



Thomas Leo Charlson

August 3, 1952 - April 17, 2019

Thomas Leo Charlson

Pawleys Island

Thomas Leo Charlson was born August 3, 1952 and passed away April 17, 2019. Tom was an exemplary family man. He loved bringing family together for festive occasions, elaborate meals, and good times. Tom provided unyielding love and support to his family and will be missed dearly.

The son of Lucile Whitted Charlson and Leo Charlson, Tom was born and raised in Asheville, NC. He was an industrious young man and kept out of trouble with a paper route and grocery bagging position at Ingles #1.

Tom chose to attend North Georgia Military College for the discipline. Upon graduation, Tom joked he was afforded two options: move back to Asheville and sell tires at Sears or join the Army. He chose the latter, much to the surprise of his fellow classmates.

He intended to fly helicopters. During his physical exam, Tom learned he was colorblind. When asked what his second choice was, a charitable recruit offered, "I heard the Engineers are good."

In October of 1974, Tom was commissioned as a Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. He retired as a Colonel and veteran of Desert Shield/Desert Storm and Operation Enduring Freedom. He graduated from Ranger School and the National War College. He was awarded the Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (5th award), Army Commendation

Medal (2nd award), National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Southwest Asia Service Medal (with 3 Bronze Service Stars), Humanitarian Service Medal, and the Itschner Award for the most outstanding U.S. Army Engineer Company in 1981. At Ft. Lewis, Washington he commanded the “Pacemakers” of the 864th Combat Heavy Engineer Battalion. Tom’s brigade command sent him to Camp Zama, Japan where he went on to lead the Japan Engineer District. Tom’s final post came in “Patton’s Own” 3rd Army where he served as the Chief Engineer for operations in the Middle East. His most valuable and fun assignment was his first – At Ft. Stewart, Georgia he met his “Band of Brothers”, and they remained great friends until the very end. Throughout his career, he mentored countless officers and soldiers and sincerely loved his country.

After retiring from the Army, Tom continued to serve. He became a Federal Security Director for the Department of Homeland Security and settled in Pawley’s Island, South Carolina. Tom enjoyed the friendships he made with TSA colleagues, airport volunteers, and his neighbors. His community “At the Beach” provided him great fun, fellowship, and unwavering support.

Some might think an officer of his stature would live and breathe the military life, but that was not always the case. You were more likely to catch Tom watching a VH1, Behind the Music, about an 80s metal band than the History Channel. When Tom wasn’t playing guitar or mandolin, he enjoyed golf, boating, and Georgia Bulldog football.

Tom remained an inspiring father and devoted husband. He was introduced to his beloved wife Mary Anne by his sister Carolyn in Hartwell, Georgia. The two fell fast in love and were married shortly thereafter. Their love would take them across the world. From Huntsville, Alabama to Camp Zama, Japan the two were inseparable. They were a perfect pair, and Tom knew it. Throughout their 36 years of marriage, he set a remarkable example of what a husband should be. Together, they taught both of their sons the importance of love, an honest work ethic, friendly competition, and the value of a good education. Tom approached his fight with cancer like every obstacle he faced – with

vigor. He was a loyal husband, father, friend, and grandfather.

Tom is survived by his wife, Mary Anne; sons, Jake (wife, Hamilton) and Mark (wife, Emily); grandchildren, Davis and Audrey; sister; Carolyn (husband, Phil), and brother; Steve (wife, Mary Jane). He is preceded in death by his mother, Lucile Whitted Charlson and father, Leo Charlson.

A memorial service will be held at 11 AM on Tuesday, April 23, 2019 at Holy Cross Faith Memorial Episcopal Church. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Smith Medical Clinic, 116 Baskervill Drive, Pawleys Island, SC 29585.

Goldfinch Funeral Home, Beach Chapel is in charge of the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

JB

“ *Great guy, great officer North georgia classmate*

john booth - April 23, 2019 at 12:47 PM

FV

“ *I met Tom when he became the Federal Security Director at Myrtle Beach International Airport and I was the Supervisor for the Horry County Police at the airport. Needless to say Tom's and my job worked hand in hand to support the security aspects for the airport. Tom was a true professional. We worked closely together and created a bond especially since we both had retired from the military even though Tom was Army and I was Air Force. Tom will surely be missed. My deepest condolences for the family during this this trying period.*



Frank Venegas

Frank Venegas - April 23, 2019 at 11:18 AM

RA

“ I first met Tom as we signed into the Army for our Engineer Officer basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia the first week of October 1974. We were standing in line one behind the other (always been a bone of contention as to who was first), and I overheard the MP giving him some grief about showing up with a dealer logo tag on his new TR-6. Since I was from that area, and the MPs would not let him drive the vehicle off-post without a plate, I took him to the DMV and from that day we became fast friends. Coincidentally we both got stationed at Fort Stewart to the 42nd Engineer Company for our first duty station and crossed paths multiple times duty our military careers, and with the stand-up of TSA in South Carolina.

God speed, luv ya man!

Roger Amende - April 22, 2019 at 08:53 AM

RA

“ Roger, Cathy and Catelyn Amende purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Thomas Leo Charlson.



Roger, Cathy and Catelyn Amende - April 22, 2019 at 08:21 AM

SB

“ Sandra And Bobby Brown lit a candle in memory of Thomas Leo Charlson



Sandra and Bobby Brown - April 21, 2019 at 03:20 PM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Leo Charlson.*



April 21, 2019 at 03:20 PM

DB

“ I was "really" friends with MaryAnne but since Tom and I were from Asheville, NC, we definitely had a connection. I met MaryAnne in 1999 at Camp Zama, Japan. My husband Mike was also a Colonel serving alongside Tom, so we were in the same group quite often. Of course, there was the fact that I had lived in Japan previously and knew how to get "to places". One day I heard Maryanne say they were going up to visit family in the Biltmore Forest. I was in shock for a few moments then asked, "Did you say the Biltmore Forest in Asheville, NC?" So, after that, I couldn't wait to meet Tom! When I finally did, he told me that after high school he worked in a factory and quickly decided that he was NOT going to do that all his life! WE had a good laugh over that!

Tom was such a quiet, gentle man! A true southern gentleman! I wish that we had been able to spend more time together but, two years soon passed and they were moving on to Tom's next assignment. Maryanne and I kept in touch and eventually, I visited them at their Pawley's Island home. Tom had retired and was woking for Homeland Security then, but he was the same sweet, kind man that I remembered.

We need Tom to be in the world! He was an example to everyone of what a man should be! I know that anyone who knew him will feel his loss for years to come. Jake and Mark will feel his loss forever. But, to them I say, "Tom is here with you, watching over you, guiding you. YOU are a part of him! Don't ever forget that! He lives on through YOU BOTH!" And, MaryAnne ... there are no words but, I am your true friend and will always be here for you!

All my love, Donna Bosack

Donna Lee Bosack - April 20, 2019 at 06:21 PM

PB

“ Tom's obituary is beautifully and eloquently written, and tells about the amazing man he was-such a servant's heart and always putting others before himself. He was always fun at family events and was always showing concern for anyone going through a hard time. What a special and inspirational man he was and I will never forget him! He touched so many lives. We will miss you, dear cuz! Thanks for the memories. Prayers for strength are continuing for his amazing wife and beautiful family. With much love, Patricia Carson Brewer

Pat Brewer - April 20, 2019 at 01:43 PM



“ Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant was purchased for the family of Thomas Leo Charlson.



April 20, 2019 at 12:32 PM