



Thomas Lee Geoghan, third son (of 10 children) of Judge and Mrs. Harry H. Geoghan of Muskegon, Michigan passed away peacefully February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Born in Muskegon Michigan on September 21, 1936. Graduated from Mt. St. Mary's University, Emmitsburg, Maryland with a BA. Joined the U.S. Air Force in 1959 and retired as a Lt. Colonel in 1983. Began his Air Force career as a Navigator, shortly afterward was trained as an Electronic Warfare Officer. First assignment was in England where on August 5, 1961 he married Shirley Janiece Benefiel, then Service Club Director at Chelveston RAF - previously a Donut Dolly with the American Red Cross in Korea. Sadly, he was never to even date an English girl. While flying up and down the Iron Curtain inside an Air Force RB-66, his squadron was soon relocated to France. First son, Thomas Lee Geoghan, II was born there in 1962. Soon after Tom and new family

waved goodbye to De Gualle and friends and stopped paying "Free Air Taxes". He was accepted into Pilot Training at Reese AFB in Lubbock, Texas. Here, he distinguished his career by being unfairly dubbed "Crash" Geoghan when as a student pilot he "dinged" a trainer wing, saving the panicked instructor pilot who had lost control in a heavy cross-wind. While in pilot training, second child and only daughter Kerry Anne was born in 1964. First assignment as a pilot was at Otis AFB, on Cape Cod, Massachusetts where he later became aircraft commander in the EC-121. Third and fourth children, sons Patrick Howard, and Brendan Gerard were born in 1966 and 1967. As children's birthdays kept growing closer together (4 in 4 years), Shirley may have hinted to the War Department that Tom was ripe for a remote assignment. He was shortly thereafter sent to Vietnam. He served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969 as a forward air controller flying his favorite aircraft, the O-2. Upon his return, he joined the ranks of SAC and received training as a B-52 pilot; sitting 24-hour nuclear weapon alerts at the end of the runways of Beale AFB, California during the Cold War.

In 1974, he began his last active duty assignment at Fort Richie, Maryland serving in the underground facilities known as Site R, on the Pennsylvania Maryland border. Tom conquered Jack's Mountain during that first winter in Pennsylvania in his beloved 1961 Triumph TR3 that he had purchased new in England on his first Air Force assignment. On the descent, he noticed that one of the four spoked wheels decided to advance on its own past his window ahead of the car only to end up buried in the snow of the valley pasture below. Although the wheel was not retrieved for several months after the spring thaw, he had survived the incident unscathed. The family settled into their home in Gettysburg, Pa where they would be happy for 26 years. He was very active in that community on several levels; Scout Master for 12 years - guiding three of his sons to attain Eagle Scout rank; member of the Knights of Columbus, member of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, and Eucharistic Minister at St. Francis Xavier. He considered another career as a "gentleman farmer" cultivating various local crops. The wisdom of that choice came into question when he was pulling what was likely a Civil War era tree trunk from the ground of the acreage he farmed next to the family home. The antique 1930 tractor was suddenly upended onto its rear wheels, lending credibility to Shirley's long-standing contention that his nickname of "Crash" was well deserved. In 1979, Benjamin Thomas was born and later adopted, completing the family picture of five children.

After retirement from the Air Force in 1983, Tom worked for FEMA in Washington, D.C. Full retirement was not a viable consideration with three children attending private colleges at the same time. Soon he grew weary of the 4 hour a day commute and he eventually found a new home with the Department of Defense in his old stomping grounds of Fort Ritchie. In 1998, Tom and Shirley found their dream home on the shores of Lake Michigan in Manistee, where they have lived for 18 happy years. The view of the shoreline from Dunes Drive just isn't complete without Tom's flag which he proudly flew when the cold Michigan weather cooperated. In Manistee, Tom continued to be active within the local community, he served as both a Grand Knight and a Faithful Navigator within the Knights of Columbus. Tom has filmed the City Council Meetings for several years and often voiced his opinion on local issues. He was active within the local Catholic Church of Divine Mercy Parish, and attended St. Mary of Mt. Carmel Shrine.

Tom completed his career of 24 years as a Command Pilot accumulating over 16,000 total flight hours, 1000 of which were in combat. His Air Force citations included the following: the Distinguished Flying Cross, Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with one Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Force Presidential Unit Citation, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award with one Oak Leaf Cluster, Small Arms Expert Marksmanship Ribbon, Air Force Longevity Service Ribbon with three Oak Leaf Clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Vietnam Service Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm, and Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal.

He is survived by his wife of 56 years, Shirley Janiece. Tom requests that all be kind to the Commander in Chief of the House (CinC House) who has "followed me to hell and led me back with loving care." He is also survived by son Thomas Lee, daughter Kerry Anne, and sons Patrick Howard, Brendan Gerard, and Benjamin Thomas. He has fourteen grandchildren and loves when they come visit and play on the lake shore dunes.

Funeral services will be held Saturday, the 4<sup>th</sup> of March at 1:00 pm at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Manistee, MI. Following the services, per Tom's wishes, we will celebrate his life and times with an Irish wake to be held at Little River Casino. Friends and family are welcome to attend and lift a wee dram in his honor.

His remains will be inurned at Arlington National Ceremony with full military honors at a future date.

In lieu of flowers, please donate to the Right to Life of Michigan or a favorite charity of your choice in his name.

*Note: In anticipation of his final journey, Tom authored this obituary.*

Oak Grove Funeral Home & Cremation Center in Manistee has been entrusted with arrangements. To share a photo or memory with the family, please visit Thomas' personal page at [www.oakgrovefh.com](http://www.oakgrovefh.com).