



## Thomas Charles Serynek

December 21, 1945 - March 31, 2026

Thomas Charles Serynek, 80, of Gary, Indiana, son of Ted and Frances Serynek, died of natural causes at his home on March 31, 2026.

Born December 21, 1945, Tom was a lifelong resident of Gary, Indiana, and a graduate of Lew Wallace High School. As a child, he loved hiking and camping in the Indiana Dunes and developed a lifelong commitment to sharing, protecting, and enjoying the natural areas of Northwest Indiana.

Tom earned his bachelor's degree from Indiana University Bloomington and his master's degree from Purdue University. He joined the Gary Community School Corporation in 1968 and taught fourth grade for most of his 45 years there. He was a proud member and activist in the Gary Teachers Union, serving as a building representative for Marquette and Noble Elementary Schools.

During the summers, Tom worked as a landscaper and painter, perfecting the art of designing and installing decorative gardens, limestone walls and unique natural landscapes.

From 1988 to 2003, Tom served as president of the Save the Dunes Council, where he lobbied, fundraised, and organized efforts to protect the dunes. He was an active member of many other community and environmental organizations over the years.

Tom loved to travel and explore. He visited Africa, Europe, Japan, the Grand Canyon, and many other destinations. He also loved bringing people together and hosted countless family and neighborhood events at his home in Miller.

Tom was preceded in death by his wife, Carol; his parents, Ted and Frances; and his sister, Charlene.

He is survived by his sister, Thea (Jim); his children, Christine (Clayton), Sandy (John), and Alex (Anne); his nieces, Lauren (Nick), Lindsay (Rob), Kendra (Paul), nephews, Chris, Kevin (Marlene) as well as many cousins, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and an amazing group of friends and grateful students.

A celebration of Tom's life will be held on May 17th, 2026 from 2-4pm CT at the Marquette Park Aquatorium 6918 Oak Ave. Gary, Indiana 46403.

In lieu of flowers please consider a donation to the Shirley Heinze Land Trust a favorite organization of Tom's that is dedicated to preserving, protecting and restoring natural areas in Northwest Indiana

[heinzetrust.org/donate/](http://heinzetrust.org/donate/)

Burns Funeral Home & Crematory entrusted with arrangements. Please visit Tom's online guestbook and obituary at [www.BurnsFuneral.com](http://www.BurnsFuneral.com)

# Upcoming Events

## Celebration of Life

MAY 17. 2:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CT)

Marquette Park Aquatorium  
6918 Oak Ave.  
Gary, IN 46403

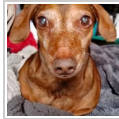
# Tribute Wall


SA

“ 4 files added to the album Tribute Wall



Sandy - April 19 at 04:36 PM



*We were SO LUCKY to have this environmentalist cool guy and Great Teacher.  
I used to call him about advice how to move a big old snapping turtle on Rt. 20. He said get a shovel and take it to the side it was headed to originally.  
Tom is missed.   
Condolences to family and friends.*

Nora Glenn - April 20 at 04:34 PM

LL

“ *My deepest condolences to Tom's family and friends from a fellow Hornet.*

Lou Lindinger - April 19 at 09:48 AM



“ *Tom and I acted in our senior class play together! I've been following him on Facebook. He will be missed!*

Gail Koppers - April 18 at 03:41 PM



*Gail Meinberg*

**Gail Koppers** - April 18 at 03:42 PM

LS

“ *Sending lots of prayers to the family. I was able to meet Tom this past summer— he grew up next door to my grandparents and dad on Polk street and we exchanged pictures and stories. I even had a picture of his grandparents with my great grandparents . May he rest in peace and his memory live on ❤️ Laura Sopko*

**Laura Sopko** - April 17 at 01:08 PM

CP

*I'm so sorry to hear of Tom's passing. I have many fond memories of him as we walked home from school. We lost touch after high school, but I enjoyed following his travels and viewing his many beautiful plants. RIP, Tom!*

*Carol (Koontz) Pahs*

**Carol (Koontz) Pahs** - April 20 at 04:31 PM