



Thomas Kladzyk

March 20, 1960 - January 21, 2021

Thomas “Tom” Duncan Kladzyk passed away in his home in Manchester, Michigan on January 21, 2021, lovingly encircled by family and friends.

With a beaming smile and welcoming personality, Tom had a big life that was full of love and warmth. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, son, uncle, and friend, he delighted in the joys of family, friendship, civic engagement, and stewardship of mother nature.

Born on March 20, 1960, Tom grew up in Bad Axe, Michigan, the youngest of four kids: his older siblings were Frank Jr., Pam, and Kathy. His parents, Frank and Marie, owned and operated the Franklin Inn in Bad Axe. Young Tom would help his mother clean the guests’ rooms, and learned the value of a hospitable spirit and strong work ethic from an early age.

He met his wife Jo in high school -- they first bonded over a shared love of “up north,” where they would later find a second home in the Upper Peninsula community of Grand Marais. At the time of Tom’s death, they had been together for 43 years, during which they shared countless adventures in the great state of Michigan.

As a teen, Tom’s love of music blossomed: he began working at Huron Music in Bad Axe in high school, and continued to work there well into college. An avid and meticulous rock & roll aficionado, Tom carefully catalogued every concert he attended throughout his life, and joyously shared this love with his family.

Tom attended first Michigan Tech, then Central Michigan University, then finally the University of Michigan, where he completed his undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering in 1985. A faithful alumni and uncommonly enthusiastic fan of U of M sports, Tom’s time at the University of Michigan was foundational. A motley crew he met at “the Dive” on Church street would prove to be his lifelong friends and his partners in sometimes wild and mildly illegal shenanigans.

Tom had a fearless independence, and some years after college decided he wouldn't be happy with a life spent behind a desk. Instead, he launched his own holiday lighting business in 1988, and through his entrepreneurial savvy, was able to grow it into a large enterprise that made Michigan communities sparkle and gleam at Christmastime. His company put up the Christmas lights in downtown Ann Arbor for over 30 years.

Working with Holiday Lighting was a natural fit for Tom, since he loved being outside and leading an active lifestyle. A conservationist and vegetarian, "salad boy" Tom was well-attuned to the glories of the natural world, and found ways to protect earth's resources through the practices and principles of his daily life. His outdoor passions included hiking, kayaking, sailing, and golf. In recent years he enjoyed ice-climbing and snow-shoeing in the Upper Peninsula, and derived great joy from exploring the stunning terrain around Grand Marais.

Tom was a consummate host and threw iconic parties. His annual Michigan football parties, the Holiday Lighting Christmas party, and the Summer Concert Series at the Gallery in Grand Marais became unmissable events. For those who have seen bumper stickers that read "I'd Rather Be in Kladzyk's Basement" floating around Ann Arbor, those refer to Tom Kladzyk's parties. He liked to go 110% when it came to festivities, a reflection of his zest for life, and the joyful celebrations he hosted will be talked about for years to come.

Tom was a devout Catholic, but was also open-minded and accepting of all religions and spiritual practices. He was a philanthropist, reflecting his deep and committed social consciousness. The organizations he supported were wide-ranging and included environmental causes, public radio stations in underserved parts of America, and Native American schools. He received an honorary degree from Orchard Lake St. Mary's in recognition of his long-term support and family association with the school.

He was involved in his community and served on the Planning Commission in both Manchester and Grand Marais. Generosity and optimism were hallmarks of his character; as Jo said, "he was the type of guy that would do anything for anybody," and he didn't have to be asked.

Tom died from glioblastoma, a disease he lived with for the last 2 and a half years of his life.

He is survived by his wife Jo, his children Tristan and Ellee, his grandchildren Emerson

and Bode, his sister Pamela, and a large extended family. He is predeceased by his parents Franklin Sr. and Marie, and his siblings Franklin Jr. and Kathryn (Brown).

There will be a public visitation at St. Mary Catholic Church in Manchester, Michigan on Wednesday, January 27, from 4 to 8 P.M. with a prayer service at 7 P.M., and a private funeral mass on January 28. A big “to-do” will be held in Grand Marais in summer 2021, details TBA. Donations may be sent to <https://medicalgiving.stanford.edu/>, designated to Dr. Melissa Bondy’s Glioblastoma Research Fund., Arbor Hospice, High Plains Public Radio, or plant a tree in his honor.

Viva Tom. Vaya con dios.

Please leave a message of comfort for Tom’s family or sign his guestbook at www.EinederFuneralHomes.com.

Events

JAN **Family and Friends Gathering** 04:00PM - 08:00PM

27

St. Mary Roman Catholic Church

210 W. Main Street, Manchester, MI, US, 48158

JAN **Scripture Service** 07:00PM

27

St. Mary Roman Catholic Church

210 W. Main Street, Manchester, MI, US, 48158

Comments



“ Dear Jo, Pam and family,
I have known Tom and the Kladzyk family for many years and cherish the countless memories I have of time with them. I always felt so warmly welcomed in the Bad Axe home and Tom was the beloved ‘baby’! He was a gentle loving soul who will be missed by many. He was also the most handsome man I ever knew. Beautiful inside and out, a rare combination, We had many laughs at naming his sister Pam ‘the Artist formerly known as Pammie KK’. Rest In Peace Tom.
Kathy Detgen

kathy Detgen - January 27 at 06:43 PM



“ On behalf of the Copernicus University of Michigan Copernicus Center for Polish Studies, we send our deepest sympathy to the family of Tom Kladzyk, who along with his sister Pamela are longtime friends and supporters of our program and University of Michigan alumni. Farewell to a great friend.

Marysia Ostafin - January 27 at 03:48 PM



“ Dearest Jo and the Kladzyk family,
I am so saddened and my heart hurts for the loss of Tom. He was a wonderful soul, kindest and caring, fun sense of humor with a terrific smile. You both made such a beautiful couple together. My tears and prayers for peace are with you and your family.

I enjoyed stopping in the music store occasionally just to have my spirits lifted. And was blessed to be able to visit you at your home in Manchester many many years ago.

Jo, I miss you and would like to get in contact with you when you are ready. We are all mourning with you.

DeLynn Lerash
Farmington, Minnesota
651-303-9144



DeLynn (Lerash) Pfannenstein - January 27 at 01:40 PM



“ Tom always lit up the world with his smile and loving personality. In 1985 he built a basement bedroom for my son who was 13 years old. Tom managed to convince my son that all black walls were not a good idea, which I believe was the peak of diplomacy. His spirit will live on in the hearts of all who love him. To Jo and all, we are so sorry for your loss and sorrow. May the angels lead him into Paradise. Love, Ginny, Dan and Sarah

Virginia Johnson - January 26 at 08:56 PM



“ When Tom was just a young boy, and I a waitress at the Franklin Inn that his parents owned, he was always coming in the kitchen and raiding the frig. There was always frozen treats for him when he got done working with his Mom. Later on, when ever I seen him, he always gave me a big hug and made me feel that I too was part of the family. So tragic for all his family and a great loss for all who's lives he touch. Fly high Tom. Love Susanne -Suzie Stahl and Tom Stahl.

Sue Stahl - January 26 at 06:20 PM



“ Dear Kladzyk Family,

I first met Tom when I joined the Planning Commission in Manchester. I felt warmly welcomed by him. I was very unsure of myself, and Tom encouraged me to voice my thoughts. He was a mentor to me during the time we served together. I was so sad the day he left the commission. He was a fine man, and whenever I saw him, he remembered me and we had a quick chat. He will be missed. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Margene Dunsmore

Margene K Dunsmore - January 26 at 09:57 AM



“ Our deepest sympathy to the Kladzyk family...

Pat & Liz Wallace - January 26 at 09:44 AM



“ Dear Jo and family,

Our hearts go out to you at this very sad time. The thousands of bright white lights that Tom hung are pale in comparison to his spirit and smile that will never be forgotten. We will keep you all in our prayers as this has been a such a difficult journey.

We were so glad to see him last fall, ever faithful and hopeful at Mass in Grand Marais and look to celebrating his life with you in GM this summer.

With deepest sympathy,

Jim and Michelle Nordberg

Michelle Nordberg - January 26 at 09:12 AM



“ Though I never had the opportunity to meet Tom, I did have the absolute privilege of becoming long-time friends with his daughter Tristan. Tom created and raised a beautiful daughter with a good heart and soul. Tristan talked fondly of her dad, and I believe he was one heck of a guy. In this life or the next, Tom has left his mark on many people, myself included. Thank you to Tristan and her family for sharing such a wonderful story of Tom's life, which I am sure only touches the surface of how many lives Tom touched. Many blessings and heartfelt thoughts! Love, Nelly



Nelly Krueger - January 25 at 11:11 PM



“ Thank you Nelly, love you!!

Tristan - January 29 at 07:50 PM



“ Beautiful smile! Lost track of him after high school and wondered what he was up to over the years, and now I know he had a wonderful blessed life! Thank you to his family for the beautiful life story. My sincere condolences.

Vicki Sieting Strand - January 25 at 09:10 PM



“ Condolences to the family on the loss of Tommy. Remembering him as our Favorite Freshman at Bad Axe High School. What a great guy and gentle spirit.
Norma (Steinhardt) Bour

Norma Bour - January 25 at 08:30 PM



“ We did not get to know Tom, but what a joy to read about his life, love, family, friends and accomplishments. Our prayers go out to Jo and her family. His smile alone shows the kind of person he was.

Julie A Highlen - January 25 at 07:46 PM



“ Tom Kladzyk was a great classmate, and friend to many from not only the class of '78 but his friendly reach was very wide in the BA community.

During the 30th reunion in 2008, he came to our home in PA after a round of golf to share his wisdom and energetic conversation before the reunion that day.

While I learned a lot from Tom about music during the school years, the best times we had were just hanging out with other classmates, playing pick-up football or basketball in some usually brutal weather- and the senior trip to Daytona, and even a few rounds of golf at Verona Hills as kids. Many, really fun times.

Great man, Thanks very much Tom. God Bless you, Jo and your entire family.

Eric and Judy Sump
Pembroke Pines, FL

Eric Sump - January 25 at 06:04 PM



“ Tom and Jo were a beautiful couple and great neighbors. Being around them was always a happy time. Tom installed beautiful lights in my backyard pergola. I have received numerous compliments on how beautiful they are. Every evening and morning those lights bring a smile to my face. Thank you Tom and Jo for giving me great memories. And for the light of happiness you gave me. Teri (Engel) Foresi

Teri - January 25 at 05:28 PM



“ Delightful Dieffenbachia was purchased for the family of Thomas Kladzyk.



January 25 at 03:31 PM



“ Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Thomas Kladzyk.



January 25 at 03:07 PM



“ Our sympathies, we always enjoyed Tom at the Chicken Broil and missed him this past couple of years, and of course we missed the holiday lighting where he brightened up the village.

Barry Allen - January 25 at 01:10 PM