



John Carl Best

August 1, 1950 - January 8, 2026

John was born in Denton, TX, on August 1, 1950, and passed away on January 8, 2026, at the age of 75. He moved to Abilene, TX, in 1960 when his father Carl Best came to Abilene ISD as a choral director. John remained in Abilene for much of the rest of his life, committed to bettering the community through music, media, and the arts.

John was a multi-talented, creative individual. He was a musician, playing the cello since 6th grade both at Madison Middle School and Cooper High School in Abilene. He played in the Abilene Symphony for many years as well as the Corpus Christi Symphony. Along with other local cellists, he formed the Abilene Cello Quartet playing at venues throughout Abilene. John graduated from Hardin Simmons University (HSU) in 1973 with a Bachelor of Music in Theory and Composition. He met his wife, Kara Jeanne (Jeannie) Wilmeth, at HSU in an opera workshop in 1969. They married in 1972.

If John's first love was music, his second love was photography. John was an award-winning photojournalist for the Abilene Reporter News and Corpus Christi Caller Times. He was a member of the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA) and while at the Corpus Christi Caller Times was editor of the regional NPPA publication. He transitioned to owning his own commercial photography business in the 1980-90s. In the 2000s he returned to school to earn a Masters in Digital Media from Abilene Christian University (ACU). For

15 years, he was affiliated with KACU FM Radio as Program Director and General Manager. While at KACU, John brought national radio shows to Abilene, including "From the Top" and Garrison Keillor's "A Prairie Home Companion." He also taught in the Journalism & Mass Communication department at ACU.

John volunteered for decades with the music and television ministries at First Baptist Church (FBC) and the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest in Abilene. At First Baptist he sang bass with a men's ensemble and directed the church's handbell choir. He designed and equipped television studios at both churches, directing TV broadcasts and sound production for weekly services and special programs.

Among John's many passions was the pipe organ. He served as a member of three organ committees at FBC Corpus Christi (co-chair), FBC Abilene (chair), and Heavenly Rest (member). He was especially proud of bringing in organ builders Nichols & Simpson as part of the rehabilitation of the Shelton Organ at FBC Abilene. In conjunction with an organ study and performance scholarship established at HSU by his mother, Gladys Best, John established the Shelton Organ Concert Series featuring organists of renown from around the world, funded by the Carl and Gladys Best Organ Performance Fund.

John and Jeannie had recently moved to Cedar Park, TX, to enjoy their retirement years closer to their grandchildren.

John was preceded in death by his father Carl Jones Best and his mother Gladys Evelyn Browning Best. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Kara Jeanne Wilmeth Best (Jeannie), his son Aaron Best (wife, Kelli Lutes Best) of Holland, MI, his daughter Kathryn Best Siefker (husband, Andy Siefker) of Cedar Park, TX; two brothers Mark Best and Calvin Best of Abilene TX; six grandchildren: Carl, Nora, Alejandro, and Daniel Best of Holland, MI, and

Evelyn and Miles Siefker of Cedar Park, TX; as well as cousins, nieces, and a nephew from the Best and Browning families.

Interment will be at the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest Columbarium in Abilene, TX. A memorial service will be held on March 14, 2026, at 2:00pm at the Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest in Abilene, TX.

Previous Events

Memorial Service

MAR 14. 2:00 AM - 3:00 PM (CT)

Episcopal Church of the Heavenly Rest
602 Meander St
Abilene, TX 79602
<https://www.heavenlyrestabilene.org/>