



Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman

March 15, 1989 - June 5, 2020

Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman, 31, of Le Claire, Iowa, passed away peacefully at home on June 5, 2020, after a courageous battle with cancer. She was blessed to have the best care team at Froedtert Hospital, led by Dr. Gilbert Fareau, Dr. Elizabeth Gore, Dr. Stuart Wong, and - as Mel referred to him - “the big boss man” Dr. Douglas Evans. In addition to them, she was always surrounded by their expert teams and caring staff. While doing their expert work, this team allowed her to visit them in their offices without appointments, gave her lunch money on occasion and enjoyed whatever adult onesie she decided to wear to her treatment.

Melanie was born in Racine, WI on March 15, 1989, to Janell Thwing. She was a 2007 graduate of Tremper High School, Kenosha, Wisconsin. She continued her education at Iowa State University, where she was a proud member of the Alpha Epsilon Chapter of Sigma Kappa. She served as chapter President in 2010-2011. She also had the opportunity to study abroad through the Semester at Sea program. She traveled the world during this time and embraced the voyage’s theme of Ubuntu, a belief in the universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. She graduated in 2011 with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science and Criminal Justice with a secondary major in Sociology.

Melanie took a year sabbatical to battle her adrenal cortical carcinoma and

then moved on to Drake Law School. She graduated with her Juris Doctor in 2015. While there she served as the Student Bar Association president from 2014-2015 and was the distinguished recipient of the Iowa State Bar Association Award in 2015.

Following law school she became an attorney for the Iowa State Public Defenders Office. She began her career at the Blackhawk County Office before moving to the Scott County Office. She was a smart, articulate, caring and witty woman who was a zealous advocate for the rights of the accused in her professional life and spoke out against injustice in her personal life. She also loved hot dogs, sour gummies and flaming hot Cheetos.

The highlight of Melanie's life was marrying Justin Eastman, her life partner, on October 5, 2019 at St. Ambrose Cathedral in Des Moines, Iowa. They met in 2014 in downtown Des Moines. Justin and his bowtie stood out in the crowd, and Melanie pretended to be very interested in sports and cooking to strike up a conversation. The only thing she was honest about that day was her love of whisky. Together they built a home in Le Claire, Iowa with their two dogs, Roo and Emmy, and two cats, Auggie and Rosie.

Melanie is survived by her husband Justin Eastman, mother Janell Thwing, great aunt Florence Zalatoris, mother-in-law, Julie Eastman-Lennie, father-in-law Jim Lennie, grandma Diane Eastman, her goddaughter Gabrielle Schultz as well as numerous aunts, uncles, cousins and too many friends to count.

She was preceded in death by her grandmother Frances Thwing, great uncle Joseph Zalatoris and grandpa Donald Eastman.

Visitation will be 10 AM until service time on Friday, June 12, 2020. at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church. 510 E. 1st Street Ankeny, IA 50023
Mass of Christian Burial will be 1 PM Friday with burial following at Ankeny

Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the charity of your choice.

IMPORTANT SERVICE INFORMATION:

Traffic Construction Notice: The 1st Street exit is closed.

If you are coming north on I-35 please use exit 90 (Oralabor Road) and go west to Highway 69 and head north to 1st street and go back east. The church will be on the north side of the road. If you are coming south on I-35 please use exit 94 (36th Street) and go west to Delaware Ave and turn south. Go to 1st street and turn west and the church will be on the north side of the street.

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church will require that you bring and wear a mask if you are attending the visitation and/or service. All church and funeral home staff will follow COVID - 19 guidelines and we ask that you do as well.

Due to COVID-19 guidelines, allowed seating for the service will be limited to 300 people. The visitation will not be limited but we will follow social distancing guidelines. The funeral service will also be live streamed on Friday at 1 PM.

Please go to https://youtu.be/7_ZOr_xovVo

Flowers may be delivered to the church on Thursday, June 11, 2020.

Cemetery Details

Ankeny Memorial Gardens Cemetery

4208 N Ankeny Blvd
Ankeny, IA

Previous Events

Visitation

JUN 12. 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM (CT)

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church
510 East First Street
Ankeny, IA

Mass of Christian Burial

JUN 12. 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CT)

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart Catholic Church
510 East First Street
Ankeny, IA

Tribute Wall

JC

“ *Melanie was the bright spot in a week of continuing legal education classes, which included a multi-day small insensitive session on trial skills. We became fast friends - who wouldn't, she was so bubbly & full of fun. We stayed in touch loosely though work emails for awhile. I just now learned of her passing, which was just a few weeks after a death in my family after long hospice. I'm so very sorry for everyone's loss of Melanie and her exuberance; she's a joy.*

Jo Cook - March 15, 2023 at 08:25 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Memories Album*

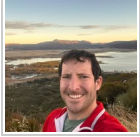


Dyamond Memorial - *Burials *Cremations *Monuments - November 13, 2020 at 02:51 PM

JN

“ *My sincere condolences to Melanie's family. She was my student and Negotiations team member at Drake law school. Her zest for life and never-ending spirit has always stayed with me. I'm so proud of all she accomplished during her time here on earth and the principles she espoused every day. She will be greatly missed.*

Janelle Niebuhr - June 17, 2020 at 08:50 AM



“ I wanted to send love and condolences to the Thwing-Eastman family. Melanie and I were not best friends or anything, but we went to high school together and took many classes together. I was always impressed with Melanie's quick wit and came to like her more and more with age. I am sad I had not kept in closer touch with her and was devastated to hear of her passing away. It's a sure sign we should cherish those we meet in life of Melanie's stature. There aren't too many like her and our society would be a far better, ad less cruel place, with more people like her on it.

Here is the note I wrote for her in her memory on Facebook after her passage. I am deeply sorry for your loss and I will miss Melanie, as I know will so many more she touched throughout her deeply lived life.

The note:

"I am in shock and deeply saddened. My high school classmate Melanie, has passed away at the age of 31. She was always quick-witted, funny and thinking about changing the world for the better, while more than able to joke about the sillier stuff day to day stuff too.

We weren't very close friends in high school though we were in a lot of the same classes and sat next to one another in some of them. But we had talked more frequently in recent years about our rotten criminal justice system. She was a fierce public defender in Iowa and I covered this stuff professionally for Prison Legal News, so we shared that in common and I'd go to her to learn about how the system works from the inside of it and talk things out.

Melanie messaged me in 2018 when I was on the beat to pitch me a story idea on the hypocrisy of marijuana legalization efforts as countless people—many her past clients—sit in prisons for marijuana possession or selling with no reprieve. Surprise: many of them were Black.

On the funnier side, we also joked more recently in March about Joe Exotic/Carole Baskin from Tiger King and you can see her snarky response to my stupid question back in college to her here on FB too, lol. She had such funny things to say about our botched 10 year high school reunion in 2017 too, which she had attended despite it being an obvious fail going in—she chose to go and make the best of it and had a hilarious way of explaining to me what it was like, as if I'd been there myself.

I see even as of just a few days ago on her wall that she was posting about racial justice, the Iowa dethroning of Steve King (aka racial justice) and other topics of immense public importance. She literally worked on these issues until the day she died. That's again, a sign of her true commitment to the causes she cared about and a symbol of a person of deep conscientiousness.

RIP Melanie. I wish we could've kept in touch over the years but am so glad to have met you and glad we still kept in touch years later after high school. The people who came in contact with you are better for it and you won't be forgotten."

Steve Horn - June 15, 2020 at 05:04 AM

“ I knew from the moment I met you, Melanie, that we were going to be friends! Your sassy attitude and "potty" mouth reminded me so much of myself. Even when you put me in check by advising me you were born the year I graduated from high school - I knew I loved you. I truly meant it when I told you if I had had a daughter - I'd want her to be exactly like you!

You were such a beautiful, brilliant and determined woman! I cannot even put into words how much I'm going to miss seeing your face. You were always a bright light whenever you walked into a room. I'm sorry I never got a chance to see you in trial but I've heard amazing things about your trial skills. I believe one of your colleagues described you as "fierce" and when I said to one Judge "she's really on her way isn't she?" her reply was "She's already there." Wow!!

I truly envied you. Not in the bad way, but you had something so special about you - I knew there was a lot I could learn from a "youngster" like you. I will always remember your beautiful brown eyes and the way you would get so happy talking about getting your nails or hair done. I'm so glad you married the love of your life. I remember how happy you were to purchase a "butt" for your wedding day. I can picture you right now sitting there with your beautiful hands and nails holding your cell phone with Keith Morrison pop socket on the back. I am smiling at the memory when you shared your ear buds with me and we danced in the lawyer's lounge - each with one ear bud. I am so glad we did that and I am desperately trying to remember the song we were singing together.

My favorite memories of you will be discussing Dateline, serial killers (John Gacy - quit clowning around) law and our cases. And, of course, our nails! I told another attorney that you deserved to be on this earth long enough to know what it feels like to be teased by a young attorney! I didn't know you very long - but I can honestly say my life is so much better for having known you! I will keep you close in my heart and do my best to carry on your great work of

fearlessly fighting for the rights of others.

I found this and I thought it described you perfectly: "Some people are just light, glow, hope....human stars." That's what you were and always will be to me!! Shine brightly Baby Girl and rest in peace my sweet friend. I hope to cross paths with you again.

*Love,
Dana Copell*

Dana Copell - June 12, 2020 at 10:51 AM



“ *Blue Caribbean Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 12, 2020 at 10:44 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 12, 2020 at 12:06 AM



“ 1 file added to the album *Memories Album*



Dyamond Memorial - *Burials *Cremations *Monuments - June 11, 2020 at 10:27 PM



“ *Douglas B. Evans, MD, and Sarah Misustin, PA purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Douglas B. Evans, MD, and Sarah Misustin, PA - June 11, 2020 at 04:52 PM



“ *Gracious Lavender Basket was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 11, 2020 at 04:50 PM

DH

“ Denise H. purchased a sympathy card for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Denise H. - June 11, 2020 at 02:47 PM

DH

“ Denise Hertz-McGrath lit a candle in memory of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman



Denise Hertz-McGrath - June 11, 2020 at 02:34 PM

DD

“ Dana & Janet Copell Harry DeLange Jack Dusthimer purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Dana & Janet Copell Harry DeLange Jack Dusthimer - June 11, 2020 at 12:47 PM

JF

“ Jamie Seratt & Family purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Jamie Seratt & Family - June 11, 2020 at 11:27 AM



“ *Sweet Solace Spray was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 11, 2020 at 10:04 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 10, 2020 at 08:25 PM



“ *Enchanted Cottage was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 10, 2020 at 07:46 PM

LE

“ You grew into such an amazing young woman full of grace, beauty, intelligence, compassion, passion and strength; and you had the special gift of speaking fluent sarcasm!

You went balls-to-the-wall on everything. The world would be a better place if more people shared in your philosophy of living life to the fullest.

We will miss you. Love, Lorrie & Paul England



Lorrie England - June 10, 2020 at 07:40 PM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 10, 2020 at 02:41 PM

AI

“ *AllChem Industries purchased the Your Light Shines for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



AllChem Industries - June 10, 2020 at 01:01 PM



“ *Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 10, 2020 at 12:16 PM



“ *Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 10, 2020 at 11:02 AM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 10, 2020 at 09:14 AM



“ *Peace Eternal Wreath* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 10, 2020 at 07:35 AM



“ *Sweet Tenderness was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 09, 2020 at 10:13 PM



“ *Mary Weinberger and Howard Glick purchased the Arrive in Style for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Mary Weinberger and Howard Glick - June 09, 2020 at 09:37 PM



“ *Love Everlasting Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 09, 2020 at 03:14 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 09, 2020 at 02:04 PM

WF

“ Wendy & Matt Hildebrandt and Family purchased the Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Wendy & Matt Hildebrandt and Family - June 09, 2020 at 01:42 PM

WD

“ Waterloo Adult Public Defender purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Waterloo Adult Public Defender - June 09, 2020 at 12:30 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



June 09, 2020 at 12:19 PM

TF

“ Tom Wood & The Volleyball Family purchased the Fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Tom Wood & The Volleyball Family - June 09, 2020 at 11:58 AM

BO

“ *Black Hawk County Attorney's Office purchased the Lavender Reflections Spray for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Black Hawk County Attorney's Office - June 09, 2020 at 11:22 AM

SH

“ *There are people in this world that you just know are special the first time you meet them...that was Melanie! She was in her second year at Drake Law and was ready to take on the world. I had no idea of the challenges she had already fought and that's how she wanted it. She was just Melanie. But she was so much more to everyone who had the privilege to meet her and get to know her. I am so glad that she stopped by the law school last October just before her wedding. She needed help with something and of course, we were all happy to help her and thrilled to see her! Her smile and laugh will long be remembered. I hope Heaven was ready for her because she will be making things happen there too! Fly high, sweet Melanie!*



Sara Hughes - June 09, 2020 at 11:08 AM



“ *Serene Retreat was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 09, 2020 at 10:36 AM

TO

“ *The Waterloo Juvenile Public Defender’s Office purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



The Waterloo Juvenile Public Defender’s Office - June 09, 2020 at 09:35 AM

AP

“ *Melanie had an indomitable spirit that lit up every space she entered and lingered long after she left. It was a quality so rare it should be bottled and shared with the world. I will miss her so much. She was one of kind and left the world a better place simply by being lucky enough to have known her.*

Alfredo Parrish - June 09, 2020 at 08:48 AM



“ *Basket of Memories was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 11:12 PM

CG

“ *Chief Judge Marlita A. Greve purchased the Medium Dish Garden for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Chief Judge Marlita A. Greve - June 08, 2020 at 10:20 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 06:54 PM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 06:44 PM



“ *Great Aunt Hattie and family purchased the Fairest of All for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Great Aunt Hattie and family - June 08, 2020 at 05:36 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 05:27 PM

BF

“ *Brenda Dahl and Family purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Brenda Dahl and Family - June 08, 2020 at 05:15 PM



“ *Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 04:05 PM

LP

“ *Melanie and my daughter Amanda Jo were besties. They had so much crazy fun together. Mel would always be kind enough to help with any legal things that came up. Her happy positive spirit was so contagious, not even one time did I see or hear her feeling sorry for herself. That being said I did see her a little tipsy a time or two! Our world has lost an amazing woman.*

Lori Payne - June 08, 2020 at 02:09 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 01:48 PM

DU

“ Department of Political Science, Iowa State Univ. purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



Department of Political Science, Iowa State Univ. - June 08, 2020 at 01:21 PM

BU

“ Melanie was terrific. I was Dean of Drake Law School when Melanie was student bar president. She kept me on my toes, always had a smile, persevered through so much and got so much out of her short life, and gave so much as well. Thinking about her makes me smile. She was a true joy to know and will not be forgotten. My deepest sympathies. Ben Ullem

Ben Ullem - June 08, 2020 at 11:52 AM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.



June 08, 2020 at 11:32 AM

JF

“ Melanie's smile in all circumstances was a breath of fresh air. She was such a joy to know and my life has been greatly brightened by having known her. I will miss her very much (as will everyone who knew her).

Jerry Foxhoven

Jerry Foxhoven - June 08, 2020 at 11:31 AM

WS

“ *Mel was a passionate advocate for her clients and an all around great human. She will be missed so much by all her extended State Public Defender family.*

Wendy Samuelson - June 08, 2020 at 11:27 AM

JT

“ *Jean and Cheryl (don't worry it's on John's tab) purchased the Fiery Lily and Rose for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Jean and Cheryl (don't worry it's on John's tab) - June 08, 2020 at 11:17 AM

DO

“ *Deepest Sympathies- District Attorney's Office purchased the Dreams From the Heart Bouquet for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



Deepest Sympathies- District Attorney's Office - June 08, 2020 at 10:36 AM

KS

“ *Melanie will forever have a spot in my heart -- her spunk, smile, kindness, determination, humility -- and her laugh. She brightened every room she entered -- and, boy, did she enter a lot. She was a go-getter. I remember her love of the movie Frozen. During the spring of her final semester of law school, anytime I passed her in the hall or ran into her, she would ask (or sing) "Do you want to build a snowman?" I remember the excitement in her voice when she told me she was bringing a guy to the Supreme Court Banquet that spring. If Justin wasn't already head-over-heels in love with Melanie, she surely swept him off his feet that night when she arrived in her beautiful evening gown. She was stunning! But then again, Melanie was gorgeous in her jeans and over-sized sweatshirt too. When you are as beautiful as Melanie on the inside, your beauty just radiates. The world is a better place because of Melanie. I thank God for blessing me and the world with the gift of Melanie. She was a gem. I imagine she is serenading the heavens with "Do You Want To Build a Snowman" ... "come on, let's play..." (By the way, we did actually build a snowman in front of the Cartwright Hall that spring.)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-zXT5bIBM0>

Rest in peace, Melanie. Justin and Janell, you are in my prayers. Treasure the memories and keep Melanie's spirit alive in your hearts forever. Peace be with you and may God bless you.

Kris Magill, Drake Law School - June 08, 2020 at 09:05 AM



“ *Arrive in Style was purchased for the family of Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman.*



June 08, 2020 at 08:19 AM



“ *Arrive in Style* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 07, 2020 at 08:44 PM



“ *Strength & Solace Spray* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 07, 2020 at 08:20 PM



“ *Arrive in Style* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 07, 2020 at 08:09 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue* was purchased for the family of *Melanie Arlene Thwing-Eastman*.



June 07, 2020 at 07:09 PM

FP

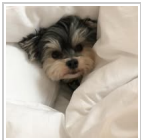
“ so very sorry, Frank/Cheryl Parise and family

frank parise - June 07, 2020 at 07:03 PM

DM

“ Melanie was a ray of light no matter how dark her personal circumstances. Professor David McCord, Drake Law School

David McCord - June 07, 2020 at 05:02 PM



“ I am so sorry for Melanie's family and close friends' loss . I was blessed to have met Melanie during law school and I know that she was a very special person. She was extremely bright, kind hearted, and always seemed to be optimistic. She was an absolutely amazing young lady. This is hard for me to even understand or accept, and I can't even begin to imagine the devastation that the people she loved must feel. Thank you Melanie for being such a bright light in a dark world. I know that you will not be forgotten.



Warren James - June 07, 2020 at 03:52 PM

KW

“ I am so sorry for your loss. I work at the Drake Law Library. Melanie radiated positivity, something sorely needed in this world. Her personal story and response to it, inspired many people. I wish you all some of her strength at this very difficult time.

Karen Wallace - June 07, 2020 at 01:56 PM