



Joel Martin Miller

April 21, 1940 - August 7, 2024

Joel Martin Miller passed away in his home on the morning of August 7, 2024, from metastatic cholangiocarcinoma. He was surrounded by his loving family.

Born April 21, 1940 in Boston, Massachusetts, Joel was the youngest of Eugene and Susan Miller's three sons. Joel grew up in Winthrop, Massachusetts, the tightknit, oceanside community where he was introduced at age 16 to his future wife and cherished soulmate, Elaine. The origin story of their first date is notable, in that Elaine's best friend (Susan) set them up to stop Joel from being the uninvited third wheel on Susan's romantic outings with Joel's best friend (Barry). While Susan and Barry didn't last, Elaine and Joel did. After dating throughout Winthrop High School and continuing long-distance during college, Elaine and Joel were married on June 24, 1962.

Upon graduation from the University of Michigan in 1961, Joel briefly attended dental school at Tufts University (and hated it), before pivoting to what would become a 50+ year career in research pharmacology and clinical hospital pharmacy, after earning graduate degrees from both the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Boston University. In fact, Joel was a third-generation pharmacist and would-be heir to the Miller Drugstore empire built by his grandfather, Max Miller, and continued by Joel's father, Gene Miller. Unfortunately for all members of the Miller family, Max squandered his sizable fortune and significant real estate holdings in Boston's Beacon Hill and Back

Bay areas by visiting the local horse track too frequently and through dealings with a crooked lawyer. So instead, Joel made his own mark in research at Boston University, where he developed models of opiate tolerance and physical dependence in connection with cancer pain. Joel was ahead of his time by focusing on the potential for broad opioid addiction and abuse, decades before these dangers were well understood. At the time of his retirement from St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Joel was a member of the pain management team, where his knowledge of opioids was invaluable.

As for Max's fortune, all Joel inherited was a life-sized oil painting of Max himself. To this day, that portrait hangs in Joel and Elaine's home—with a photoshopped picture of Joel's head dangling over Max's face. Joel treated the portrait of Max with his typical irreverence and good-natured humor. As partners-in-mischief, Joel and Elaine also found enormous pleasure in tricking their own daughters. Prior to each daughter's wedding, they spent time taking dance lessons at a nearby community center—where a variety of other adult education classes also took place. In the lead-up to Betsy's wedding, they called her weekly from the community center, where they professed to be on break between the ballroom dance class and their alleged new hobby: a yodeling class. While Elaine would make the call to Betsy, Joel would make pretend yodeling sounds in the background. Elaine would then say she had to rush off the phone because class had started.

This humor, combined with his unique vision and skill as an exceptional photographer and gifted public speaker, are some of the characteristics that defined Joel and for which he will be remembered by all. However, what most clearly defined Joel was his extraordinary love affair with Elaine, which spanned nearly 70 years and formed the center of gravity for both of them. Joel and Elaine have been inseparable since the 1950s, forming a bond that truly is one for the ages. This very happy marriage also produced two loving daughters—Liz and Betsy—who were the light of Joel's life, though there has

never been a satisfactory explanation as to why two smart people essentially named both of their children “Elizabeth.” In an era when many fathers did not participate equally with their wives in raising their children, Joel was present and happily involved. Joel never missed a school play, concert, recital, graduation, or important milestone. Joel always found joy spending time with family, and when Fielding—his grandson—was born in 2013, Joel retired from St. Elizabeth’s Hospital and the new grandparents moved from their longtime home in Sharon, Massachusetts to be closer to Fielding. As a grandfather, Joel was besotted. A week rarely went by without spending time with his grandson. Joel and Fielding told each other endless stories and jokes, and Fielding became Joel’s most treasured photography subject (a fact witnessed by Joel’s many photography colleagues on Fotki and Facebook).

It was easy to love Joel, and everyone sincerely did—from his high school friends in Winthrop to his longtime friends from Sharon (where Elaine and Joel lived from 1976 until 2013), to his newfound community at Montebello, in Alexandria. Joel thoroughly enjoyed life at Montebello. Now retired, Joel had time to expand his many interests, talents, and circle of friends. He was active in the Montebello election committee, co-chair of AiM (Art in Montebello), founder of a classic film series, and co-administrator of the Montebello Facebook page. His talents as a public speaker made him the perfect moderator and emcee for a wide variety of events, including the annual Candidate’s Night. He also was known and respected as a photographer with a keen and creative eye. Joel’s photography was frequently featured in exhibits at Montebello, as well as in juried shows at local galleries, including the nationally recognized Torpedo Factory.

Joel will be remembered by his many friends and family as an exceptionally warm, smart, funny, caring, and happy person, whose life was filled with optimism, a zest for learning, and—most of all—love.

Joel is preceded in death by his older brothers, Aaron Miller and Irwin Miller. He is survived by his cherished wife of 62 years, Elaine Miller, his devoted daughters, Elizabeth Novak (Erik Novak) and Betsy Miller (J.F. Scarborough), and by his beloved grandson, Fielding Scarborough.

A lifetime supporter of independent journalism and the creative arts, memorial donations in Joel's name can be made to the Educational Fund for National Public Radio's local broadcasting station in Boston, WGBH:

[https://donate.wgbh.org/wgbh/tribute_form]

Residents of Montebello, where Joel often could be found walking the trails to photograph nature and architecture, may wish to contribute to a memorial bench in Joel's name. This can be done by sending a check payable to MCUOA and writing Joel Miller on the memo line.

A memorial gathering will be planned for September, with details forthcoming.

Tribute Wall

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“ *The Winthrop Senior High School Class of 1957 was honored to have Joel as an honored member. We send our heartfelt condolences to the entire Miller family.*

Adrienne Shore Fox - August 10, 2024 at 04:20 PM

JT

“ *Jeanne Tifft lit a candle in memory of Joel Martin Miller*



Jeanne Tifft - August 10, 2024 at 04:11 PM