



C. Thomas (Tom) Harris

March 30, 1931 - August 16, 2022

With an ever sharp and agile mind but a frail body, C. Thomas (Tom) Harris passed away on August 16. Tom was a young 91 years old. He married his high school sweetheart Elaine Harris (nee Guhl) in 1951. They moved to Portage in 1960 and were both instrumental in establishing Portage as a city. He was the first city engineer and successfully advocated for the installation of Portage's sewer system against strong political pressure.

Tom surveyed every parcel of land, platted countless subdivisions, and designed several buildings in Porter County. He was particularly proud of designing and planning Elaine's and his home and subdivision, Trail Creek. All his buildings and homes featured functionality and eco-friendly architecture well before environmental concerns were vogue.

Tom was an avid reader and embodied the phrase "never stop learning." He could talk about anything and loved one-on-one conversations with others talking about any subject matter from the economy to why cups were designed round. There were never superficial conversations with Tom.

Tom loved his hobbies —sailing, fishing, traveling, camping, motorcycle riding, and photography. His children and wife were the beneficiaries of his interests. Access to five motorcycles, in part, made his children popular. The family tent-camped around the United States, including spending summers in a campground 10 miles from their home at Spectacle Lake in Valpo. Tom leaves to his children a treasure trove of now-digitized candid family photographs spanning 70 years.

Tom and Elaine spent winters in Zihuatanejo, Mexico for over 20 years. He adored the Mexican people and their language, art, and culture. A self-taught linguist, he fancied himself as fluent in Spanish; the family sometimes had their doubts.

Tom's sense of adventure and love of life will be missed by his family. He is survived by his children Richard Harris, Nancy Vaidik (Jim Stankiewicz), Julie Elisha (Jeff), and Chris

Lopez (Dean). He is also survived by his nine grandchildren: Kristin and Kelly Stankiewicz, Amanda Hernandez, Kyle Telechan, Alex Harris, Cameron and Juliana Lopez, Lexi and Jillian Elisha and his seven great grandchildren. Elaine preceded him in death in 2019.

A celebration of life will be scheduled in the future. If you wish to be notified about the celebration email tomharriscelebration@gmail.com.