



Donald “Skip” Hoovler of Pataskala, Ohio passed away peacefully on March 13, 2026, one week after celebrating his 83rd birthday with his loving family. Born on March 6, 1943, to Donald and Dolores (Moritz) Hoovler, Skip was a proud graduate of Watkins Memorial High School (Class of 1961) and Ohio University (Class of 1965). As a young man, Skip was a standout athlete, first at Watkins Memorial and then as a two-time (1963 and 1964) All-American football player at Ohio University, where he also earned first-team Mid-American Conference honors for three consecutive years, co-captained the football team and played in the 1964 Senior Bowl. His 91-yard interception return for the Bobcats in the 1962 Sun Bowl – for which he was awarded the bowl’s Jimmy Rogers Jr. Most

Valuable Lineman Trophy -- still stands as the longest such play in the Sun Bowl’s storied 90-year history. Skip was drafted by the New York Jets in 1965 and played for the Jets and the Houston Oilers in the National Football League. Skip was part of the inaugural class inducted into the Watkins Memorial High School Hall of Fame. He was inducted into the Ohio University Athletic Hall of Fame in 1978.

After his football career, Skip launched a successful decades-long career in business, founding Hoovler Financial and Insurance Services in Columbus and building it into one of central Ohio’s leading financial services firms. He also pursued his lifelong passion for standardbred horses and for harness horse racing, serving in multiple leadership roles in that industry while building a national reputation as a horseman, breeder, administrator and tireless industry advocate. In that vein, Skip served for decades on the Board of Directors of the United States Trotting Association. He was a past President and longtime board member of the Ohio Harness Horsemen’s Association and a director of that group’s Political Action Committee for Equine Racing (PACER). He also served proudly on the Board of Directors of the Little Brown Jug Society -- the organization that supports and promotes one of harness racing’s premier events -- and received the United States Trotting Association’s President’s Award in 2018 for extraordinary service to that organization. In 2025, the Ohio chapter of the United States Harness Writers Association honored Skip’s decades of leadership and service by selecting him as the 51st member of the Ohio Harness Racing Hall of Fame.

Skip was preceded in death by his parents and by his sister, Sharon Hoovler Brill. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Tamara (Foor) Hoovler, his brother John (Kathleen) Hoovler, his three children [Jennifer (John) Forren, Amy Hoovler (Steve Helwagen), and Bret (Melissa) Hoovler], eight grandchildren [Kelsey (Rob) Pepitone, Carter Helwagen, Dolen Helwagen, Bryce Forren, Lindsey Helwagen, Kendall Forren, Jate Hoovler and Campbell Hoovler], one great-grandchild (William Pepitone) and many special nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews.

A visitation (11am-2pm) and memorial service (2-3pm) will be held on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at the Pataskala United Methodist Church, 458 South Main Street, Pataskala, with a Celebration of Life to be held immediately thereafter (3:30 - 6:30pm) at Williams Farm, 8405 York Road S.W., Pataskala. The family requests that attendees consider wearing green and white in honor of Skip. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to the Pataskala United Methodist Church or to Bella Care Hospice. The family especially wishes to extend its gratitude to the staff at Johnstown Pointe for their exceptional care and kindness.