



Thomas A. Stenger

February 14, 1946 - March 13, 2020

Thomas ("Tom") Stenger passed away on Friday, March 13, 2020. Tom succumbed to complications of dementia at the H.J. Heinz Campus of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. He was 74 years and one month old-far too young.

He is survived by, among others, his wife, Christine ("Penny") Stenger (née O'Brien, now living in Pittsburgh); son, Allen Stenger (Washington, D.C.); daughter, Elizabeth ("Beth") Stenger and her partner, Jeremy Branson (Pittsburgh); sister, Mary Ann Pierson and her husband, Tres (Wheeling), and David ("Dave") Stenger and his wife, Stacy Keith (Annapolis, Maryland). With the current spread of covid-19, Tom's family has postponed his funeral. (They intend to hold a funeral mass over a memorial weekend in summer or fall 2020.) In these circumstances, Tom's family has decided to honor him with a lengthier obituary than might be commonplace.

Tom was born in 1946 to Ralph and Gladys (née Kalkreuth) Stenger, of Carmel Road, Wheeling. Tom arrived on February 14 that year, a Valentine's Day baby. He was the third of five children, at least once Ralph and Gladys finally got around to creating Dave. (His two older siblings, Ralph ("Larry") and Richard ("Dick") Stenger, passed away in 2009 and 2018, respectively. Larry is survived by (among others) his wife, Lynne (now of Belleair Bluffs, Florida); Dick, by (among others) his wife, Pat (Waltham, Massachusetts).) The

Stengers were members of St. Michael Church, just down the road. Tom, like his siblings, attended St. Michael School and Central Catholic High School (graduating with the latter's class of 1964). In 1968 he graduated from Wheeling College.

Tom served as an officer in the Army during the Vietnam War, including a stint in-country, primarily in the area of Huế. Tom would tell you himself that he enlisted to beat the draft (he was fortunate not to suffer from bone spurs) and that, after his service, he was no fan of war. Tom returned to Vietnam with Allen as a tourist in 2013. It made Tom very happy to see that the Vietnamese people were faring as well as they were.

After his service, Tom married Penny in 1972. The couple lived first in Wintersville, Ohio, but shortly thereafter settled in the Bello-Vedere Avenue neighborhood in Wheeling. Tom lived the greater part of his life in that home. He and Penny raised Allen (born 1978) and Beth (1980) there. The Bello-Vedere neighborhood, somewhat isolated from the center of town, was a unique and special place: Tom and his family became very close friends with their neighbors. The Stenger home was a place of many gatherings of family and friends and held many special memories for Tom.

Tom's dad, Ralph, had founded what would become Stenger Business Systems, Inc., formerly of Chapline Street in Wheeling. "SBS" began by selling cash registers and typewriters. Soon the company focused on selling, leasing, and servicing copiers (never "Xerox machines"; SBS didn't sell Xerox). Gradually, Tom took the reins of SBS from Ralph. SBS was an Ohio Valley institution, proudly listing as customers many businesses, school districts, churches, and other places of worship. SBS employed as many as 30-40 residents of the Valley when Tom served as president of the company.

Tom guided SBS through ups and downs. Copier manufacturers sometimes

award high-performing affiliated retailers "business-and-pleasure" junkets to exotic locations. SBS received a number of these awards. Tom and Penny had the good fortune to tour Japan, sail the Mediterranean, attend a gathering with Pope Benedict XVI at the Vatican. (Tom felt very blessed.) Tom was a kind man, a man of integrity. On a handful of occasions, Tom "required" an employee who had contributed to SBS's success to take the trip in his stead. Tom retired in 2010, and the SBS business was sold to the good folks at Hughes Office Equipment.

One of the accomplishments of which Tom was most proud was his role (with Penny) in helping to start an Ohio Valley chapter for the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA). Tom was a compassionate, giving person. Having experienced the challenges of mental illness himself, he felt compelled to help others struggling with the same. For many years Tom and Penny ran weekly DBSA meetings. He was able to offer support to many people, some of whom had nowhere else to turn.

Tom and Penny moved to Pittsburgh in 2014. They joined Our Lady of the Angels Parish, welcomed by Brother John Harvey. Around that time, Tom started to experience physical and mental challenges consistent with early-onset dementia. By 2018, the dementia had progressed to such an extent that Tom moved to a memory-care facility to receive continuous care. Last summer, after a further health setback, Tom moved to the VA Pittsburgh's Heinz Campus to receive hospice care.

Over the final years of his life, the horrible condition that afflicted Tom robbed him of his ability to communicate easily. He was attended to by family and some of his oldest, dearest friends. It was no small joy to his visitors that Tom was able to remember them to the end. (If Beth asked Tom if Tom recalled who she was, occasionally Tom would say something to the effect of, "Well,

duh!" and provide his daughter's name.) With his unexpected, laconic remarks and ever-present gratitude, Tom quickly became a staff favorite-or at least that's what the staff members were gracious enough to tell him and his family. It was a blessing that during his final months Tom rarely appeared to be frustrated or distressed by his condition. It is no mere coincidence that the care, attention, and humanity of the staff at the VA Pittsburgh's Heinz Campus were simply extraordinary.

Tom Stenger was a son, sibling, friend, church-goer, Eagle Scout, soldier, husband, father, small business leader, hobby-carpenter, Penguins supporter, volunteer. He was quick to share a smile. He had a goofy side. He was a man of faith. Most importantly, he was a decent human being who sought to make the world a better place while he occupied it. He will be dearly missed.

In lieu of sending flowers, please consider making a donation in memory of Tom to either the Dementia Society of America or the Alzheimer's Association. And do consider logging onto thomasmsmithfh.com and sharing a note with Tom's family.

Tribute Wall



“ Thomas A. Stenger

October 09, 2023 at 09:55 AM



“ Thomas A. Stenger

October 06, 2023 at 11:36 AM



“ Penny, Allen, and Beth,

It was just today that we learned of Tom's death. We were shocked and dismayed. Tom was so special in so many ways. The years we were in CLC, the meetings together and other gatherings were very special to us.

We shall always think of him and the entire Stenger as dear friends. A family with strong moral convictions and strong faith. Tom will always remain in our memories as a young vibrant man with quick wit, sometimes sarcasm, but always "God loving".

We will miss him and we will keep you all in our thoughts and prayers.

*Judy and Tom Dietrich
(new address still in Wheeling, but at 14 Timberview Drive).*

Special thanks to Beth for reaching out to Aimee via facebook so we would be aware of Tom's death.

Judy and Tom Dietrich - October 20, 2020 at 10:22 PM

PM

“ I was saddened to hear of Tom's death from a classmate at Wheeling. My husband Steve had courses with Tom and so many of Tom's qualities and gifts remind me of Steve...even that both were Eagle Scouts! Steve died in June 2018 and the passing of Tom brings so many memories flooding back. We sure had some great times back then!
My prayers for you and your family,
Paula Miller Class of '68

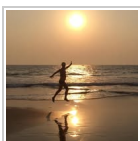
Paula Miller - April 27, 2020 at 06:25 PM

KB

“ Dear Penny, Allen & Beth,
Please know that we are thinking of you and so sad to hear the news about Tom.
With heartfelt sympathy,

Kim & Dan Bonenberger

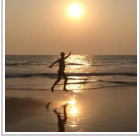
Kim Bonenberger - March 28, 2020 at 04:34 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Michael Burk - March 26, 2020 at 06:59 PM



“ *Piranha Bar, Berlin, Germany. One summer long, a few mojitos later and Tom and I were best friends. A great man and his great son I met in July 1999. Friends ever since. In my heart you will live forever, long may you run, Tom!*

Michael Burk - March 26, 2020 at 06:58 PM

DW

“ *My heartfelt sympathy to Penny and family. Stenger and O'Brien families always good friends of ours reaching back to St. Mike and Central days. Always enjoyed talking with Tom and he was forever with a smile. A great man who will truly be missed. David Winstel*

David Winstel - March 24, 2020 at 10:40 AM

PG

“ *Penny and family, we were saddened to read about Tom. I remember being in several groups and classes with him at Central and Wheeling College. He was a good friend with a great and witty sense of humor. I remember also that his parents and my parents spent a lot of Serra Club time together. Our thoughts and prayers are with you. Pat & Chuck Gruber, Bridgeport, WV.*

Pat & Chuck Gruber - March 24, 2020 at 08:31 AM

JM

“ *My sympathies to the Stenger family. Tom was a good man and friend.*

Jim McGlumphy

Jim McGlumphy - March 23, 2020 at 03:46 PM

MH

“ Dear Penny,
We were so sorry to hear of Tom's death. He was a wonderful man and will be sorely missed. Please accept my deepest sympathy.
Marianne Hazlett.

Marianne Hazlett - March 23, 2020 at 02:51 PM

DP

“ Penny and Allen,
We are so sorry for your loss! Our thoughts and prayers go out to your family at this sad time. Dan and Darlene Petri

Darlene Petri - March 23, 2020 at 09:38 AM

HW

“ I am so sorry to hear about Tom. Tom and you were so helpful and supportive to me. My fondest memories of Tom are working with the Odyssey of the Mind team. May God comfort you during your time of sorrow. Love. Andy and Helen

Helen Wowczuk - March 22, 2020 at 04:57 PM

GD

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Greg Dailer - March 22, 2020 at 04:23 PM

GD

“ With Tom’s passing my heart goes out to the entire Stenger Family. But it goes out especially to his loving daughter Dr. Beth, his wife Penny and his son Allen. They will miss him dearly. A special thanks to Dr. Beth for seeing to it that my Best Friend (your Daddy) got the special care and attention he needed, especially in the end. You are a sweetheart.

Greg Dailer - March 22, 2020 at 03:46 PM

FC

“ May the Holy Spirit bring you gifts of peace, comfort & guidance in the days ahead. Tom has been born into Eternal Life. He beat us to Easter. I'll remember him in a mass intention. May he be welcomed into the Halls of Saints by our Lord & savior, the Blessed Mother, his parents & relatives, friends, fellow journeyers, etc. Shalom

Fr. Gary Naegele, cousin - March 22, 2020 at 01:47 PM

KD

“ Doug and I had no idea that Tom (and you) were experiencing this sadness, We are thinking of you and your children and remembering Tom with happy thoughts. Our most deepest and profound condolences.
Doug and Karen Dalby

Karen Dalby - March 22, 2020 at 12:43 PM

RN

“ Betty and I are sad to hear of this passing.I still Renner the family reunions we had when we were kids,getting into uncle Ralph garden,Larry making stink bombs and trying to blame everything on tom.the stinger family has lost another unplacebale member.Betty and I send you and the family prayers and the fact that I will always remember my cousins Larry Dock and Tom.Raymond an d Betty Naegele

Ray naegele - March 22, 2020 at 12:43 PM

JK

“ Sending love and prayers to all of you at this time. All of my memories of Tom seem to center around St. Mike's. And all of them reflect the faith, love of family, joy of life, and his determination to bake things better for everyone.

Janell Knorr - March 22, 2020 at 12:13 PM

CS

“ Penny, Allen and Beth -- Alvin and I are deeply saddened at the death of Tom. I knew Tom since 1965, when my family moved to Wheeling, and Mary Ann and I took up our strong friendship from then on. God will continue to bless you and look after all of you during this time of trial and grief and beyond.
Carolyn and Alvin

Carolyn Schafer - March 22, 2020 at 11:24 AM

SS

“ Allen, Beth and Penny, my deepest sympathy. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Scott Schenerlein

Scott Schenerlein - March 22, 2020 at 11:09 AM

DO

“ Alice and I send our loving thoughts to the entire Stenger family at this sad time. Love, David

David O'Brien - March 22, 2020 at 08:36 AM

BE

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Beth - March 21, 2020 at 01:51 PM