Larkin

Thomas Edward Nissalke

July 7, 1932 ~ August 22, 2019

1932-2019

On August 22, Thomas Nissalke died peacefully at his home. He joyously joined his wife Nancy in Eternal Life on this day, their 60th wedding anniversary. "Coach" as he was known by many was a community leader, a man of great loyalty, empathy and integrity.

A native of Madison Wisconsin, a veteran of the US Army, Tom coached high school (Wayland Academy) and college ball (Tulane University) before breaking into pro basketball with the Milwaukee Bucks. Tom met his match in the beautiful drama teacher at Wayland; He and Nancy married in 1959. Together they navigated the unpredictable world of pro sports. Known as a hard-nosed leader, Tom coached some of the world's greatest athletes in the NBA/ABA/CBA while with the Milwaukee Bucks, Seattle Supersonics, San Antonio Spurs, Houston Rockets, Utah Jazz, Utah Stars, Charlotte Hornets, Cleveland Cavaliers, and others.

His basketball career had many highs -- winning an NBA championship, holding Coach of the Year honors in both the NBA and ABA, coaching in the Olympics, etc. It also had plenty of lows. He often said his autobiography could be, "I Spent 10 Years in Seattle One Winter."

After coaching, Tom entered the broadcasting world as TV commentator and radio analyst for ESPN, the Houston Rockets, and the Utah Jazz. Cohosting a highly rated call in show, he was known for "articulate analysis, no BS, and lively discussion."

Tom was more than basketball. Growing up as a YMCA kid, he was a tireless champion of children and the "underdog." Keenly focused on fundraising, he served the Utah YMCA for 20 plus years as a board member, CEO and Chairman. As part of a Prison Ministry Team, Tom spent a decade visiting the Utah State Prison. His various business interests included co-ownership of Salt Lake's popular Green Street Social Club.

A lover of jazz music and a voracious reader, Tom was also an avid follower of politics. He and daughter Holly shared an intense bond in their disdain for the current White House occupant. Most of all, Tom was a family man. He and Nancy considered kids Tom II (spouse Kristi Nissalke) and Holly (spouse Patrick Connolly) to be their greatest successes. Tom never understood people talking about their grandkids, until he proudly took on the role of "Pa" to Caroline (13) and Bella (10.) Then he really "got it."

To all who loved and respected him, thank you. To Ray and Jack, you will always be family.

A Celebration of Life and reception will be held September 13th at 3 p.m. at Wasatch Presbyterian Church., 1626 S 1700 E, SLC.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to the YMCA Tom & Nancy Nissalke Fund for Kids. Please visit https://ymcautah.org/give