



Thomas Ray Whitesell

June 15, 1941 - January 25, 2023

Thomas Ray Whitesell passed away peacefully, in his home surrounded by loved ones on January 25, 2023. He was born June 15, 1941 in Kingston, Pennsylvania. Son to James P. and F. Louise Whitesell (both deceased), he is survived by his loving wife of 59 years, Deborah King Whitesell, and his children Evan Whitesell Heitzman (Thomas), Tracey Elizabeth Whitesell (Terrance) and James King Whitesell (Anna). He loved his six grandchildren, Thomas, Christopher, Elizabeth, Michael, Clayton and Rory. He is also survived by his sister, Susan Hillman (David).

Tom led a full and adventurous life. As a child, he lived for seven years with his family in Caracas, Venezuela where his father and grandfather led contracted efforts to build oil company housing and infrastructure. Upon completion of this project, the family moved back to the United States and settled in Palmyra, NJ. The Riverton elementary school is where Tom met the love of his life, Deborah, and many life-long friends.

The foundations for Whitesell Construction were laid out in the early 1950's which saw 12-year old Tom learning to build houses alongside his father and grandfather in Cinnaminson, NJ, many of which were around the Riverton Country Club. The business was a family affair operating out of the Whitesell household, which included his mother who oversaw company bookkeeping and administration. As a young man, Tom worked on the projects when not in school, splitting the time between his father's construction business and a joy

in his life which was playing football.

Tom looked fondly upon his memories of playing football at Palmyra High School, Valley Forge Military Academy, and Temple University. His talent on the field landed him a football scholarship to Temple University where he played for the Owls for two years before heeding the call to return home to help run the family business full-time. When Tom was 23, he subsequently bought his father out of the construction business and started Whitesell Construction Co., Inc.

Tom initially operated the business as a residential and commercial contractor developing and selling properties in Burlington County; however, within several years, he discontinued residential construction and focused instead on building commercial and industrial facilities. Tom developed master-planned business parks to appeal to the business community and local municipalities. Award-winning projects would eventually take place in Burlington, Camden, Gloucester Counties, King of Prussia, and Bucks County. During its prime development days in the mid-1980's, Whitesell's staff grew to exceed over 550 personnel, performing all phases of development and management. All told, the company eventually developed over 250 commercial buildings and 20 million square feet of office, industrial, and retail properties throughout the Delaware Valley, including ten corporate campuses in southern New Jersey and southeastern Pennsylvania over the past six decades. Today the Whitesell organization remains the largest privately owned commercial real estate firm in southern New Jersey.

Tom loved his employees and considered them family. It was this culture that became ingrained into the business and was one of the pillars in its success. His care also extended deeply into the community where Tom served on a number of business, civic, and charitable boards over his lifetime including Cooper Hospital, the Chamber of Commerce Southern New Jersey, Oaks Integrated Care, Burlington County College, Burlington County Council of Boy Scouts of America, and Burlington County Bank.

Tom and his wife Debbie were avid travelers. They enjoyed adventurous vacations throughout North and South America, Antarctica, Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and the Caribbean. Tom also loved flying, time on his boats, and was always eager to include friends and family wherever he went.

Tom and Debbie spent over 20 years living in Palm Beach, Florida before they moved to North Palm Beach. Many beautiful family memories include fishing, boating and big family dinners, which were created in their idyllic home.

Along with his hard work ethic and drive, Tom was known for his remarkable creativity and vision. This vision extended into one of Tom's greatest prides - his farm in Moorestown, NJ. There, he and Debbie spent many years breeding race horses and later providing facilities for the care and rehabilitation of retired race horses, as well as creating a beautiful nature refuge of trees, gardens and walking paths. At various times, Tom might also have been found donning his white apiary suit, tending to his beehives and harvesting honey.

While Tom was known for his business ventures and his various hobbies, he was also a generous philanthropist. His desire to help anybody in need was embedded into the fiber of who he was. He truly felt a passion and calling to help people. He could be found preparing his farm for large fundraisers or traveling to foreign countries to help build hospitals for children awaiting surgery. No cause was too small and no challenge too big - if a person was in crisis or need, he was always ready to lend a hand and help out. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

Gifts in Tom's memory may be made to Oakes Integrated Care, Urban Promise or Operation Smile.

A gathering of family and friends will be held this Friday from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at First Presbyterian Church, 101 Bridgeboro Road, Moorestown, NJ 08057. Tom's Memorial Service will be held Saturday promptly at 10 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 101 Bridgeboro Road Moorestown, NJ. The Memorial Service will be live streamed, please visit www.fpcmoores town.org Interment will be private for the family.

To share your memories of Tom, please visit www.Givnish.com

Previous Events

Gathering of Family and Friends

JAN 27. 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM (ET)

First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown
101 Bridgeboro Road
Moorestown, 08057

Memorial Service

JAN 28. 10:00 AM (ET)

First Presbyterian Church of Moorestown
101 Bridgeboro Road
Moorestown, 08057

Tribute Wall

JW

“ I had the pleasure of working for Tom at Whitesell Construction many years ago. He was a lovely man and he took excellent care of his employees. Condolences to his lovely wife and family. I am so sorry for your loss.

Joan Wojciechowicz - January 30, 2023 at 10:33 AM

DW

“ Sending our condolences to the family, friends and everyone honored enough to have known this kind, gentle and amazing man. The world has lost a man who did everything in life the right way and lived his life to the fullest. My entire family was better people for knowing Tom and the example he set for so many. May he rest in peace knowing he did a great job while on earth. With love and nothing but the utmost respect and admiration...you shall always be missed and never forgotten. Love and warmth, David and Ruth Waronker

David and Ruth Waronker - January 30, 2023 at 09:28 AM

LN

“ Condolences to the entire Whitesell family and organization on Tom's passing. The world lost a nice man. During the 1980's and early 1990's Tom and I had many conversations on the well-being of Burlington County. Tom was always concerned for the quality of life of others. In his own company he always strove to develop quality buildings. Let me share two quick stories. On weekends in the mid 90's it was my turn to get up when our small son woke very early. I would put him in a car seat and venture through various business/industrial parks throughout Burlington County. One Sunday morning with son, now asleep in the back seat, I came across Tom in the parking lot his Marlton park. We chatted and he asked me if the white color on his new building was the same white as the building next door. It concerned him very much that they did not match. In another conversation Tom said, Whitesell now employees 1,000 people and that's a lot of responsibility. Tom was always a vigorous sponsor of many many good works and causes. He will be missed.

Sincerely, Lewis Nagy, former Burlington County Economic Development Director

Lewis J Nagy - January 28, 2023 at 07:06 PM

KW

“ Tom was one of the real true gentlemen in the world. I was fortunate to have known him for so many years. He will be greatly missed by all that had the pleasure to know him. My deepest sympathies are with his entire family and friends.

Ken Waetzman

Ken Waetzman - January 27, 2023 at 05:16 PM

BS

“ So sorry to hear of Tom's passing. He was one of the great Super Seniors from PHS and a good friend in school. Best wishes to Debbie and the rest of the family.

Bob Sanders - January 27, 2023 at 04:37 PM



“ Sentiments of Serenity Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.



January 27, 2023 at 12:48 PM



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

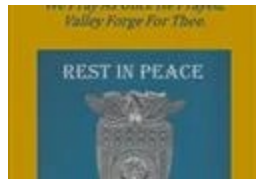


January 27, 2023 at 11:09 AM



Hayden
Lutterloh
III

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Hayden Lutterloh III - January 27, 2023 at 10:59 AM



“ *Magnificent Life Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.*



January 27, 2023 at 08:10 AM



“ *Kent Darrow purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.*



Kent Darrow - January 26, 2023 at 07:30 PM



“ *Heart-felt Condolences to the family and friends. May his soul RIP Nurse -Risper*

Risper Omondi - January 26, 2023 at 07:05 PM



“ *My husband, Frank Mevoli, was blessed to have worked for Mr. Whitesell and I have fond memories of times spent with the Whitesell family. He was so good to us. May all his family and loved ones be comforted and rejoice in happy memories. Pat Mevoli*

Pat Mevoli - January 26, 2023 at 05:14 PM



“ *Kathy and I personally, and everyone at Operation Smile, will miss Tom in every way. His energy and love of helping us as an organization, and his personal connection to the children we took care of, will never be forgotten. He and Debbie have always been incredibly supportive of the work we have been doing as well as us as individuals as we follow our paths in life. Debbie, we are here for you in every way we can be. Tom, we hope you will help all of us into heaven, as I am sure you are there now.*

Kathy and Bill Magee



Kathy and Bill Magee - January 26, 2023 at 04:12 PM



“ *Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.*



January 26, 2023 at 02:43 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.*



January 26, 2023 at 10:38 AM

BD

“ Tom, married to my cousin Debbie, lovingly embraced me always as if I was his cousin. His selflessness, genuine caring and love for others was forefront in everything he did. His loss is profound to all who have had the privilege of knowing him.

beth darrow - January 26, 2023 at 08:52 AM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.



January 25, 2023 at 10:33 PM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas Ray Whitesell.



January 25, 2023 at 07:46 PM

DS

“ Evan and Tom, I am so deeply sorry for your loss. Your father was a great champion for so many and his legacy will live on in the lives he helped lift through his involvement in our community. My thoughts are with you and your family during this difficult time.

Denise Soto - January 25, 2023 at 05:01 PM



“ *Sentiments of Serenity Spray* was purchased for the family of *Thomas Ray Whitesell*.



January 25, 2023 at 01:23 PM