



Thomas James de Bettencourt

September 1, 1932 - November 16, 2020

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Thomas James de Bettencourt, age 88, passed away surrounded by loved ones in Chico, CA, on November 16, 2020. Tom was born in Oak Bluffs on Martha's Vineyard, MA on September 1, 1932 to William N. de Bettencourt and Mary M. Connor de Bettencourt. He was the oldest surviving son of 11 children. In 1954, he graduated from St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore with a bachelor's and master's degree in philosophy and theology.

He joined the US Army in 1955, where he trained as a paratrooper and was selected for Special Forces. In 1956 Tom attended the Army Language School in Monterey, CA to study Russian. It was there he met his future wife, Norma "Nonie" Williamson. Tom was subsequently stationed in Germany as a Russian language intelligence analyst.

Tom and Nonie were married in Germany on May 3, 1958. After Tom left the Army, they moved to California in 1960 and then to Hawaii in 1964 where Tom worked for Dole Pineapple. They were soon headed to the Philippines -- with four young children in tow -- where Tom helped open cannery operations for Dole. They returned to California with their five children in 1968. Tom pursued a career in production and inventory control and they remained in Lafayette for over 30 years. Tom and Nonie retired to Paradise, CA in 2000.

Tom's many pursuits were indicative of his exceptional gifts and broad interests. He supervised cannery operations, owned and operated a restaurant, worked as a mechanic, managed a computer manufacturing firm, and was a supply chain expert. He was constantly seeking knowledge and could talk about everything from rebuilding car engines, welding, plumbing, and electrical wiring to philosophy, WWII history, spiritual theology, and current events. He was an avid outdoorsman, climbing the Matterhorn in Switzerland, learning to surf in Hawaii, taking up scuba diving with his sons in CA, and backpacking in the Sierras. Tom loved languages, formally studying Russian, German, Latin, and Greek, as well as being able to converse in Tagalog.

Tom had a special gift for fitting in with just about anyone. His ability over the years to maintain friendships with people he met in the many places he lived, including college classmates in Baltimore, Army buddies in Monterey and Germany, missionary priests in Mindanao, and co-workers in the Bay Area, Honolulu, and Polomolok, was inspiring. He prioritized visiting any of his extended family whenever he was in the area, whether it was an uncle on a farm in Merced, a sibling on the Vineyard, or any of his many relatives spread far and wide.

Closer to home, he loved gardening, mixing his famous "Mediterranean spice mix" from scratch for all his kids and grandkids, and working in his shop on a variety of projects. Tom and Nonie always had a menagerie of pets in their home and were devoted animal lovers. They both participated in the Butte County Sheriff's Office S.T.A.R.S. volunteer program.

Tom and Nonie were active parishioners of St Thomas More Catholic Church in Paradise, CA. They shared a deep faith which got them through the good times and the bad. Tom was a long-standing member of a lay religious order (Secular Order of Discalced Carmelites). The family has fond memories of Nonie playing cello and Tom singing at Mass.

Tom and Nonie were married for over 60 years and blessed with five children, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Nonie passed away on Nov 4, 2018.

On November 8, 2018, a mere four days after Nonie passed away, the Camp fire destroyed their home. Tom relocated after the fire to a retirement community in Chico, CA. In time, Tom met and developed a special relationship with Doreen Spellmann, a fellow resident.

Husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, son, uncle, and friend, Tom inspired and encouraged those close to him with his deep faith, love of learning, and perseverance. He was always dedicated to his growing family and loved getting visits or updates from his kids, grandkids, and great-grandkids. He was a provider, a teacher, and a helping hand to anyone who needed it. He will be sorely missed by all who loved him.

He is survived by his five children: Michael de Bettencourt (Lia), Mark de Bettencourt (Ann), Stephen de Bettencourt (Audrey), David de Bettencourt, Noreen Searls (Kevin); seven grandchildren: Thomas de Bettencourt, Emilia de Bettencourt (Charles Knipper), Dominic de Bettencourt, Catherine de Bettencourt, Oliver de Bettencourt, Nolin Searls, Renae Searls; two great-grandchildren: Sophie de Bettencourt, and Sadie de Bettencourt;

his brother John “Jack” (Edel), and sisters Eileen Tierney, Theresa Veinotte, and Kathleen (Ray) de Bettencourt; and many nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his wife Nonie, his siblings William “Billy,” Anne, Gerald, William N., Jr. “Bink,” Rosemary, Maureen, his daughter-in-law Sujita Sklenar, and his grandson Jon-Michael.

A funeral Mass will be held at a later date. Tom’s remains will be interred in Sacred Heart Cemetery, Oak Bluffs, MA, alongside those of his wife, Nonie.

Donations in lieu of flowers are suggested for:

St Thomas More Catholic Church, 767 Elliott Rd, Paradise, CA 95969

The Abbey of New Clairvaux, 26240 7th Street, Vina, CA 96092

For information on the virtual Funeral Mass scheduled for Saturday, Dec 5, 2020, at 1:00 PM Pacific Time, or to relay stories or remembrances to Tom’s family, please send an email to: tjdbfuneralinfo@gmail.com.

Comments



“ Great memories of how happy my father was to have Tommy, Jackie and Bink come deer hunting with us in Vermont! My dad thought a lot of this guys! Tom Connor

Tom Connor - November 25, 2020 at 03:15 PM