

Thomas Esper



1925 - 2022

Thomas E. Esper

Dec. 13, 1925 - August 28, 2022

Thomas E. Esper, 96, passed away peacefully at his home on Sunday, August 28, in the presence of his immediate family.

Known as Tommy to his friends, he was born in Rankin, Pennsylvania to Syrian immigrants, Tamar Esper and Massara (Sara) Sulieman. He remained a proud Arab American throughout his life, and his contributions to the community were recognized by the Arab American Cultural and Educational Center when he received their Man of the Year Award.

Tom graduated from Rankin High School in 1943, where he played center and linebacker for the football team. He was also an avid amateur boxer.

He is a World War II veteran who served in England at the end of the war.

He received his BA in History and MA in Education from the University of Pittsburgh. He also served as Dean at the Paris American Academy in Paris, France, during the 1960's.

Tom was a popular teacher of history, economics, and psychology at Gateway High School in Monroeville, Pennsylvania for 25 years. His advice to all new teachers: "Never smile before Christmas."

While at Gateway, he was the chief negotiator for the teachers union, where he fought

hard and won a pay increase for the educators. He was a lifelong member of the Pennsylvania School Educators Association, which recognized his outstanding work in the field of education with its Distinguished Career Award.

After retiring from teaching, Tom became an entrepreneur in business and real estate acquisitions. He traveled often to many countries, but his favorite place in the world, besides his hometown of Pittsburgh, was Paris, where he had beloved relatives.

Tom was an avid Steelers fan, a staunch Democrat, a great dancer, a fan of old movies, and opinionated about where one could get the best marinara sauce.

He was a lifelong member of St. George's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Oakland, Pennsylvania, where he was inducted into the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch.

Tom was briefly married to the late Ruth Verbe Rydel. He is survived by his daughter Christina Ritch (John); granddaughters, Nina Ritch (Michael Boland) and Alyssa Ritch-Frel (Jan); and three great-grandsons, Samuel John Boland, John Esper "Jack" Boland, and Vincent Frel. He leaves behind countless cousins, nieces, nephews, godchildren, and friends whom he adored.

A private graveside service will be held on September 2 at William Penn Cemetery, where he will be laid to rest next to his beloved brother Howard Esper, near his sister, Marian Joseph (Dewey), his parents, and other relatives. Arrangements entrusted to the Thomas L. Nied Funeral Home, Inc., 7441 Washington Street, Swissvale.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations can be made in his name to the Antiochian Village or St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

www.niedfuneralhome.com