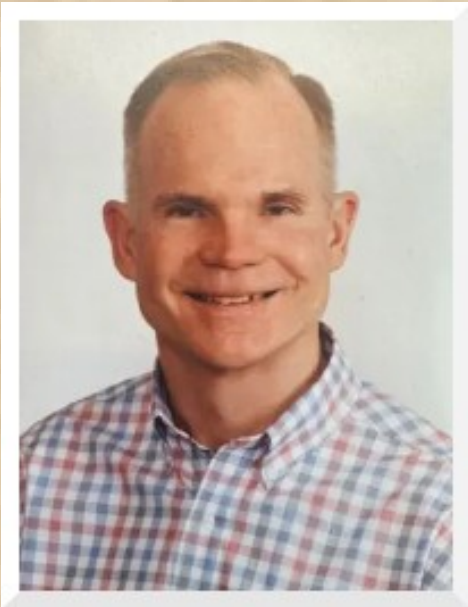




# Railsplitter Obituary



## **Thomas Owen MacGillis**

**30 January 1955 - 27 October 2023**

Thomas Owen MacGillis passed away peacefully on Saturday, October 7, 2023 at the age of 68, surrounded by his loving family. Preceded in death by his parents, Paul and Florence MacGillis. Beloved husband of Sally of almost 35 years; loving father of Sean MacGillis, Elle (Jack) Puncochar, and Scott MacGillis. Dear brother of Timothy MacGillis, John (Elaine) MacGillis, and Jean LaMere. Adored brother-in-law of Stephanie Adams and Andy (Judy Zickuhr) Bergman. Beloved son-in-law of Sandra Bergman. Special uncle to Ryan (Leah), Christopher (Ann), and Kyle (Diana) MacGillis; Alexandra LaMere and Danielle LaMere. Further survived by many family members and friends.

Tom was born on January 30th, 1955 at St. Joseph's Hospital in Milwaukee, WI. He attended St. Therese Elementary School, Hawthorne Junior High, and graduated from Wauwatosa West High School in 1973. Tom earned a BBA from the University of Wisconsin- Madison and was a lifelong Badger fan. Tom completed ROTC and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Field Artillery upon his graduation from UW- Madison in 1978. He served on Active Duty for two years at Fort Lewis, Washington. After his return to Milwaukee, he joined the Army Reserve. Tom was mobilized during Operation Desert Storm. He served in the



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Army Reserve for 22 years and retired as a Major. Tom never expected recognition, and was committed to serving his country.

Tom was dedicated to a long career as an independent insurance agent, beginning his role with the guidance of his father Paul. He was an owner of MacGillis & Company, in business with his brother Tim since 1992. Tom took pride in his client relationships and was well respected for his integrity and knowledge in the industry. In 2020, Tom transitioned to retirement with colleagues of G2 Insurance Services.

Tom met Sally, his beloved wife, during an appointment in his office. They shared a common interest in cross country and downhill skiing. Tom was intrigued, and within a few days asked Sally to join him on a date for a Christmas concert at St. John's Cathedral in downtown Milwaukee. They were married at St. Therese Catholic Church on October 22nd, 1988. Sally often says "he's the love of my life." They were blessed with three beautiful children and made their home in Wauwatosa. A devoted husband and father, Tom put his family first and made every effort to be present for both family and friends.

Tom had a competitive spirit. He made exercise and fitness a priority, completed triathlons and marathons, enjoyed golf, swimming, and biking, with time for spectator sports. He followed the NBA, NFL, MLB, and college level sports. He could strike up a conversation with the detail of a radio broadcaster. Tom was a passionate and patient coach for his children with Tosa Little League baseball and Trojan basketball. He found joy watching his children play volleyball at all levels, including college. He encouraged them to do their best in life. He instilled in them a strong work ethic and the value of higher education. He provided gentle guidance in their faith education. His children were his pride and joy.

Tom enjoyed the daily newspaper, current events, classic rock music, his perennial gardens, and Friday fish fries. He loved talking with friends and neighbors. He was a wonderful conversationalist with a kind and friendly smile. He had a natural ability to share a story and make a recommendation. He looked forward to FaceTime calls with his brother John to highlight the latest golf match or deep thoughts. He valued his relationship with his brother Tim, often supporting each other with humor. Tom loved being a big brother to his sister Jean. She "admired how he nurtured the things that are important and chose an enlightened life" and



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“noticed for a long time how he took care of his kids.” Jean said she was “inspired by his athleticism.”

Tom was an avid fisherman year-round. He loved the outdoors with trips to Paul and Florence’s cabin in Mercer and visits to Rhinelander with Sally’s family. Tom enjoyed boating, fishing, and the one that got away. Tom shared his passion for catching panfish, bass, and muskie with his sons. Many wonderful summer family memories were made renting cabins in northern Wisconsin.

In August of 2018, Thomas was diagnosed with cholangiocarcinoma, a rare cancer of his bile duct. He persevered through treatment at Froedtert Hospital in Wauwatosa. Tests showed no evidence of cancer for 2 ½ years. Tom made the most of every day, remained optimistic and returned to his active lifestyle with support of his family. He and Sally were able to make a memorable road trip to Yellowstone.

In February 2022, tests showed his cancer had returned. Tom began palliative care and was determined to live for every day. His strength to fight was incredible. Throughout his treatment, Tom was positive. He rarely complained and would say he was “doing ok” despite harsh medication side effects. Upon the return of his cancer, one of Tom’s wishes was to celebrate his daughter’s wedding. Thanks to the amazing care of his treatment team at Froedtert and his loving wife, on July 22nd, Tom was able to give his daughter Elle away and welcomed Jack Puncoschar to the family. Tom got his wish for a father-daughter dance. Tom and Sally enjoyed their final dance at the wedding with Elton John’s “Can You Feel the Love Tonight.”

Due to complications from cancer and treatment, Tom chose to transition to home hospice. We, Tom’s children, are incredibly grateful for our mother Sally, who as a retired nurse, cared for our dad in our family home. Tom chose to be transferred to Zilber Hospice on Friday, October 6th, and was made comfortable. At 6:38 am Saturday, October 7th, Tom passed away surrounded by his wife Sally and children Sean, Elle, and Scott.

Tom’s family would like to thank Dr. Deepika Sriram; Dr. Susan Tsai; Dr. Hui-Zi Chen; Dr. Jonathan Gully; Dr. David Johnstone; Kate Strahm, PA-C; Lauren E. Newell, APNP; Tracy Kersten, APNP; Tricia Wilcox, APNP and the entire Froedtert Cancer Center team; Promedica Hospice; and Zilber Hospice for their kindness and excellent care.