



## Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf

August 30, 1929 - August 8, 2024

Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf, born August 30, 1929, in Albert Lee, Minnesota, to Charles Edgar and Alice Inger, nee Brattrud, Schwartzkopf departed for his heavenly reward at the age of 94 on August 8, 2024, in Austin, Texas.

Chuck was a popular and well known journalist and radio broadcasting professional in the Texas Central Gulf Coast area. He shared air- time with the Early Bird, a bantam chicken, at radio station KULP in El Campo, Texas, and his interest in his wife's Czech language and customs led him to create "Polka Time", air time dedicated solely to playing various polkas. He also wrote a weekly column, "Chuck's Wagon", in the El Campo Leader News.

Chucky, as he was affectionately called in his youth, was an only child and grew up in Waseca, Minnesota. He had fond memories of sitting at the piano with his mother and aunts singing the popular songs of the day as his mother played. He also enjoyed listening to his dad play the banjo each evening. He was blissfully happy spending time at his grandpa's Skelly Gas Company service station on State Street in Waseca. His grandparents were the late Charles and Nora Schwartzkopf. Chucky remembered delivering the Waseca Newspaper and the Minneapolis Star Journal in the snow on his wooden Norwegian style skis.

At age 12, he moved with his parents to the East End of Houston, Texas where he attended Jackson Junior High School. When he attended Stephen F. Austin High School in Houston, a heart malady prevented him from participating in sports resulting in a life-long interest in magic, or prestidigitation, as Chuck liked to say. He loved to eat chili cheese dogs at James Coney Island while living in Houston. While attending high school in Houston, Chuck had a newspaper route in the vicinity of Telephone Road delivering both the Houston Chronicle and the Houston Post.

Chuck was influenced in his youth by his Aunt Helen Brattrud, a career woman with CBS in New York City, which led him to enroll at the University of Houston and major in Radio Broadcasting, with a minor in Drama.

In May of 1952, Chuck joined the Marine Corps and was stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, California where his MOS, Military Occupational Specialty, was Radio Journalism. He gained his training in journalism at the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois. While at El Toro, Chuck worked off base as a Radio DJ and Journalist at Radio Station KVOE. He was invited to pursue a career in broadcasting in Hollywood, but had a yearning to return to El Campo, and radio station KULP.

While at KULP, Chuck utilized the KULP Radio Station's Mobile Remote Public Address System, referred to as the KULP Sound Truck, all over Central Texas and the Texas Gulf Coast to broadcast on weekends from Catholic Parish Annual Picnics held in places that included Praha, Frydek, Ganado, Louise, Dubina, Columbus, New Ulm, and beyond.

During his career in radio at KULP, which had culminated in Chuck becoming the Manager of the station, Chuck found himself in a pickle when U.S. Congressman Jake (J.J.) Pickle, the owner of the station at the time, decided to sell the business. After leaving KULP, Chuck worked briefly for Wharton

County Electric Coop as head of Public Relations before accepting a job as the Public Information Director at Wharton County Junior College (WCJC). He remained at WCJC until his retirement. During his time at WCJC, he invited noted personalities to speak on campus including Wharton native, Dan Rather, and Marvin Zindler, Houston television's Special Assignment Man for Consumer Protection and Reform Causes, who had taken on the Sheriff of La Grange to shut down the infamous Chicken Ranch. More than once, Chuck brought WCJC's Starlette Drill Team and the WCJC Band to Mardi Gras Parades in New Orleans, Louisiana.

Throughout his career in El Campo, Chuck took on weekend broadcasting assignments at CBS radio outlet, KTRH, in Houston, and also did broadcasting work for KULM radio station in Columbus, Texas. Chuck was the Regional Newspaper Correspondent to the Houston Chronicle, the Houston Post, and the Victoria Advocate for Wharton, Matagorda, and Jackson Counties for many decades.

While working at his first job in El Campo, Texas, at radio station KULP as a Personality Announcer and Disc Jockey, Chuck met the love of his life, Joanna Wilma Kocurek. Chuck was the DJ providing dance music at a benefit for the Military Guys and Dolls held at the El Campo Community Center and Joanna won the "Guess What's in the Box" drawing. The prize was a walk with the DJ to the radio station and back. That stroll provided the spark and they later married at the Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral in Houston on December 26, 1952, while Chuck was on a three-day leave from his duties in California with the USMC. Their marriage was blessed for almost 68 years until Joanna's death on September 1, 2020.

"Always forward thinking and using his creativity", a phrase Chuck wanted inscribed on his headstone, might best describe this magnificent man who will be greatly missed by all. Chuck founded the El Campo Cultural Festival in

tune with his fascination with ethnicity and cultural backgrounds, and his desire to promote the cultural backgrounds of the people he lived with. He learned some Czech, Polish, and Spanish so he could greet and converse with people in their “native tongue”. Joanna, being of Czech descent, helped him read fan mail from his listeners who wrote to him in the Czech language. Chuck made sure to incorporate ethnic songs of all the inhabitants of El Campo and Wharton County into his KULP programming.

Chuck garnered numerous awards and commendations. Included among his accomplishments was participation as a founding member of the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio, which commenced in 1972. He and his late friend, O. T. Baker, are credited with founding the Institute of Texan Cultures, also in San Antonio.

Additional awards and commendations were given Chuck by the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America. He was even named an active honorary Girl Scout. In Chicago, Illinois he was presented with the National Polka DJ Award at the McCormick Place Convention Center and was able to dance with Joanna to one of his favorite Polka Bands, The Six Fat Dutchmen, who played his favorite polka tune, Julida Polka, a Czechoslovakian song. He was named Citizen of the Year by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and received awards for his work with the American Legion Craig-Harris Post 251, the Knights of Columbus Council 2490, St. Philip Catholic Church, SPJST, Wharton Celebration on the Courthouse Square, and many other groups.

Chuck lived his life grounded in the Roman Catholic faith and loved our Savior, Jesus Christ, throughout his adult life, and he modeled the Christian life to all his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Chuck is survived by his four children, Juliet Vander Ploeg, and husband Bob; Nora McCullough, and husband Jim; Chuck Schwartzkopf, Jr., and wife Stephanie, nee Satsky; and Nick Schwartzkopf, and wife Dylin, nee Gello-ano;

and by his eight grandchildren, R. Dirk Vander Ploeg II, and wife Julie, nee Hauglie; Kate Vander Ploeg; Christine Wakefield, nee Vander Ploeg, and husband Troy P. "Trey" Wakefield, III; Leonard E. "Trey" Svrcek, III; Madison Rodon, nee Svrcek, and husband Matthew; Raleigh Palis, nee McCullough, and husband Chris; Hannah Sigmon, nee Schwartzkopf, and husband Josh; and Cara Schwartzkopf; and by his sixteen great-grandchildren: Ava, Bob, Penelope and Willem Vander Ploeg; Jack, Van and Timothy Woodage; Mary, Ruth, Charlie, Eleanor, Frances and Dorothy Wakefield; Sailor Palis, Harper Rodon, and Zoey Grace Sigmon.

The family extends its heartfelt gratitude to all the dedicated caregivers who attended to Chuck for over seven years at Austin Retirement and Nursing Center on Burnet Lane in Austin, Texas.

A Visitation will be held at Triska Funeral Home in El Campo, Texas, Sunday, August 18th at 2 p.m. with a Rosary following at 4 p.m. On Monday, August 19, at 10 a.m. a Funeral Mass will be held at St. Philip the Apostle Catholic Church in El Campo. Entombment with military honors under the auspices of the American Legion Post 251 will follow at Holy Cross Memorial Park.

Pallbearers will be Dirk Vander Ploeg, Trey Svrcek, Troy Wakefield, Jack Woodage, Josh Sigmon, Matt Rodon, Chris Palis, Hayden Harrigan, Robert Vander Ploeg III and Paul Joki. Honorary pallbearers will be Chuck Schwartzkopf, Jr., Nick Schwartzkopf, Jim McCullough, Bob Vander Ploeg, Van Woodage, Timothy Woodage, Charlie Wakefield and Willem Vander Ploeg.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorials to St. Philip Catholic School or St Philip the Apostle Catholic Church of El Campo, or to the Knights of Columbus Council 2490 in El Campo, Texas.



# Cemetery Details

## Holy Cross Memorial Park

1617 South Mechanic Street  
El Campo, TX 77437  
(979) 543-3770

# Previous Events

## Visitation

**AUG 18.** 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Triska Funeral Home  
612 Merchant Street  
El Campo, TX 77437-3440  
(979) 543-3681  
[triskafh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:triskafh@sbcglobal.net)

## Rosary

**AUG 18.** 4:00 PM (CT)

Triska Funeral Home  
612 Merchant Street  
El Campo, TX 77437-3440  
(979) 543-3681  
[triskafh@sbcglobal.net](mailto:triskafh@sbcglobal.net)

## Funeral Mass

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AUG **19**. 10:00 AM (CT)

St. Philip Catholic Church  
304 W. Church Street  
El Campo, TX 77437  
<http://stphilipapostle.org/>

# Tribute Wall

BC

“ *What a fine man Chuck was! All of us in Joe Miller's family have fond memories of him, especially during his time at KULP. We loved when our dad would take us to the station with him while he was working on something. It was so interesting and exciting, and Chuck Schwartzkopf was a part of that! He will be missed. May the Lord give you His peace, knowing he is with his Heavenly Father.*

*Mary Lou, Barbara and Jody Miller*

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**Barbara Miller Coleman** - August 20, 2024 at 12:37 PM

JV

*Thanks so very much for your kind words and memories!*

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**Juliet VanderPloeg** - October 11, 2024 at 08:30 AM

CS

“ *Cay Krueger Scheumack lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf*



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**Cay Krueger Scheumack** - August 18, 2024 at 12:54 PM

TF

“ *The Mark Svrcek Family purchased the Dreams From the Heart Bouquet for the family of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf.*



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**The Mark Svrcek Family** - August 15, 2024 at 09:13 PM

RI

“ Ron, Jerrold and Panel Tech Inc. planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf.

Ron, Jerrold and Panel Tech Inc. - August 15, 2024 at 08:05 PM

RI

“ Ron, Jerrold and Panel Tech Inc. purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf.



Ron, Jerrold and Panel Tech Inc. - August 15, 2024 at 08:05 PM

LD

“ Lori Lincke Dresner lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf



Lori Lincke Dresner - August 14, 2024 at 07:52 PM

DC

“ Sorry for your family's loss.  
What an icon! Growing up in the wonderful Czech community of El Campo; I remember mother, (Margaret Bures) playing polka music from KULP on the radio and his wonderful voice. I learned to love the rhythm of polka and to polka dance while listening to his air waves. Thank You Chuck!  
Diane Bures Clark

Diane M Clark - August 13, 2024 at 06:09 PM

JV

*Thank you, Diane, for sharing your wonderful memories!*

Juliet VanderPloeg - October 11, 2024 at 08:32 AM

MM

“ *He was a great boss when I worked as a DJ at KULP in El Campo. Prayers and condolences to the family.*  
*Marvin Machart*

Marvin Machart - August 13, 2024 at 12:29 PM

JV

*Thank you Marvin, for your kind words! He loved mentoring the young men that he worked with!*

Juliet VanderPloeg - October 11, 2024 at 08:34 AM

PD

“ *Patricia Dybala lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf*



Patricia Dybala - August 13, 2024 at 11:08 AM

SD

“ *Sandra Diehl lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf*



Sandra Diehl - August 13, 2024 at 10:32 AM

PH

“ Pat Hogan lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf



Pat Hogan - August 13, 2024 at 07:58 AM

CR

“ Cindy RiHa lit a candle in memory of Charles Franklin "Chuck" Schwartzkopf



Cindy RiHa - August 12, 2024 at 10:46 PM

MT

“ Mr. Chuck Schwartzkopf was a local "star" in Wharton County for much of my life. He loved people and what a personality he had. My condolences to the family. He had a long and beautiful life. May he rest in peace and let perpetual light shine upon him!



Mary Lou Krenek, Egypt, Texas - August 12, 2024 at 08:46 PM

JV

Thank you so very much, Mary Lou, for sharing your memories!

Juliet VanderPloeg - October 11, 2024 at 08:35 AM

CC

“ I remember Chuck on kulp radio station. He was a good man. From Clara Cerny



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**Claire Cerny** - August 12, 2024 at 06:26 PM

JV

Thank you for sharing your memories with us!

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**Juliet VanderPloeg** - October 11, 2024 at 08:38 AM

HD

“ Our most sincere sympathy with the passing of Chuck. A wonderful & caring man who will be missed. May perpetual light shine upon him and may he rest in peace with the Lord and his loved ones who await him in his heavenly home.



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**Helen Dolezal** - August 12, 2024 at 01:36 PM

JV

Thank you, Helen, for your condolences and memories of our dad!

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**Juliet VanderPloeg** - October 11, 2024 at 08:36 AM