

Thomas Frederick "Tom" Lorenz

June 14, 1942 ~ April 25, 2020

Thomas Frederick “Tom” Lorenz died peacefully in his home on April 25th in Olathe, Kansas at the age of 77 after an almost twenty-year battle with cancer.

Tom is survived by his wife, Joy Ann of Olathe, Kansas; daughter Leslea Amanda (Mandy) Lorenz of Olathe, Kansas; brother, Steve Lorenz of Sun City, Arizona; granddaughter, Heather Redford of Salt Lake City, Utah; grandson, Spencer Redford (Taber) of Sedalia, Missouri; grandson, Seth Lorenz Redford of Salt Lake City, Utah; grandson, Adam Redford of Alpine, Utah; and granddaughter, Holly Redford of Alpine, Utah. He is preceded in death by his parents John Thomas Lorenz and Vera Maurine Bigelow of Salt Lake City, Utah; sister, Leslea Nan Dummer of Sandy, Utah; and daughter, Lillian Ann Redford of Sedalia, Missouri

Everyone who knows Tom, knows he loved to tell stories, share knowledge, and talk to everyone. He had an astounding ability to remember anything and everything. He was Google before the word was invented. Any subject (literally), any question, any time, you could ask and get a complete answer with additional information. As I share the summary of his life, I will share a couple of stories. I hope you will enjoy them and can remind you of some of the fun stories he would share about his many adventures throughout his life.

Tom was born in Lawton, Oklahoma on the Fort Sill Army Base. Throughout his school years he moved with his parents to various parts of the world. His two favorite parts of the world to talk about were Istanbul, Turkey and Churchill, Manitoba, Canada.

Storytime: Dad would talk about how he would wander the streets of Turkey (now he was only around 6 years old) and scare his mom because he was gone so long. My parents went on a trip for their 50th wedding anniversary to Turkey to see some of the areas where he had grown up. Everything had changed, of course. It was something he had wanted to do his whole life and we are incredibly grateful he was able to visit.

Churchill was one of his favorite places to talk about. You know, walking uphill, both ways, in the freezing snow. Not sure about the uphill both ways – but the Arctic was always cold. He loved looking up the temperature and compare it to what it was here. The Artic was always colder. He would share numerous stories of how cold it was. He was in charge of getting up and turning the heater on in the morning. Living in army quarters (even the commander’s quarters) wasn’t the most luxurious.

Tom was able to finish his high school career in Arlington, Virginia at Washington Lee High School in 1957. During his Senior year he met Joy Ann Bridwell. He enlisted in the Army in 1962 and was sent to Basic training then on to Fitzsimmons General Hospital (near Denver, Colorado) to serve his 2 years.

During the military he had some of the most interesting jobs. He started as a medical technician in the lab. While that was interesting for a while, he eventually looked for a challenge. He was given a job to assist during autopsies.

He learned about every aspect of the human body during that assignment. It would always surprise doctors when he would know just as much about the human body as they did. He went into the reserves while at the University of Utah after discharge. Tom Continued his college studies in Entomology and became the curator of the Spider Collection at the University of Utah from 1966–68 which was a paying position.

After 6 and a half years of dating Tom and Joy Ann Bridwell were married June 10, 1965 in the Salt Lake City Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They started their marriage in Salt Lake City while Tom went to the University of Utah.

Lillian Ann was born on September 18, 1967.

In 1968, Tom graduated from the University of Utah with a degree in Biology and Entomology. It took him a while. He couldn't decide what kind of degree he wanted. This is one of the reasons why he accumulated a wealth of knowledge. He accumulated enough hours to have a doctorate, but finally was able to settle on Biology.

Storytime: He loved spiders and was considered an expert. After graduation he had to 'dumb' down his resume in order to get a job as a manager at a cheese shop in the Salt Lake area. One day the owner received a call for Tom Lorenz, the expert in spiders. The caller had found a spider and was not able to identify it. The owner told them they must have the wrong person. After asking my dad, the truth came out. My dad was able to identify the spider and he continued with the manager position.

Dad always loved studying bugs. I had a project where I had to catch bugs and then pin them. You would have thought Christmas had come early.

In 1971, Tom was offered a position at the newly formed Environmental Protection Agency. This took the family to Mission, Kansas. He started working in the Lab and continued to find new opportunities throughout his career in EPA . He worked in the water division and finally found his dream job when he joined Super Fund Division. He was the Project manager of the cleanup of several superfund sites though out Missouri and Nebraska.

While living in Mission they were able to form a great bond with similar young married couples who were members of the same church ward. Playing the game of Nertz was a special event for these couples when they would get together. These friendships have endured through the years to today. We, as a family, are grateful for all of the memories.

Storytime: Back in the 70's, the church required members of the local congregation to raise a certain amount of the funds to build the church and also donate time to the construction. Tom learned how to wrap the perfect present because they would earn money for the fund by wrapping gifts at Halls during the Christmas season. When it came time to build the Overland Park building (72nd and Antioch), many nails have his name on them. Hours were spent doing all types of different work to make sure the building was perfect.

In 1974 Tom decided to reenlist in the Army Reserves. He joined the 325th Army Reserve Medical unit in Kansas City, Mo. He started as a Laboratory Sgt.

In 1978 the family moved to DeSoto to a twenty-acre section of land. This was Tom's dream. It was complete with a pond, that would soon be stocked with fish galore. They built the house – literally. The family stained the wood panels for the walls. Tom installed the insulation and completed the electricity. He also painted the inside and outside of the house. It was one of his many talents – he could fix or build anything.

A special delivery arrived in 1979 when Leslea Amanda (Mandy) joined the family. There was now a discrepancy of 3-1 in favor of the women, but Tom took it in stride. It should be noted – this only included humans. If you added the cats, horses, cows, ducks, etc…. the discrepancy increased considerably! Lillian would grow into rodeos, which would be a huge part of the family's time over the next several years, and Amanda would become a Daddy's girl (of course, I was the youngest).

Storytime: One of his favorite stories of me: After visiting Disney World we went to Waffle House (after a really long day) and had breakfast 3:00am. I fell asleep in my waffle. (Yes, a short story. But he would laugh so hard. He loved telling people about that. Now everyone knows. I was young and tired and full of Disney Magic…can you blame me?)

DeSoto included the opportunity to have horses, cows and steers, baby chicks and chickens, and lots of cats. Most important – fish!

Memory: Fishing was an important part of the time in DeSoto. We each had our ‘rock’ that we would sit on while fishing. Mom would yell from the house that dinner was ready. We were far enough away that we could get away with pretending not to hear her the first one or two times. It was amazing to sit out there and just have time, watch the sunset, and learn from the master fisherman.

In 1988, the family moved to Olathe, Kansas. A deck had to be built, a garden put in, and a basketball goal put up.

His final position in EPA was in the Superfund area. He was in charge of Superfund sites throughout Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas. His expertise and ability to learn and retain everything he read made him the perfect person to work with the Army Corps of Engineers and other governmental and civilian groups when trying to cleanup these contaminated areas. He loved this position and his ability to make a difference at these different sites.

In 2002, he retired from the 325th General Field Hospital. He loved the unit and missed spending one weekend a month with the group. He made several friendships that last til today.

In 2009, he retired from the EPA and decided to relax a little. Of course, retirement doesn’t mean life stops. He always found something to do.

Oh, How He Fought!!!

In 2001, Tom was diagnosed with Renal Cell Cancer and had one kidney removed. From that time on he fought Renal cell and a couple of different kinds of cancer. Not fighting was not an option. The Army man was in full force! We had some excellent doctors and received many, many blessings and miracles. We were able to travel to M.D. Anderson and receive a drug trial that gave us an additional 2 years.

His Favorite Things

Tom loved rocks and genealogy. He joined the local Olathe Gem and Mineral Society, which he later became the president of. He loved the members, meetings, and rocks! Tom has his own ‘rock shop’ in the basement. He makes cabochons and then sets them in jewelry, mainly for family. He would love to spend a couple of hours cutting and polishing the cabs. He also helped with the Kansas City Gem and Mineral Show for over a decade. From being an announcer, to helping with the scholarship auction, to setup and takedown – he loved the first weekend of every March. The vendors at the show know him well. It will be a shock next year. But, even during his sickness, he was able to make it to the show this year.

Tom has worked with the public and his own family in finding genealogy connections. When the family went to Europe, we went to Germany to look at several small towns where his ancestors had lived. It was fascinating to try and find the houses and imagine what life would have been like so long ago.

TO OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

This journey would not have continued as long as it has if it wasn’t for your love, support, prayers, notes, fasting, thoughts, and faith. Our family can’t thank you enough for all you have done for us over these 20 years, but especially over the last couple of months. You have been amazing. We thank you for everything. Please know we love you and you are in our prayers of gratitude. If you need anything – please let us know what we can do to serve you.