

Thomas Gail Plummer

October 21, 1939 ~ March 5, 2023

Tom Plummer, German professor, father, bishop, grandfather, artist, writer, and husband died at the age of 83 on March 5th. A native Salt Laker, he also lived in Vienna, Cambridge, the Twin Cities, Berlin, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Hawaii, New York City, and anywhere his wife of 58 years, Louise, lived.

After a 2 ½ year mission to Austria, Tom dedicated himself to the study of German literature, film, and art. With a BA from the University of Utah and a PhD from Harvard, he started his career at the University of Minnesota. While chairing the German department, he produced Germany in the 20s—a cultural event focusing on the lessons of the Weimar Republic. He brought masterpieces from all over the world to the Walker Art Center and other venues across the Twin Cities. Academically, the event included two books, several catalogs, and a magazine. The biggest event was a production of The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany performed by the Metropolitan Opera Company.

Tom almost left academia for entrepreneurship. His first experiment failed when he started a snow blowing business ahead of the worst winter Minnesota had seen in twenty years. But Master Seal Coaters succeeded with cheap child labor, a rusted truck through which you could watch the road pass by under your feet, and plenty of damaged asphalt. Despite a rough start where his glasses dropped in tar sealant and family members traded colorful words, Tom stuck it out. By the end of Summer, he knew he could make it in the asphalt business and make it his profession. Luckily for everyone involved he was offered a position at BYU and managed to move home to Utah after twenty years away.

Tom chaired the humanities department a year after arriving in Provo. He later team-taught a memoir class through the Honors department with Louise and published three memoirs of his own. He was everyone’s cheerleader. He relished the opportunity to forward their academic pursuits or exult in their other achievements. He did the same for his sons and their wives (Jon and Julie, Ed and Dede, Charles and Erica, and Sam and Sarah) and any grandchild who asked (he had fourteen). Academic achievement was a core value that he instilled in everyone.

In retirement Tom took up painting when Louise brought him to watercolor class. He became prolific when he switched to the iPad inspired by David Hockney’s digital work and built a Facebook community of nearly 5,000 friends, artists, and fans.

Tom has requested Mahler’s Symphony No. 2 be played at his resurrection.

A memorial service will be held in Tom’s honor at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 27th Ward, 185 P St, Salt Lake City, UT on Saturday, March 11th at 11:00 AM with an after party at noon.

.