



Thomas Edward Ciriacks

August 10, 1937 - September 25, 2022

Thomas Edward Ciriacks passed away peacefully in his sleep on Sunday, September 25, 2022. His long life was filled with learning, doing, and providing for family. He accomplished much in his 85 years on this planet, and we lost precious insights and wisdom in this world with his passing.

Tom's father Ruben was an Army Lieutenant Colonel, which necessitated a nomadic lifestyle and succession of new schools and fleeting friendships in his youth. By Tom's own telling, this transitory existence affected him deeply. The longest stretches of his early years were split between California (Riverside) and Wisconsin (Whitefish Bay and Milwaukee). Memories of Riverside include serving as an altar boy in the local Catholic Church and performing chores for a neighboring rancher, including cleaning chicken coops, and exercising horses. Upon returning to Wisconsin, Tom helped out at his grandparent's store and watched over his younger siblings. Living on the Milwaukee's North Side, Tom attended Peckham Junior High and Washington High School (Class of 1955).

After graduating, Tom briefly lived in Hawaii with his father and younger brothers. During his island tenure he picked pineapples in the fields, and endured taunting as a "Haole" to earn grocery money. Tom boldly enlisted in the Army in August 1955. He described this experience to his children throughout his lifetime: "I picked pineapples hunched over in the hot sun so

that my brothers and I could have milk and so they could afford to get on a boat back to the mainland, then I joined the Army to get off that island; it was the only way." This was a highly effective maneuver when deployed in response to any of his six children airing a grievance, ergo if his goal was to raise a brood of doers and non-complainers, he attained it.

Tom proudly served as an artilleryman (distinguished as an expert marksman) and medic in the U.S. Army, frequently recounting the more harrowing aspects of training when stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Upon discharge, he continued his service as a reservist in the Air National Guard.

On January 3, 1959, our world was changed forever when Tom married his match, the inestimable Colleen Mary Curley (Daughter of Rosemary Curley and Nee McLaughlin). Colleen was literally the girl next door who was known to write his name in her ice cream in their youth. Throughout their long-spirited partnership together, Colleen kept him on his toes. Within days of their union, Tom got his first break with his initial hire as a technician at AC Spark Plug and worked his way over the next 21 years into a leadership role in its manufacturing division in Oak Creek. His proudest moment at AC was the contribution his team made to the Apollo 11 mission and their delivery to NASA of the guidance system for the Lunar Landing Module.

Tom often took the road less traveled in his various paths to success. For example, the Milwaukee School of Engineering awarded Tom his first college degree in 1975, a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Management, 6 years after the last of his and Colleen's six children was born. A lifelong learner, he then went on to achieve his MBA from Golden Gate University in 1980.

Tom was well-known as a "gadget" guy, reflecting his innate appreciation for innovation--he was first in line to purchase a new programmable calculator for school, a 4-function Texas Instruments Radio Shack Special for \$99. He wore

out the keys and magnetic programming strips in short order. He was naturally drawn to technology and collected laser discs, computers, software, and most anything that had a battery to produce a tantalizing beam of light.

In 1977 (Jimmy Carter, Bee Gees, Star Wars, Radio Shack's TRS-80 Micro Computer) he was promoted to Manufacturing Manager of Operations at Delco Electronics. This professional step-up required a bold cross-country relocation to Santa Barbara, California, the execution of which was planned as a camping trip. This unique approach was really designed to avoid the culture shock awaiting his kids in California by sneaking up on it slowly and deliberately, mile-by-mile on the adventure of a lifetime, this strategy was "Pure Tom".

In fact, that Summer of '77 changed everything for his Clan and is still regaled for its epic cross-country adventures that included stays in several national parks, interactions with alligators, a visit to The Badlands, and a hand-drawn portrait of Tom by a San Francisco street vendor who likened his regal good looks to an Italian prince (right before asking him for a lot of \$ for his efforts). In 14 days the exhausted but excited travelers reached their new community, the lovely humble town of Carpinteria, and everything was new and somehow that seemed ok because everything over the last 2 weeks was brand new and this was not the end of the adventure, it was just the next adventure. Much later it was gleaned that this itinerary was a retracing of a previous trip experienced in his youth with his own father and brothers, only this had a lot more stops for ice cream.

Tom thrived in his reacquaintance with California and eventually was recruited by rival Raytheon. Over the next 25 years he would be sought and recruited by multiple Aerospace companies looking to manufacture high-tech theoretical designs, none of which had been previously produced. Climbing that ladder

eventually took him further down the California Coast to Long Beach.

It was one of his last assignments that Tom considered his finest professional achievement. As VP of Manufacturing, he directed and oversaw Northrop's successful manufacturing and delivery of the Gyroscopes and Beryllium sphere components integral for the success of The AIRS guidance system for the MX Missile. AIRS is still considered the most accurate inertial navigation (INS) system ever built largely based on these incredibly precise, painstakingly manufactured "space-age" components. President Ronald Reagan was to rebrand this missile as "The Peace-Keeper", and due to the extreme accuracy of AIRS, this missile program became a key bargaining chip for the U.S. in the SALT II treaty negotiations with the former USSR.

Post 9/11, Tom, never one to rest on his laurels, decided he would join the recently formed U.S. Department of Homeland Security. He worked out of their office in Irvine for 15 years as an adjudicator until he finally, and officially, retired from work at the age of 80 (2017). In 2018 he relocated to Visalia to live with his daughter, Mary Ann Laufer. A year later he took up residency at the nearby Evergreen Residence Assisted Living facility. During his 3 years there, he thrived within his private "Tom Cave" with his big bed, big screen TV, and family remembrances visible in every nook and cranny. This was his room in the specialized memory care unit where Tom received outstanding care from the devoted staff.

Tom engaged his problem-solving skills and positive mental attitude to fight the good fight against the dementia that was claiming his active mind. Mary Ann and Colleen made sure he had a bottomless supply of his favorite items, including Baskin-Robins ice cream and Pepsi Free. He was visited often by family and friends, and true to form, he earned the title "King of the Memory Care Unit" for looking out for his fellow residents while impressing upon the staff his "professional" suggestions for the facility's overall improvement.

Though the last gyroscope had long since been delivered, Tom was still on a mission to provide guidance.

In the end, the recounting of a man's life amounts to the many vibrant stories of him, passed on by his family and close friends, as well as their lingering loving thoughts of their life along-side him, long after he is gone; and so he is known today simply and lovingly as "Papa Tom" to his 10 grandchildren: Lindsey, Kevin, Jenny, Amanda, Hailley, Samantha, Callahan, Lauren, Caleb and Liam, as well as his 7 great-grandchildren: Kolbe, Fern, Rosalie, Graham, Archer, Ezra, and Ethan. Papa Tom was a constant and prolific storyteller of tall tales to every wave of these offspring that came down from his line.

Thomas E. Ciriacks loved The Green Bay Packers and the great outdoors. He was an accomplished photographer, an avid golfer, a devout fine small arms collector, a habitual technology geek and one who doted on all manner of dogs and devoured any and all types of very hot sauces. Tom's pride and joy, however, was always his family, his team, his collection of people to provide for and hold close. This intention started with his marriage to Colleen, who relocated to Visalia (post-divorce) to assist their daughter, Mary Ann, with the coordination of his ongoing care to the very end. In order of birth, Tom is survived by his children, Patrick (Kelly), Julie (Wade) Brylow, Mary Ann, Thomas M. (Jeannine), and Paul (Milka). He was preceded in death by his son James (Valerie).

Tom will be missed by all who knew him.

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

Tribute Wall

ML

“ 1 file added to the album Tom/Dad/Papa ... The MAN, the MYTH, the LEGEND



Mary Ann Ciriacks Laufer - October 06, 2022 at 01:51 PM

BK

“ Our condolences, Pat, to you and your family. What an accomplished man. I hadn't known all the details of his AC/Delco accomplishments.

bill kelly - October 06, 2022 at 12:19 PM

KD

“ Pat, what a wonderful tribute to your father. He was an amazing man, I feel like I know him from the obituary. Condolences to you and the entire Ciriacks family.....

Kimberly Duprey - October 06, 2022 at 11:45 AM

LG

“ What a rich and interesting life he lived, filled with love and adventure. And he was so blessed with family that cared for him when he needed them most. Sending my prayers for peace.

Laura Goddard - October 06, 2022 at 10:30 AM

DN

“ *What a great life he had. Great daughter Mary too.*
Dan and Nancy Allain

Dan and Nancy - October 05, 2022 at 10:29 PM

CL

“ *An amazing man with an incredible legacy. Such a blessing to so many for an abundance of reasons.*

Christine Lawry-Hawkins - October 05, 2022 at 08:41 PM