



Thomas M. Leahy

December 1, 2015

Thomas Melvin Leahy, Jr., retired faculty member of the University of Florida, and a retired army officer passed away November 29, 2015. He was 92.

Tom Leahy was born in Denison, Iowa, and graduated from the Denison High School. He attended Iowa State College until entering the Army in 1943. He served 30 months in the South and Southwest Pacific theaters, including a year in the headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur in Leyte and Manila, the Philippines. Tom was separated in 1946 as a First Lieutenant.

In 1950, after the outbreak of the Korean War, he was recalled to active duty and continued to serve until he retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1970. During that time he served at various posts in the United States, including Sandia Air Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Fort Benning, Georgia where he was the Adjutant General of the 2nd Infantry Division. Tom's foreign assignments included: Adjutant, Headquarters Command, NATO Southeastern Headquarters, Izmir, Turkey; Advisor to the Adjutant General of the Republic of Korea Army, Seoul, Korea; and Executive Officer, Military Advisory Group, the U.S. Embassy, Lisbon, Portugal.

Following his retirement from the Army, he moved his family from Lisbon to Gainesville where he lived since that time. He was awarded a Master's Degree in Journalism and Communications from the University of Florida in 1972 and was inducted into the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi. After teaching for two quarters at UF's College of Journalism and Communications,

he accepted a position as Director of Communications for the Florida Sea Grant College Program at UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Tom retired in 1988.

During his retirement, he continued to pursue his life-long love of writing and published three novels prior to his death.

Tom was a member of the First Lutheran Church and Past President of the Kiwanis Club of Gator City. He was also a member of the Gainesville Chapter of the Retired Officers Association and the Retired Faculty, University of Florida.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Lovella and survived by his daughter, Suzanne of Gainesville, his two sons, Thomas III of Midlothian, Virginia and Robert of Gainesville; as well as his brother Robert Leahy of Cedar Falls, Iowa, five grandchildren and a great granddaughter.

Funeral services will be held at the First Lutheran Church, 1801 NW 5th Avenue, Gainesville at 1:00 PM Saturday, December 5, preceded by visitation at noon. Military honors and interment will follow at Forest Meadows Memorial Park Central, 4100 NW 39th Avenue, Gainesville.

Donations may be made to Haven Hospice, 4200 NW 90th Boulevard, Gainesville, FL 32606 or the First Lutheran Church, 1801 NW 5th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32603.

Tribute Wall

JH

“ I am so sorry to learn of Tom's passing. I came to UF in 1988 as Tom's replacement at Sea Grant. I quickly learned that no one could replace Tom - he was an original. He was so gracious in showing me the ins and outs of the job and was always available to answer any of my questions. He and Luvella were an inspiring couple and when her health began to fail, his devotion to her was worthy of a novel or Hollywood production. He was truly a person whose presence made the world a better place. My sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Jay Humphreys. - February 15, 2016 at 01:22 AM

TS

“ Tom and Luvella were two of the nicest people I ever had the pleasure of knowing. Tom was always ready to have a good laugh about something and to find joy in life and work. He was so devoted to his wife during her time of difficulty. No many would be willing to make the sacrifices he did out of love. I feel honored that God placed in a position to get to know these two beautiful people and their children. May God bless your family in your time of grief and loss.

Twila Stivender - February 11, 2016 at 02:49 AM

PS

“Tom was a good friend but we started out working together at Florida Sea Grant. I remember him being an engaging director of communications but also a tough professional who was fiercely protective of Florida Sea Grant, its marine agents, and publications. Tom wanted to make people aware of Florida's own special marine ecology, and help them understand "the wise use of our nation's marine resources." He was a meticulous editor and was always looking for new ways to get the word out about Florida Sea Grant. He was an excellent Sea Grant ambassador, a personable colleague, and, to many, became a steadfast friend. I'll miss him. My condolences to the Leahy family on the loss of this wonderful man.

Peggy J. Shaw - February 10, 2016 at 05:21 PM

TL

“I am also Tom's first cousin. I have wonderful memories of Tom as well as Lovella, who was the love of his life. He and Lovella visited me in California before one of their many cruises, and I, along with Bob and Bev, visited him once in Florida. Before Tom left on several long cruises, he sent me maps so I could follow his journeys. He always got a kick out of my being interested in them. I will miss you, Tom.

Tina Lewis - December 26, 2015 at 06:14 AM

PH

“ *Paula Hassler. I am Tom's first cousin, and we grew up in Denison, Iowa; our families living not too far from each other. I remember reading comic books in the summer with Tom and his brother Bob (who is my age). Later on, when I was about 19 or 20 I remember drinking beer with Tom at a Denison tavern and talking about writing. Tom did a lot more writing than I did, but I did my fair share of getting published. I remember visiting Tom and Lovella in Florida with my husband Don. I remember Tom as being a wonderful person, as well as a terrific older cousin. RIP, Tom*

Paula Hassler - December 24, 2015 at 04:29 PM

PL

“ *What great memories I have spending so many Christmas seasons with Uncle Tom and his family growing up. He was a very kind and generous Uncle and welcomed us into his home. Spending time playing pool, swimming, throwing the football around the yard and of course playing with Inga his beloved dog. As I got older it was special to visit because we were able to play golf together with my brother and his brother Bob, my Dad. A great foursome of Leahy golfers. He will be missed but never forgotten. Love to the family I wish I could have been there today.*

Paul

Paul Leahy - December 05, 2015 at 08:36 PM

BR

“ My husband, Russ Robinson, and I have had the great honor and pleasure of knowing Tom as a neighbor and friend for 18 years. His kindness, caring spirit, and concern for those around him was unsurpassed. The twinkle in his eye always betrayed his occasional criticisms of world politics, University policies, neighborhood growth,, and other issues on which he held strong opinions. We cherish the memories of our neighborly get together's, and his ultimate transitioning to various assisted living situations, where we would also join him in social togetherness. The loving attention and unswerving care by his daughter, Suzanne, serves as a model for family devotion. We will miss him so very much.

Brenda Robinson - December 05, 2015 at 03:53 PM

AB

“ We lost a Kind, generous, loving man, who cared deeply for all those close to him, and those who served him on his numerous cruises to different parts of the world. Dad loved to tell stories, and as humble as he was, he loved to be the center of attention. He was the Sweetest Grumpy Old Man I will have ever of had the pleasure of sharing many moments of life with. Dad you will forever live in my heart, my thoughts and my deeds. Love You!
Alexis R Bruce.

Alex Bruce - December 04, 2015 at 09:47 PM

RB

“ Condolences to you and your family Suzanne.

Ralph Brigham - December 04, 2015 at 05:27 PM

JD

“ *Suzanne and family, My thoughts and prayers are with you during this sad time. I know you will miss your father but the memories and love that you have for him and each other will be a great comfort.*

Jane Sloan DeVane - December 04, 2015 at 05:02 PM

FU

“ *I am sorry for your loss. It was my pleasure to get to know your Dad over the last couple of years.
My thoughts and prayers are with you and your family.*

Frank Urban - December 04, 2015 at 03:42 PM