

Tom Summers

Courage, dedication, commitment and caring — these elements formed the foundation for Tom Summers' life and were the backdrops for his passing. We lost a good friend when Tom died on Oct. 8, 1992 of complications from a bone marrow transplant. Tom was born in Neptune, N.J., on Feb. 18, 1953. He grew up in Bridle, N.J., excelling both academically and athletically at Manasquan High School.

During his Academy years, Tom embodied the concept of leadership by example. To Tom, excellence in leadership meant dedication to standards, a passion for truth, and a desire for personal growth. In his own inimitable way Tom always managed to show us what was right through example — “make it right” was his motto.

Upon graduation Tom attended Undergraduate Navigator Training at Castle AFB and moved to his first assignment at Rickenbacker AFB in 1976. He quickly established his credentials professionally and personally, becoming widely recognized for his ability to lead, teach, and motivate.

When medical problems removed Tom from flying status in 1979 he recognized an opportunity for growth, rather than a forum for disappointment. With gusto he moved into project management at the Air Force Weapons Laboratory, Kirtland AFB. He quickly distinguished himself as an innovator who focused on results. Project management is complex and Tom showed he had the rare ability to synthesize project complexity into concrete results.

Tom left the Air Force in 1981 to pursue a civilian career. Typical of his passion for learning, Tom initiated his civilian career with a master's degree from the University of New Mexico. Professionally, Tom managed a series of increasingly-complex and critical projects, including major construction projects and nuclear power plants. In 1984 Tom moved back into aerospace, taking a position with Northrop on the B-2 Bomber program. As manager of Master Program Scheduling, Tom was instrumental in schedule integration and program control for the Air Force's highest-priority acquisition program. During these years Tom was always true to his code — “make it right”. In late 1991, Tom's life changed dramatically when he contracted leukemia. Tom faced the challenge of cancer with characteristic courage and determination. He selected an aggressive course of medical treatment which included a bone marrow transplant on Christmas Day, 1991.

Tom is survived by his wife, Tobbie, and three children: Thomas Casey, Tracy, and Kelly Hope. They cherish his memory and the values he lived within their family.

During Tom's last year he became a student of leukemia and carefully documented his experience with the disease and its treatment. His burning desire was to make this information available to other bone marrow transplant patients. Currently, there is little information available from a patient's point of view.

As a memorial, Tom's family and friends have committed to completing his book and publishing it under his chosen title: *She Got Pregnant and I Got Leukemia*. Tom was an exceptional leader and friend. We will miss him greatly. (K.C. Schwarz, '75)