



Thomas J. Burke Sr.

October 28, 1927 - March 16, 2021

Thomas J Burke, Sr. of Cinnaminson, N.J. passed away peacefully on Tuesday March 16, 2021 in the company of two of his children. In these pandemic times, all his children, and often his grandchildren, were with him in shifts during the days and hours leading up to his passing. He was never alone for which all his children are grateful. He was 93.

Tom was born in Philadelphia, PA on October 28, 1927, the last-born child of Irish immigrants from County Mayo, Ireland. His father was Stephen J Burke of Bohaun and later Doon Westport and his mother was Margaret A (Roache) Burke of Cashel Turlough.

Tom was the much-loved husband of Mary Jo (Flaherty) Burke who predeceased him in October of 2019. They were married and devoted to each other for nearly 66 years. He is the loving father of Thomas Jr. (Pam), Joseph (Maureen), Mary Kathryn Ley (the late Theodore), Michael (Tracy), Kevin (Lynne), Rosanne Purcell (John), the late James, and deceased infants Anita Marie and Karen Marie, grandfather of 18 and great grandfather of 13.

Born in Misericordia Hospital in Philadelphia, Tom spent his first years in a solidly Irish neighborhood in southwest Philadelphia. In 1929, his parents purchased a newly built home on C Street in the Olney neighborhood of lower northeast Philadelphia, which was made up at the time of row homes and

open space. For the duration of the Depression, the Burkes were one of the lucky families whose breadwinner had a steady, reliable job. Although money was very tight, Tom and his brothers, Charles, Steve, and Andy and his sister, Marie, knew a lot of stability in uncertain times. Tom often spoke of the loving atmosphere of the home, his mother's scone, soda bread, tea, and pinochle around the family kitchen table. He also fondly recalled the Irish parties in the basement, his father's recitation of "The Foggy Dew", and beer brewed in the upstairs bath during Prohibition.

Tom began his Catholic education at St. Ambrose grade school up the street from his home. He completed high school at Northeast Catholic High School during the waning days of WW2. Upon graduation, he wanted to enlist in the US Army as all three of his brothers were in the service: Charles (Navy), Steve (Army), and Andy (Marines). His mother had other plans, however; after he graduated from high school, his mother cajoled both him and the President of Villanova University that he should enter the college and study engineering. He completed one semester, partly and gratefully financed by money sent home by his brother Charles, until he was drafted. After basic training, he was scheduled to go to Japan for the Occupation but was struck with appendicitis days before departure and his outfit left without him.

Tom re-enrolled in Villanova in 1947 under the GI Bill and completed his four years with a BSEE (Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering). After graduation, he began his career at Philco in Philadelphia and followed that with a job in Allentown with Lehigh Valley Engineering. During this period, he began dating Mary Jo and commuted back and forth to Philadelphia while also studying for his master's degree at Lehigh University. He knew that he would return to Philadelphia because both Mary Jo and his parents wanted him back in Philly. Consequently, he took a job with RCA in Camden, N.J. and stayed with the company until retirement.

Both Tom and his future wife Mary Jo belonged to the Catholic Discussion Club in Philadelphia. When Mary Jo moved in February of 1953 to a new apartment in the city, she sent a "Change of Address" card to her friends and acquaintances as was the custom at the time. Tom mistook her change of address card as an invitation to call on her outside the discussion club. His commute between Allentown and Philadelphia began and within four months they were engaged. Four months later, on Nov. 21, 1953, they exchanged marriage vows at Saint Patrick's Church on S. 20th Street in Philadelphia, the same church in which his parents wed in June of 1920.

Tom and Mary Jo went on to have a large family, starting in 1955 with Tommy and ending in 1969 with Jamie.

During his career, he worked in support of missile re-entry tests, the NASA Mercury and Gemini Programs, moon exploration missions, and astronaut recoveries mostly in the Atlantic and mid-Pacific Oceans. In fact, articles were written about these efforts; one in particular referred to the men working on these projects as "The Seven Experts of the Free World" - one of whom was Tom Burke! In 1970, the whole family moved to Kwajalein, Marshall Islands in Micronesia. While there, Tom worked on defense missile systems commuting everyday by airplane to another island, Roi-Namur. Tom and the family returned state-side in 1974 and he continued working at RCA. Immediately after retirement, Tom started his own consulting company, working on many of the same projects he had been working on with his former employer. After a number of years hiatus, Tom returned to the workforce as a toll collector for the Burlington County Bridge Commission.

Tom and Mary Jo taught Irish adult ceili dancing for many years and performed at exhibitions and parades with dancing groups. They also enjoyed many ceilis and hoolies, and, of course, the annual Mayo Ball at the

Philadelphia Irish Center. They were also longtime season ticket holders of Villanova basketball and football. For 10 of their retirement years, Tom and Mary Jo fulfilled a long-held goal: visiting the 48 contiguous states in a motor home. They were also cruise enthusiasts.

Strong in his faith and active in church life at St. Charles Borromeo, Tom was a Eucharistic Minister, member of the Holy Name Society, active in Marriage Encounter, head usher in the church, and a reliable multi-year volunteer at the annual parish carnival.

Tom is also survived by many nieces, nephews, extended family members in the US and Ireland, and friends who will miss him dearly.

Relatives and friends are invited to gather from 9 to 10:00 a.m. on Monday, March 22, at Givnish of Cinnaminson, 1200 Rt. 130 North. Tom's Mass of Christian Burial will begin at 10:30 a.m. at St. Charles Borromeo Church, 2500 Branch Pike, Cinnaminson. Interment will follow in Lakeview Memorial Park, Cinnaminson.

Thomas' funeral Mass will be livestreamed and can be viewed using this link: <https://my.gather.app/remember/thomas-burke>

In lieu of flowers, donations in Tom's name may be made to Good Counsel Homes, Inc. <https://www.goodcounselhomes.org/how-to-help/donate>. Please choose "South Jersey Home" in the drop box or donations may be sent to Good Counsel Homes, Inc. 116 Heulings Avenue, Riverside, NJ 08075.

To share your condolences and memories, please visit www.Givnish.com.

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

MAR 22. 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (ET)

Givnish Funeral Home Cinnaminson
1200 Route 130 N
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077
(856) 829-8000
info@givnish.com
<https://www.givnish.com>

Live Stream

MAR 22. 10:30 AM.

Link for Live Stream will be found in the obituary

Mass

MAR 22. 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Charles Borromeo Church
2500 Branch Pike & Pomona Road
Cinnaminson, NJ 08077

Tribute Wall



“ *Givnish Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of Thomas J. Burke Sr.*



Givnish Funeral Home - March 20, 2021 at 09:30 AM



“ *Thomas J. Burke Sr.*

September 09, 2022 at 01:27 AM



“ *I'm so sorry to hear about Uncle Tom.
He will truly be missed. Will always remember the good times with
Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary.
Love to the family.
Linda Flaherty Moore*

Linda Flaherty Moore - March 26, 2021 at 09:05 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Thomas Burke's Funeral Mass*



Givnish Funeral Home - March 23, 2021 at 03:56 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Burke Sr..*



March 21, 2021 at 12:26 PM



“ *I send my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Thomas J Burke Sr.*

Kevin was my longtime college roommate and great friend. I remember fond memories he shared particularly those of the Kwajalein Islands. Vividly I remember Kevin talking about the limited and beloved selection of records that were available on the island. Kevin made a cassette of the Kwajalein Classics and we listened to those songs all the time - blasting them. I can still hear them.

You are in my thoughts. The obituary was beautiful. Sending prayers.

Sincerely,

Greg

Gregory Sweeney - March 21, 2021 at 11:31 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Burke Sr..*



March 21, 2021 at 10:50 AM

MK

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Mary Kay - March 20, 2021 at 09:58 AM



“ 239 files added to the album Life Tributes



Givnish Funeral Home - March 20, 2021 at 09:18 AM

ML

“ 29 files added to the album Memories Album



Mary Kay Ley - March 20, 2021 at 09:00 AM

CB

“ 1 file added to the album Memories Album



Catherine Bailey - March 19, 2021 at 02:31 PM

CB

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Catherine Bailey - March 19, 2021 at 02:30 PM

KB

“ *My condolences to the Burke family, I am deeply sorry for your loss.*

Karel Bean, Lockheed Martin RMS

Karel Bean - March 19, 2021 at 11:33 AM

MD

“ *To the Burke family,
I was fortunate to work with your Father in the RCA days during the mid-late 80s! What a wonderful manager as well as a wonderful family man! I know your Father & Mother are holding hands in Heaven! We will keep your family in our thoughts & prayers 🙏*

*With deepest sympathy,
Martina (Manco) DelRocini & Family*

Martina DelRocini - March 19, 2021 at 12:18 AM

KB

“ Hopefully Our Lord has already welcomed my Uncle Tommy into his glorious kingdom where he has been reunited with my Aunt Mary Jo and the rest of his family and friends! However, I regret that he will no longer be "on this side of the grass" as I will surely miss him. I loved my Uncle Tommy from my very first memory of him (probably around 3 years old). He would lift Mary Lou and I up by our arms and swing us around in a big circle as if we were flying. We could not get enough of his attention when we were little. Later in life, he became our family's patriarch and was always eager to visit and celebrate our special occasions. He even came to Texas with Aunt Mary Jo and taught my son how to ride his bicycle when he was probably in his late 60's! Additionally, in my opinion Uncle Tommy was a model father, brother (to Aunt Marie, Andy, Charles, and my father) and husband to my Aunt Mary Jo. I believe he enjoyed life to the fullest and quietly showed us all how to trust God and be joyful even in the throws of painful experiences. We Burke's were blessed to have him in our lives. We will miss him.

Kathy Bailey

Kathy Burke Bailey - March 18, 2021 at 09:38 PM

JW

“ Tom was our Very Best Man at our wedding, May 14, 2010.. After that I always called him” The Best Man”. Jeanette and Marty Watson

Jeanette Watson - March 18, 2021 at 06:54 PM