

## **Thomas Kevin Theodore**

Died: December 14, 2009

Tom died at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia on Monday, December 14, 2009. He was 69 years old.

He grew up and went to high school in Somerset, Massachusetts, a coastal community at the head of Narragansett Bay on the southern coast of the state. He was in the honor society and on the newspaper and yearbook. He sang in the glee club, was in dramatics, and on the debating team.

At Dartmouth, Tom majored in history and was a member of Alpha Chi Rho fraternity, serving stints there as assistant social chairman and rushing chairman. He rowed crew his freshman year, and was in the glee club all four years. He was an N.R.O.T.C. cadet his freshman year and for his remaining years at Dartmouth was enrolled in the Marine Corps platoon leaders course (PLC).

Right after Dartmouth he went to the University of Pennsylvania law school for one year. "Learning that the law wasn't for me," he wrote in his Reflection for our 25<sup>th</sup> Reunion Yearbook in 1986, "I did not return for the second year and spent the next ten years in a series of different jobs in publishing, sales, business management, insurance and public education."

It was the last experience in education that turned his head, he said, launching him into what he called a "later-life learning quest." He got a master's degree (University of Vermont) and doctoral degree (Temple University, in education), and entered into a career in counseling and human resources development, and became a high level international management consultant.

As he wrote in 1986, "I came out of those ten years of career wandering with a determination to succeed and with the knowledge and skills to do so and, I suppose, by most standards I have successfully steered a course, sometimes serendipitously, to levels of personal and professional achievements I had not dreamed of. If it sounds like I'm feeling good about where I am with my life and career, it's because I am."

At the time of our 25<sup>th</sup> reunion in 1986 Tom and his family were living in Little Compton, Rhode Island, at the end of the Sakonnet Peninsula a little south of where he grew up in Somerset. Sometime after, they moved to Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, outside Philadelphia.

It was there, on the morning of March 9, 2004, at age 64, that Tom began to live through a dramatic life-threatening medical crisis that would last for months and set the course for the rest of his life.

Pouring himself a cup of coffee that morning, he began to feel “a sudden and enormous pressure in my chest.” The quote comes from a cover story written about his experience for the Lankenau Hospital (in Wynnewood, Pennsylvania) monthly magazine for March 2009, an account largely retold at length in WWW for July 2009.

Tom tried to recline on his sofa, but quickly realized something was terribly wrong and drove himself to the hospital. On arrival, he discovered he was unable to walk or even stand, and collapsed, tumbling from the car to the pavement, where he lay calling for help. Medics came and wheeled him into the hospital. They were cutting his clothes off.

That was the last thing he remembered for four weeks. He had had what the cover story said was “an aortic dissection, a torn lining of the large vessel that carries blood out of the heart.” Famous non-survivors of this condition, the story says, were Jon Ritter and Lucille Ball. Tom’s family was told to prepare for the worst.

In succession, came treatment and struggles and more treatment — an operation, a life-saving medically induced coma, several weeks in intensive care, medical complications, strokes, temporary right-sided paralysis, kidney failure, dialysis, amputation of a right toe due to poor circulation, and three weeks of in-patient intensive physical therapy.

Flash forward five years, to the spring of 2009. Little is known about the intervening years of what must have been a lengthy recovery and readjustment. The hospital magazine article published that spring says Tom was presently in good health, and that he serves “two days a week helping incoming and departing patients at the main lobby.”

The article ends, quoting Tom, as he praised the surgical team for its quick action back in 2004. “They saved my life. They gave me at least another five years — and counting.”

Tom would pass away months later, before the end of the year.

When he died, Tom left behind his wife Susan, and two sons, Christopher and Adam, a stepson, David, and a stepdaughter, Christin.

Tom wrote about turning points in his life in his 1986 Reflection. “As a truly qualified adult learner, the future presents any number of opportunities to be seized and worked. Dartmouth taught me how to learn, adjust, and deal better with life. It equipped me with a unique understanding of the human condition and set me off on a long and winding road as a learner for life. For that I will always feel indebted and grateful.”