



Thomas George Rostek

MAR 31, 1945 - MAY 15, 2025



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In Loving Memory of Thomas George Rostek

March 31, 1945 - May 15, 2025

Baldwin, Pennsylvania

Thomas George Rostek, age 80, of Baldwin, Pennsylvania, passed away peacefully on May 15th, surrounded by his loving family.

Born and raised in Pittsburgh, he was the cherished son of Flora and John Rostek and beloved brother to Joannie Kavalir, James Rostek, Edward Rostek, Mindy Savatt, Nancy Valdiserri, and Michael Malenka.

A proud graduate of Carrick High School (Class of 1963) and California University of Pennsylvania (1969), Tom dedicated his life to education and service. He taught chemistry at Wilkinsburg High School from 1969-1998, followed by Elderton High School until 2004. He impacted countless students not only in the classroom, but as a cross country coach, chess team coach, class sponsor, yearbook advisor, and the visionary behind "The Wilderness Experience." He also taught at the Community College of Allegheny County, helping many pursue careers in healthcare, and later continued teaching at Thomas Jefferson, Baldwin, and Oakland Catholic High Schools.

Tom had a deep love for the outdoors. He and his son shared a passion for hiking, beginning their Appalachian Trail adventures on Springer Mountain, Georgia, in 1993. He was a dedicated member of the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, logging over a thousand volunteer hours and helping build the Silberman Trail Center. His beloved cabin and his work as a trail overseer brought him great joy.



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A man of strong faith, Tom was an active leader in his church, Triumph of the Holy Cross (formerly St. Elizabeth), serving as President of the Men's Club and Senior Citizens group, volunteering at the Spring-a-Rama carnival, and enjoying fellowship with friends and family.

One of Tom's favorite places was Deer Valley YMCA Camp, where he created lifelong memories with his family-sailing, hiking, swimming, and telling stories to his grandchildren. Summers were filled with laughter, volleyball games, fishing, ice cream at the snack bar, and crafts with the grandkids.

Known for his playfulness and gentle spirit, Tom spent many days at the Cloverleaf YMCA and Baldwin Pool, where he became an honorary grandpa to many. Whether he was splashing in the water, telling jokes, or simply listening, he made everyone feel special.

Above all, Tom cherished his family. He was a devoted husband to his wife of 55 years, JoAnn, and a loving father to Thomas (Nancy) Rostek, Kristin Gottesman, and Jennifer (Charles) Leis. He supported them in every way-moving them in and out of homes, cheering on Pittsburgh sports, cooking Sunday spaghetti, and offering steady encouragement and humor.

His grandchildren-Katherine and Andrew Rostek, Sydney and Leo Gottesman, and Cameron and Cecelia Leis-were the light of his life. He never missed a chance to play, imagine, teach, or cuddle. Sunday waffles, playground adventures, and bedtime "Abercrombie" stories will be remembered forever.

Thomas is survived by his wife, children, and grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, Flora and John, and his sister Joannie Kavalir.

Tom leaves behind a legacy of wisdom, kindness, laughter, and love. He will be missed deeply and remembered always.

Family and Friends will be received from 4-8pm on Sunday, May 18, 2025 at the Jefferson Memorial Funeral Home, 301 Curry Hollow Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15236.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 10am on Monday, May 19, 2025 at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Church- Triumph of the Holy Cross Parish, 1 Grove Pl, Pittsburgh, PA 15236.



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Burial will be handled by Jefferson Memorial Park.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Potomac Appalachian Trail club in Thomas Rostek's honor at <https://www.patc.net/donate>.

Online condolences may be made at jeffersonmemorial.com.






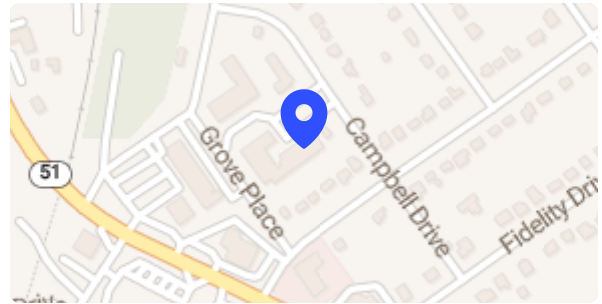
Events

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Mass of Christian Burial

-  **Monday**, May 19, 2025
-  10:00 AM - 11:00 AM ET
-  **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**
1 Grove Place, Pittsburgh PA 15236





Tribute Wall

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Richele Walker posted:

He was the best teacher I ever had! He is the reason I love science and learning! Always kind and just a wonderful human! R. Diggs class of '76

May 30 at 4:20 PM



Fallston Borough Council sent a Wings of a Dove Tribute Blanket to the Rostek family.



May 22 at 10:06 PM



Jaison Bottoms posted:

WHS ALUM Member of cross country and the wilderness experience He taught me alot about life and myself going to meets and camping Great teacher great man

May 21 at 12:49 PM



Charisse Witherspoon posted:

Sending deepest condolences to family and friends He was the Best chemistry teacher He cared about us All and he will always be remembered ❤️

May 21 at 11:51 AM



Do Nguyen posted:

Do Nguyen, Wilkinsburg class of 1978, a young refugee from Vietnam, the world was a new and often bewildering place, especially in a classroom where English was spoken. But then there was Mr. Rostek. With a kind demeanor and a knack for making even the most complex chemical reactions seem simple, Mr. Rostek made chemistry class a beacon of clarity. Do, whom Mr. Rostek sometimes playfully called "DoDo," always remembered how easily the lessons clicked, thanks to his remarkable teacher.

May 20 at 12:26 PM



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Philip Codelka posted:

To: Thomas, Kristen and Jennifer: Jo Ann and I would like to extend to each of you our sincerest condolences and sympathy in the loss of your Dad. My parents and their children had the honor and privilege of being your Dad and Mom's neighbor for over 50 years. I cannot overemphasize how great a neighbor your Dad and Mom was to our Father and Mother over the years. Your Dad had a passion for both teaching and the outdoors; and openly expressed this love to myself and our family in our many conversations over the years. Please extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to your Mom as she grieves the loss of her life partner. Phil and Jo Ann Codelka

May 18 at 9:51 PM



Harry Broadus posted:

I had the privilege and honor to be a colleague Tom's as an instructor at Wilkinsburg Sr. High School. He was highly intelligent, always positive, always a class act, always a gentleman, and highly respected by his students and peers. You could always tell he loved his students, and in turn, they loved him. He was an educator in every sense of the word, and I am proud to have been his colleague and friend. Rest with God Tom! Harry Broadus WHS

May 18 at 11:59 AM



Tashia Trowery posted:

Mr. Rostek was an awesome teacher that truly cared. He pushed me to be my best at all times. He will truly be missed. Tashia Trowery Wilkinsburg High c/o 96

May 18 at 10:46 AM



Tashia Trowery posted:

Mr. Rostek was an awesome teacher and I will never forget him. He always encouraged me and pushed me to do better. You will truly be missed. Tashia Trowery Wilkingburg High C/O 96

May 18 at 10:44 AM



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Ed Blotzer posted:

I worked with Tom at Wilkinsburg for many, many years. He was a really great guy. The students and teachers liked him a great deal. His chess students particularly appreciated the opportunity to learn and play the game of kings. His chemistry students too were grateful to have him as their teacher. Many of his students went on to college appreciating the opportunity afforded them by Tom. Many of us were sad to see him leave; however, he had a much better opportunity. We were also grateful for the work he did on many contracts, giving up personal time for the good of others. Tom will be sorely missed by all who were fortunate to cross paths with a wonderful man. Ed Blotzer

May 18 at 10:36 AM



Kelly Brown posted:

Please accept my sincere condolences for your loss. Mr. Rostek was known to many of us at Wilkinsburg High as "Roz". This was not a lack of respect -- it was all respect and love of THE coolest teacher. Easygoing, patient, willing to explain anything, he managed classes with a firm but gentle hand, and often a sense of fun or curiosity. Kids visited his classroom when he wasn't even their assigned teacher. I will never forget him making laughing gas in chemistry - that was a hoot. Always approachable, Roz was one of those teachers whose influence went beyond the subject he was teaching and he will always be remembered fondly.

May 18 at 6:47 AM



SD

Shardele Daley posted:

He was THE best chemistry teacher a girl could have. He just genuinely loved his students. We had fun learning in his classroom. I will always remember you. Thank you for being of part in who I am today. You would be proud. #Wilkinsburg Tigers Shardele Sowell-Daley

May 17 at 10:57 PM



SP

Srta Price posted:

Mr. Roster was a favorite teacher of mine at Wilkinsburg Jr.-Sr. High School. He was an amazing Chemistry teacher and was my class sponsor. We worked closely together as I was Class President. He had a great sense of humor and was a favorite of many. My condolences to his family and friends. - Daria Price, Ed.S

May 17 at 8:16 PM



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Brian Hannon posted:

Sincere condolences to the family of my beloved chemistry teacher at Wilkinsburg High. I graduated in 1978 and went on to obtain a Chemical Engineering degree from Carnegie-Mellon, inspired by Mr. Rostek. I'll always remember him for teaching us how to use a slide rule and letting us blow up sodium in the lab by simply putting water on it! LOL! God Bless a life well lived. - Brian Hannon

May 17 at 12:43 PM



Nancy Galloway lit a candle in honor of Thomas.



May 17 at 10:17 AM



Nancy Galloway posted:

Mr. Rostek was my homeroom teacher at Wilkinsburg High School from my freshman year until 1981 graduation. I will forever remember him saying the Pledge of Allegiance daily and demanding not our compliance but our respect. He did not want a homeroom class due to the room being a chemistry lab but he trusted us and we respected him. Rest in Peace Mr. Rostek.

May 17 at 10:16 AM



Steve Koeppen posted:

I have some fond memories of working on the Silberman Cabin with Tom. We tried to get our wives together by spending a night at the cabin with us but he couldn't talk JoAnn into doing it. One night when it was just Tom and me at the cabin, we got into a discussion of religion. I asked him why God doesn't just talk to us in a normal voice that we can hear. Tom said that it was because He wants us to find Him through faith. Those words have stuck with me over the years and I've shared that conversation with others that I felt needed to hear it. Steve Koeppen Taneytown, MD

May 17 at 8:39 AM



The Aflac Leadership Team sent an Ocean Breeze Spray to the Rostek family.



May 16 at 9:15 PM



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BM

Brian Moore posted:

Sydney and I are so sorry to hear of Tom's passing. We both feel very lucky to have known him. Our thoughts are with his friends and family.

May 16 at 8:45 PM

BR

Brian R. planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Thomas.



May 16 at 8:30 PM

AG

Allan Gould sent a Fiery Lily and Rose to the Rostek family.



May 16 at 7:51 PM

KH

Kelsey O'hanlon posted:

Any time with my Uncle Tommy was a memory to cherish, but one thing I'll always remember when thinking of him would be his "caterpillar" mustache! When me and my siblings were young, he would make us laugh by pretending his big, fuzzy mustache was a caterpillar! Our little selves would hesitantly reach for the "caterpillar" giggling with anticipation for when it would "bite"! Not sure if he would have even remembered this silly little game...but it is definitely my fondest memory....

May 16 at 6:18 PM



Anonymous sent a Lavender Reflections Spray to the Rostek family.



May 16 at 6:15 PM

TF

The Simodejka And Jacobus Families sent a Heavenly Light to the Rostek family.



May 16 at 6:06 PM



Tribute Wall

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Anonymous sent a Lord's Prayer 44" Sonnet to the Rostek family.



May 16 at 5:40 PM



Mr. & Mrs. Doug And Susan Szalla planted a Memorial Tree in honor of Thomas.



May 16 at 5:40 PM



Katherine Rostek shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

My grandfather was there for every important moment. Every musical, graduation, and Saturday family dinner. He was a joy to converse with, to learn from, and to laugh with. We will never forget the moments spent together at the pool, spring-o-Rama, fish fries, family dinners, and so so much more. We love you grandpa.



May 16 at 3:42 PM



Media

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Katherine Rostek shared a photo to the **Tribute Wall** album.

May 16 at 3:42 PM





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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