



Thomas James Anderson

October 23, 1938 - November 15, 2020

Thomas J (Tom) Anderson, 82, of Niagara, WI, passed away on Sunday, November 15, 2020 due to complications from COVID-19. He was born October 23rd, 1938, in Niagara, first child of Lorraine and Ralph E. Anderson.

There was nowhere to go but up for young Tom after he earned his first D-minus in Kindergarten at Niagara Elementary in the subject of “cutting” – courtesy of teachers Blasé and Bryant. Realizing he needed to turn things around and set a good example for his 4 siblings that would follow, he spent the rest of his life getting the last laugh, as his beautifully manicured lawns were the envy of most of Niagara once Tom was old enough to push a lawnmower. “I’ll show them cutting!” he later remarked.

Growing up during Niagara’s glory days, young Tom pursued athletic endeavors since he wasn’t quite yet being noticed by the ladies. His 135-lb frame can be seen to this day in old black-and-whites of the city championship softball team, the high school basketball team and the high school football team – although it’s unclear if his role was as star athlete, scorekeeper or somewhere in between.

After graduating from the famed “Hard as nails, tough as bricks, we’re the class of ‘56” graduation class, Tom decided to leave Niagara behind temporarily and enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he spent 3 years on base and touring the Pacific while earning distinction as a naval aircraft electrician. He spent time stationed at Northern California’s Moffett Field, and during leave would hitchhike to Niagara and back, honing his talking skills as he kept bored big rig drivers mesmerized by tales from God’s country. His kids believe it was during these rides that their dad learned his trademark sign-off whenever he called and left a message: “Give me a call. Big 10-4!”

After the Navy and a 2-year stint at GM in Milwaukee, Tom returned to Niagara to be back with family and to raise one of his own. It was then when Tom developed his trademark philosophy of “stirring the pot and walking away”, something he picked up from his father. He enjoyed getting a laugh or an exasperated look out of the unsuspecting, whether

offering kids to take a stick of gum from one of the “gum trees” growing under the front picture window, yelling to young neighborhood boys as they rode their bikes down Garfield Street “How’s she going girls?”, to offering kids “tootsie rolls” he would collect from the lawn before he mowed. Appreciated by many, loved by all.

Following in the footsteps of his grandpa Carl and his father Ralph, Tom entered the paper trade, becoming employed by the Kimberly Clark paper mill in 1962, eventually earning a promotion to foreman at the age of 30, forever becoming the youngest foreman ever promoted at the Niagara mill. Growing up, his kids would often hear him talking shop about the #3 paper machine with his brother Strawman while they munched on cannibal sandwiches in Lorraine and Ralph’s back yard.

Tom and his wife Mary Ann raised two so-so kids in Debbie (NHS class of 1981) and Tom (NHS class of 1982, higher ranked in his class than his sister in hers) and began living the Niagara dream. Trying to recapture his athletic prowess, Tom decided to tackle the challenging sport of bowling, eventually becoming one of the town’s best rollers. He was the Big Lebowski before the Big Lebowski. The basement had the trophies to prove it. Athletic redemption at last.

A lifelong Packers fan, Tom decided to apply for Packers season tickets in the mid-60s, and was heartened 20 years later when he was awarded 4 seats in the upper reaches of Lambeau Field for a tidy sum which included half his kids’ college tuition and a set of old Ram golf irons with white grips. “How much? That’s a bunch of bull...”, Tom remembers thinking. “This team has sucked for more than a decade!” But he bit the bullet and enjoyed going to Packers games the rest of his life.

Tom balanced his time with family, friends and work, including finding time to be with his good Niagara “chums” on walleye fishing and beer drinking expeditions to Lake Erie and the far-reaching lakes of Canada. He loved his chums and they loved him back.

It was during these halcyon years that Tom earned a reputation as a salt-of-the-earth kind of guy. His kids would sometimes get home from school to find their dad sitting at the kitchen table “shooting the sh..” with the local drycleaning deliveryman, or listening intently as the umpteenth Mormon missionary he invited into the house attempted to sway him to their brand of faith. Tom always took a pure, genuine interest in everyone he met – breaking the ice, making them comfortable and being a true friend. Many of his kids’ friends continued to the end to see Tom as a sort of 2nd dad. Whenever he would visit his daughter in St. Paul or his son in Northern California, their friends would say “Your dad’s coming? What time should we be there?” Just the kind of man he was.

In the early 1990s, newly unencumbered Tom began dating the newly unencumbered Lisa (Peterson) Hendricks, also of Niagara. Tom and Lisa spent the next 28 years or so enjoying each other's company, refusing to miss a Friday night fish fry and laughing and living life to its fullest. They could often be found in the summers at the Peterson's lake house in Spread Eagle, enjoying the quiet solitude of the lake periodically broken by the cacophony of contagious laughter coming from the Peterson sisters. After several attempts at getting Lisa to say "yes", he finally popped the question for the last time this past spring, and Tom and Lisa were married on June 20th in a beautiful ceremony at Frog Lake in Spread Eagle, surrounded by just a few handfuls of family and close friends.

Tom worked at the Niagara mill until age 55, when he retired early with grace and a love of the game of golf. In his brilliant golf career, Tom had (3) holes-in-one – and couldn't wait to buy the bar patrons a round after each one. He spent the next 25 years enjoying the warm winters and golf courses of Punta Gorda, Florida where his kids and family would often visit.

Tom is survived by his wife Lisa, who was there at his side every day at the end, his daughter Deb (Greg) Webster of St. Paul, MN, son Tom (Nancy) Anderson of Pleasant Hill, CA, grandchildren Jack, Madison, Marie, Kate, and Henry, sisters Judy (John) Dewing of Bellingham, WA, Audrey Pustelnik of Tampa, FL, Nancy Anderson of Edina, MN and brother Dennis (Kris) Anderson of Niagara, his sisters-in-law Wendy, Paula, and Kristie, Lisa's sons Neil (Jenny) and Ryan and their families, step-grandchildren Trevor and Abby Webster, and Kody, Riley, Nevaeh, Koby, Jack and Lexi Hendricks, numerous nieces and nephews, and a slew of people in Niagara who are going to miss this man's sense of humor, kind spirit and smile for a long time...

Our "life of the party" has now departed us and the hole in our hearts is huge. They say time heals all wounds. We hope so because this one is big. Tom's siblings call him as much a friend as a brother. Tom's grandkids call him the best grandpa ever. And his kids call him the best dad ever and so much more. And to Lisa Tom was the perfect man, despite his imperfections.

The family extends their sincerest appreciation to the healthcare staff at Rennes East Nursing Home in Peshtigo, and Aurora Medical Center in Marinette who went to great lengths to care for Tom during his final weeks. They went out of their way to tell Tom's family what a positive, energetic, kind and enjoyable soul he is. We knew that. Finally, Tom loved his Iron Mountain VA healthcare team, who treated him well and always with a smile. We thank all of you from the bottom of our hearts.

Due to COVID restrictions, the family is planning a celebration of life next summer at the Peterson cottage. In lieu of gifts or flowers, please consider a donation to your favorite charitable cause or his – the Salvation Army, to whom Tom donated every year for over a quarter century, and think of Tom’s warm smile and that time he may have “stirred your pot and walked away”.

Comments



“ Tom and Debbie, I feel so bad for the loss of your Dad. My sincere sympathy to both of you! Tom, I have some memories of your Dad, all good just so you know! He was my catechism teacher where he always had a smile on his face and something good to say. He was one of my shift managers at the mill and always a pleasure to work for and always upbeat and happy! I'm sorry but I did not know he died until 2 days ago.

I just want to let you know that you are in my thoughts and in my prayers!

Take care,

Sincerely,

Mike Moreau

Mike Moreau - November 27, 2020 at 03:29 PM



“ 4 files added to the album Memories Album



Nancy Anderson - November 23, 2020 at 09:50 PM



“ Daddy O....I think of you at least every hour on the hour of every single day.

Miss your smile, miss you laughter, miss your positive and joyful presence.

I think you'd love your obituary. I envision you "Howling from Heaven!!!"

XOXOXOXO

Debbie

deb - November 23, 2020 at 01:11 PM



“ What a unique man, neighbor and coworker!
Our most sincere regards!
Don and Heidi Olson...

donny olson - November 23, 2020 at 04:47 PM



“ Uncle Tom
Altho I haven't seen you in decades, I will always remember you being quick with a joke
and a laugh.
My condolences

Becky - November 23, 2020 at 08:20 PM



“ We always enjoyed seeing Tom whenever we went over to the cottage. He was such a nice
and happy man. He is going to be missed by many. R.I.P. Tom. Hugs to his family. Denis
and Sue

Sue - November 24, 2020 at 12:13 AM



“ Debbie, my sincere and heartfelt sympathy to you and your family. Your brother's obituary
paints a picture of a fine, funny, engaging man. Clearly he passed the on to you and your
brother. COVID be damned. I'm sorry that he was taken too soon by this virus. May you
always remember the things about him that delighted you. Thank you for sharing a glimpse
of your dad.

Monica - November 25, 2020 at 08:50 PM