



Thomas E. Fricke

October 3, 1935 - October 7, 2025

Tom passed away peacefully at his home on Torch Lake, with his wife of 42 years, Carol, by his side. The previous Saturday, they hosted the wedding of his Granddaughter Chelsea to Garret Freborg. The entire family was in attendance, representing four generations, joyously celebrating the wedding and Tom's 90th birthday. Tom was born in South Bend, Indiana, the son of Margaret "Peg" (Sowle) and John Fricke. He attended Benton Harbor (MI) High School, and Western Michigan University before beginning his career with Hilton Hotels in Chicago. His 38-year career with Hilton took him to Omaha, NE, El Paso, TX, and Lincoln, NE. He oversaw construction of new hotels and manage them during their first few years. The last move with Hilton was to a national office in Atlanta, GA. Following his retirement from Hilton Hotels, Tom accepted the position of Director of the Kalamazoo County Convention and Visitors Bureau, a post he held for 14 years, before his second retirement in 2002.

Tom was active in the Episcopal Church, Rotary International (Paul Harris fellow), the Elks, and numerous non-profit organizations. He was an honorary Admiral in the Nebraska Navy, a roller coaster enthusiast, and an ardent fan of the Nebraska Cornhuskers.

Tom and his wife Carol traveled the world and settled down in their dream home on Torch Lake, MI. He loved the lake and their 3 beautiful Golden Retrievers. Tom is preceded in death by his parents, brother Jack, and brother-in-law Jim. He is survived by his wife, Carol, sister Karen, sons John (Tammy), Mark (Vicki), and Steven (Tamara). Also surviving are 5 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren. A memorial celebration will be planned for a later date. Memorial gifts should be directed to St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 403 Traverse St., Elk Rapids, Michigan 49629. Arrangements were made by Wolfe-O'Neill Funeral Home, our family serving yours. Memories may be shared at wolfeoneille.com/obituaries.

Tribute Wall



“ I'm honestly devastated Tom has passed. I was his caregiver everyday for almost a year. I was devastated when I couldn't continue caring for them. I gained a wonderful relationship with both Tom and Carol. I have missed seeing them every day since. They were always so happy and welcoming and understanding no matter what crossed their paths. I felt like I started to become family to them.

Tom loved when I cooked breakfast. He always was switching it up on me though. He always had to have his eggs with runny yoke. We spent a lot of our time outside. He absolutely loved the sun. He always told me he would sit outside naked if he could. I still don't believe he never did.

Being at their home was the best part of my days. They always made me laugh. Tom and Carol both had a personality that anyone they met would never forget them. Carol just shined happiness every time I was there. I got to be there for her first book with the golden retriever rescue she worked with! I bought the book the day it came out! Tom and Carol shared so many amazing stories with me and I will never forget them.

I'm thrilled he was able to attend the wedding as when they first started planning it, he kept telling me how careful he had to be because he couldn't miss the wedding.

My condolences are with Carol and the family. He was an amazing person and I believe having Carol by his side made him the amazing happy person he was no matter what. I hope he is soaking up all the sun he can while watching over his beautiful wife and family.

-Katrina King

Katrina Downing - October 16, 2025 at 10:28 AM

LD

Tom was always a gentleman and lots of fun. His wonderful wife Carol is a dear, dear person. Together they were a dynamic duo!

Linda Depta - November 07, 2025 at 09:36 AM