

# *Tommy Hartwell*

Tommy “Mom” Hartwell, Class of ‘75, died on Aug. 26, 1993, after a long and bitter struggle with a little-known but vicious killer named Scleroderma. For Tommy it was a particularly difficult battle, robbing him of the time and ability to enjoy the things he loved most: his family, his friends, and his flying.

There is a great deal I could say about Tommy. He had a zest for living that never failed to inspire others. Whether it was going full bore at B.C.T., skiing at Vail, flying T-43s out of Mather, or risking everything when turning in his Air Force wings for those of Southwest Airlines, Tommy always ran at full throttle, always looking forward and never looking back. Tommy’s enthusiasm, his drive, his unflagging optimism found a perfect companion in his wife of 17 years, Jill. With Jill at his side Tommy was unbeatable. She provided him with direction, purpose and love. She also gave him two beautiful children, Nathan, age 7, and Marissa, age 4. Tommy had been flying since shortly after graduation from the Academy — pilot training at Laughlin AFB, T-43s at Mather, 737s for Southwest Airlines out of Houston. He loved the skies and he excelled in the left seat of the big birds. Ultimately amassing over 13,000 hours, he had just been nominated for assistant chief pilot for Southwest Airlines before illness grounded him. Dedicated, hard-working, and professional, Tommy earned the respect and admiration of everyone he worked with and for.

Ever ready to make a friend, Tommy left behind a world of them. Classmates from the Academy, fellow pilots from Southwest, neighbors and associates all filled the chapel outside Houston, Texas, where we joined Tommy’s family to bid him a final farewell. And, although we all mourned his leaving us, I couldn’t help but take comfort in knowing that, in spite of death, Tommy still loved and was loved by his family; his friends will forever remember him; and, free of his pains and in the company of God, Tommy is flying once again. (Hugo G. Posey, ‘75)