territories to develop.

As he grew the business, he settled in Sheboygan in 1977. He was involved in the Sheboygan Jaycees, Noon Optimist, invented the Bratza Pizza for Bratwurst Days and helped with numerous causes. He sponsored fireman, policeman, and youth teams in basketball, volleyball, softball, and golf, even a race car. His franchise had a hot air balloon and a firetruck. The firetruck provided birthday fun, appeared in weddings and parades, and even went to opening day at the Milwaukee Brewers' games. His first date with Donna was on his antique firetruck. Del received countless awards and was most proud of receiving a ring for 25 years of dedication to the Happy Joe's Pizza franchise.

In 1988, the family moved to a farm in Sheboygan Falls which eventually became 4D Farms. He was involved in 4-H projects, and the farm even hosted the famous Lipizzaner Stallions on their tour.

For health reasons, he moved the family to Birnamwood, WI, in 1998. He went from making pizzas to working for Schwans Consumer Brands, delivering

frozen pizzas to grocery stores.

Del had a passion for hunting and conservation of wildlife. He was fortunate to hunt caribou in the Arctic Circle, bear in Canada, pheasants in South Dakota, and deer.

His brother's Alzheimer's diagnosis brought him full circle. In 2013, he moved back to Missouri to be near his family. He loved traveling, camping and being outdoors. He was at peace with a life well-lived with family and friends. His beautiful voice is singing again.

The family will have a celebration of life in spring 2025.

Memorial donations may be made to: www.humanesociety.org/memorial, www.parkinson.org, <https://act.alz.org>.

Cremation arrangements are under the care and direction of the Kidwell-Garber Funeral Home of Versailles.

Tribute Wall

KU

“ First, very sorry for your loss.
This is a little embarrassing. We often ate and drank at Happy Joes.
My senior HS yrs.
Del tolerated our boisterous behavior and he new we were liberating
his large glass mugs, but he never called us on it. Yrs past, and I
would go to Sheboygan to stay in touch. I told him what we did. He
smiled and said, I knew.
That is was what made him the unique. He has left me, and my
friends with great stories and memories. I will personally miss him.

Kurt - February 07, 2025 at 11:22 PM

PS

“ Our introduction to Del was 2(?) years ago during our first and only
visit to their home in Missouri to which Donna had invited my
husband John and me. We spent all afternoon with them during
which Del took me on a ride around his property on what i think was
a 4 wheeler- whatever it was, i decided I didn't need to experience
that again. He obviously was fearless and full of spunk! Me not so
much!
Afterwards, while I spent time with Donna and another friend there,
my husband chatted around a fire with Del for quite awhile, and
afterwards had a glowing report of how enjoyable their chat was,
and not infrequently since has let me know he wanted to get
another opportunity to continue that chat with Del; he had found it
so enjoyable. This was during a time period when Del was evidently
struggling, but John saw none of that. Alas, their property was a bit
of a challenge for us to get to and drive home the same day before
dark, so that next visit never happened. When we got the news of
Del passing on to his next “adventure,” John was so very shocked
and saddened. Thank you, Donna, for that opportunity to meet him
this side of the veil.

peg schlacks - January 25, 2025 at 10:23 AM

GP

“ I'm so sorry to hear of Del's passing. Liz and I send our warm sympathies to Donna and the kids.

--George and Liz Possley

George Possley - January 24, 2025 at 03:45 PM

BK

“ Where do I begin Del and Donna and their family have been a part of the Van Veghel family for as long as I can remember. He was the funnest, most caring, loving man as I grew up and my fondest memories are taking my kids to happy Joe's, but before that, having the happy Joe's fire truck pick me up at church after my wedding Which was 90+ degrees and they just drove around town and didn't care what bar we wanted them to stop at....It's really one of the happiest memories of my life... so many swim meet memories..I know Robbie and Sniper greeted him with open arms and a cold beer... again, so many of the best will be looking down on us! My sympathy and Gods peace to you all

Barbara Kleine - January 23, 2025 at 11:06 PM

JV

“ Celebrating the 1981 Cedar Grove- Belgium girls basketball season was a great high school memory. Donna was our coach so we partied at Happy Joe's. My sympathy to the family.

Jodi VanEss - January 23, 2025 at 09:27 PM

DM

“ So sorry for your loss, sending hugs, thoughts and prayers to Dels family. Del was a great man and friend. I grew up going to Happy Joes. Best pizza and ice cream in town. He was a great sponsor for our women’s softball team. God gained a wonderful angle 🙏❤️

Debbie Meyer - January 23, 2025 at 08:40 PM

JS

“ Where does one begin, growing up across the street from the Hoffman Family. Loved taking care of the kids many years of babysitting. All the fun swimming parties. Taking care of the dogs. Amos was my favorite. Then employment at Happy Joes. He hired me to be Happy the Dog mascot. Then working the ice cream parlor, waitress, making pizza's and delivering pizza's. The fun we had and how much Del taught me over the years. He will be greatly missed. ❤️🙏❤️ Hugs Donna, Dustin and Danae. Miss you all!

Jill Spielvogel - January 23, 2025 at 07:32 PM

JA

“ So very sorry for your loss. Del was a great person friend and neighbor from the day he came to Sheboygan. In 9th grade (1979) I asked Del if he would sponsor our softball team to which he agreed. This led to many future sponsorships and an ongoing role in the SSA. Our thoughts and prayers are with you all, he will be missed.

Jay Adams

Jay Adams - January 23, 2025 at 07:31 PM