



Bernard Graham Tomkins

May 25, 1944 - October 28, 2025

Bernard "Graham" Tomkins, of Visalia, California, entered his final whistle stop on this railway of life, on October 28th, 2025, at the age of 81, with family by his side. His journey began in Ontario, Canada, born to "Bernard" Matthew Tomkins & Grace Tomkins. Graham is survived by his incredibly understanding wife of fifty-five years, Mary Jane, his sons, Craig (Jamie) and Grant (Nileen), who both received his "collecting gene" grand-daughters Avriella and Charlotte, who are responsible for more of his smiles than anyone, and of course "Petunia", a steadfast partner in cupboard raiding. He is pre-deceased by his parents and younger brother David.

Graham lived his entire life using his middle name, a name it turned out that was not so original in its choosing. Right next to him, and born at almost the same time, was another baby boy whose mother had named "Graham". So after all the suggestions and fretting for that perfect middle name, Mrs. Tomkins decided it was just right for her boy too.

Like any young child, Graham had a love for animals. Some kids wanted kittens, others puppies, but Graham wanted a goat, and there's evidence that he got one. His love for animals continued throughout his entire life, be it his steadfast loyalty to Afghan hounds, or "Petey" his favorite neighborhood peacock, with which a truly special bond was created. At home, pets would come and go with time, but it was always a dog, always man's best friend that

found a place in Graham's heart. He always found the best in them, treated them with a loyalty that was repaid thousands of times over. His inability to understand people that would cause harm to animals was voiced unashamedly and his opinions were not only unwavering but unfiltered.

As he grew into his teens and young adulthood, Graham learned a skill that would eventually provide a lifetime of employment, or maybe that's enjoyment; he became a pool shark, hustling others for money. It was his lack of actual skill in the game that eventually led Graham into the world of sales and, as he often quipped, "I didn't want to work for a living so I got into sales"

On a Friday in early September of 1970, Graham won the lottery. He married Mary Jane and would spend the next 55 years of his life reminding everyone just how lucky he was. In his final days, he would tell anyone within ear shot how amazed and appreciative he was of "MJ" and everything she had done for him.

His time spent listening to the early days of Rock 'n' Roll in those pool halls of his youth led to what became an ever evolving and eclectic taste in music. From Mississippi Blues and jug bands to Rockabilly and Doo-Wop, you couldn't stop by the house without hearing something that you had probably never heard before. When the family purchased a home in a new community in Ontario, Graham began looking for fellow music lovers. He started a get together, a "Record Night", with guys who all shared the same passion and it continued for over 10 years. It also made for some very wonderful friendships that endure to this day. This desire to share music led to, for a brief time, a Saturday afternoon slot as a disc-jockey, which provided another means to play what he wanted, when he wanted and as loud as he wanted. At a little AM radio station, 1350 CKAR, in Oshawa, Ontario, the "Doc of Rock" was born.

As important as animals and music were to Graham, trains, and all things trains, were the driving force and probably the tie breaker for what seemed like all of his life's decisions. "Railfan", "Trainspotter", "Foamer", "Rivet Counter"... a true "Ferroequinologist" who knew the history of everything about rail, since rail began. As long as it happened in Canada and maybe most of the U.S. Let's just say that if his tax return and a new issue of Model Railroader arrived on the same day, he'd open the magazine first. Fortunately, his chosen profession in sales afforded an immeasurable amount of time and travel to discover the almost forgotten haunts of a bygone era in transportation.

After Graham's retirement from Snap-on in 2011, the work really began. Self-diagnosed with OCD, he often said "I make lists... and that's what you do when you have it!". When not actively participating in his many hobbies, he was cataloging his vast collections of trains, vinyl records, diecast cars and memorabilia. Time making lists on the computer also allowed for time to share jokes, which he did via email almost daily; memes, political humor, funny photos and even the occasional opinion. Friends and family far and wide, were kept laughing, or groaning, thanks to Graham's love of a (debatably) good joke. True to form, as that last stop was approaching, Graham made sure that those around him found a way to smile.

There will be a private Celebration of Life held on November 15th, 2025

The Tomkins family would like to extend our utmost gratitude to all the people that helped the music keep playing, the smiles beaming, and the train on the tracks.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to the ASPCA or the American Liver Foundation

(or maybe just drop a tip in the hat for that next busker you come across)

Services have been entrusted to Salser & Dillard Funeral Chapel. Memorial Tributes and condolences may be offered by logging onto www.salseranddillard.com.

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