

John Lance Swanson



Captain John L. Swanson, SC, USN (Ret.), passed away on 1 April 2026. He was 86 years old.

John was born in Moline, IL, on 16 April 1939 to Paul F. and Marie (Schneider) Swanson. He graduated from the Naval Academy on 6 June 1960 and from Harvard Business School in 1972.

During his 23-year Navy career, he served on or was stationed at Suffolk County (LST-1173); Naval Station Newport, RI; Military Equipment Delivery Team, Rangoon, Burma; Defense Fuel Supply Center, Alexandria, VA; Staff Commander Service Group Three embarked on Ajax (AR-6), Sasebo, Japan; Columbus (CG-12); Navy Ships Parts Control Center, Mechanicsburg, PA; Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Shipbuilding and Logistics;

and ended his career by standing up the Navy Resale and Services Support Office, Field Support Office, Mechanicsburg, PA.

His military decorations include the Legion of Merit Medal, the Vietnam Service Medal with one Star, the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Cuba and the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device.

He was married for 66 years to Selena Dovel, whom he met on a blind date during midshipman summer training in Virginia Beach. They were married on 11 June 1960.

John fully embraced retirement, traveling to many different areas with Selena and enjoying many trips. Projects around the house kept him busy while planning for their next trip.

His grandchildren heard their Mommom and Granddaddy's different takes on bridge strategy and their travels around the world on ocean cruises and riverboats, playing bridge with Russians, Australians, New Zealanders, South Americans and more. His generosity and positivity will live on in each of them.

His kids remember his many hours out in the yard teaching them to throw a baseball or playing touch football, ping-pong and pool matches in the basement, his always joyful take on life and his sense of adventure, trying new things from skiing to skating to exotic food.

His wife remembers the quiet moments with her best friend, their adventures and the sparkle of the most handsome blue eyes she's ever seen. His legacy transcends death, and he'll visit us as cardinals up in treetops or with the whispers of the wind. Survivors include his wife, Selena; their children, John L. Swanson Jr. '86 (Deborah) and Mary Dillon (William); granddaughters, Sydney, Lexi and Miranda; and great-grandsons, Luke and Peter.

July-August 2026 Shipmate