



PRAETZEL, Thomas Gerald

MAY 2, 1952 - JUL 1, 2024



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MAUI MEMORIAL PARK
NAKAMURA MORTUARY
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Thomas Gerald Praetzel was born on May 2, 1952, at Travis Air Force Base, and died in early July 2024 on Maui. Tom was the third of six children born to Mary Louis Junjohann and Conrad Francis Praetzel, Jr.

Tom was probably the smartest of the bunch. He was witty, clever, sarcastic, and pity; people gravitated towards Tommy. He went to grade school at Henry Ford Elementary in Redwood City and briefly to St. Pius. One nun said he would with the "devil himself," his parents sent him back to public school.

Tom was more outgoing than his siblings and had a charming (sometimes annoying) penchant for mimicry. His impersonation of Maxwell Smart as the master of ceremonies at his junior high talent show was a hit!

Tom attended classes at Canada College before going briefly to UC Berkeley. He got a good draft number and went to work. Tom tended bar, and managed restaurants and hotels around Half Moon Bay, including the Moss Beach Distillery, Shorebird, and Frank Torres Beach Hotel. The contacts made there eventually led him to the island of Maui. He moved there in 1975.

On Maui, Tom worked as a bartender but with his outgoing personality, he met many people and was soon able to move into the construction business. He obtained his general contractor's license and ran many big jobs on the islands.

Tom cared deeply about family. When his younger brother, Doug visited, Tom took him under his wing and made it a summer to remember. Tom was living in an old school bus on a Hawaiian family compound at the time and considered family by all. Tom seemed to know everyone in that small town. Maui was his new home.

Tom loved fancy cars and had several used ones over the years when living on the Northern California coast, including a De Soto, Austin Healy, and a Lotus, that he enjoyed driving and



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working on.

On Maui he finally bought his ultimate dream car, a brand-new Lotus Elise in 2004. There was no real freeway on the island where he could open it up, but he did manage to thrill his young nieces with a ride and terrify their mom when they came back saying “Tommy went 100!!!”

Tom loved Hawaii and embraced the island life, although he couldn’t resist buying leather jackets, which he rarely could wear. He seldom visited the mainland but enjoyed visits from family and was a generous host. Tom made sure his family had a good time when they visited, introducing them to the local cuisine, taking them snorkeling and showing the planets and stars using his fancy telescope. Tom was equally happy to see them leave because he loved solitude.

Tom was an avid kayaker and would be on the ocean at sunrise to enjoy the water before the tourists arrived. He loved to talk about seeing whales and turtles up close. Tom loved telling stories, the smell of a whale’s spout as it came up to breathe (apparently rather unpleasant). He especially loved sharing humorous stories, like overhearing a tourist looking out over the ocean say, “Don’t those whales just LOVE that salt water.”

Tom was a storyteller; he knew how to write. Tom often sent his parents long stories about growing up, about things that happened on the islands, often about both. After he retired, Tom started posting articles to various websites (e.g., mauiniuelelo) under the name of Holonalu. Tom could fix almost anything. After he retired from contracting, Tom fixed watches from his home on Maui.

Tom liked to sit on his lanai watching the sunset and say with a sigh “It’s SO tropical.”

Tom is survived by his five siblings—Mary Praetzellis, Conrad Praetzel, Mollie Brinkley, Doug Praetzel, and Eloice Helms—and their spouses, plus many nieces and nephews, cousins, and friends.



Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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