



Thomas "Tom" Michael Atkins

January 29, 1938 - September 29, 2023

Thomas Michael Atkins, age 85, was born on January 29, 1938, in Baltimore, MD, and passed away on Friday, September 29, 2023, in Saline, MI, a year and a half after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, which he faced with extraordinary bravery. Tom had joyful memories of the farm on Scio Church Road in Ann Arbor where he lived as a child. He attended University High School in Ann Arbor, as did his mother in the 1920s, and received BSE and MSE degrees, as well as a bachelor's degree in Architecture, from the University of Michigan. He and Susan Ott, also an engineering student, married in September, 1960. Tom served the active duty portion of his six-year Army Reserve commitment at Fort Leonard Wood in Missouri, an experience he found valuable for its lessons that risky and demanding tasks can be endured and even enjoyed.

Much of Tom's career as an automotive engineer was spent at Kelsey-Hayes, where he helped to develop the first mass-produced antilock braking system in the world. Tom received 12 patents for his technical accomplishments, work of which he was justifiably proud. Antilock braking systems with Tom's control algorithms have been used in 40 million pickup trucks and similar vehicles.

Tom was a creative cook, carefully testing and documenting dozens of recipes, and taking the lead role in many inventive Thanksgiving dinners. Tom and Susan enjoyed watching movies together on TV, working in their garden, taking walks in their tree-lined Ypsilanti neighborhood, and watching birds.

Tom played tennis as a young man and enjoyed watching tennis tournaments

on TV. He started running when he was 40 years old and ran the 25K Old Kent Riverbank Run in Grand Rapids 15 years in a row.

Tom loved music and introduced his family to an astonishing array of performers. He took delight in languages and was fluent in Spanish. Tom excelled at cryptic crossword puzzles and The New York Times crossword; his streak with the latter was 1026 days at the time of his cancer diagnosis.

Tom will be remembered for his tireless devotion to his family, his calm temperament and his steady kindness. He will also be remembered for his methodical and precise nature, his ability to fix or build just about anything, his generous contributions to a vast array of charities, and his dry sense of humor.

Tom is preceded in death by a number of cherished cats, most particularly Jack, who followed Tom around the yard as he gardened. Tom is survived by his beloved wife, Susan; daughters Linda Atkins, Jennifer Atkins, and Charlotte Atkins; brother Dale Joseph Atkins; and niece Wendy Cline.

Cremation has taken place. Donations in Tom's memory may be made to the Humane Society of Huron Valley. To leave a memory you have of Tom or to sign his guestbook, please visit www.rbfhsaline.com.

Tribute Wall



“ *What is remembered lives. Long live Tom Atkins!* ”

deborah cooper - October 28, 2023 at 08:33 PM



“ *Thomas "Tom" Michael Atkins* ”

October 23, 2023 at 01:07 PM



“ *I worked with Tom many years ago. He was an exceptionally smart person and a pleasure to work with. My condolences to his family.* ”

Clark Robbins - October 01, 2023 at 09:32 PM