



## Thomas Summerfield Baxter

November 1, 1938 - January 12, 2021

With dignity and faith, surrounded by family, Thomas Summerfield Baxter, age 82, joined his beloved wife and the Lord on Tuesday, January 12, 2021, following care at CHI St. Francis Medical Center in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Tom was the third of four children, born to Raymond Thomas and Irene Summerfield (Jackson) Baxter on November 1, 1938, west of Grand Island. He was the sixth known family descendant to carry the Summerfield name, dating back to the early-mid 1700s.

As a Grand Island Senior High graduate, he continued on to the University of Nebraska (Lincoln), choosing to return home after his freshman year, determined to help run the family business in tandem with Ray. Soon after, he met the love of his life, Elizabeth Lee Harwager, who he married at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church on November 6, 1959, where they remained steadfast members the rest of their lives.

Tom and Liz cherished, and remained deeply committed to each other, during their sixty years of marriage. As newlyweds, they built a home near the family business, then welcomed three children into the world. Upon the unexpected, early death of Tom's father, the 29-year-old cattleman suddenly found himself running the business. The experience proved to be one of the strongest influences and motivating factors throughout his life. His lifelong mantra,

learned from Ray, was simple: “My word is my bond.”

Following in Ray’s footsteps, Tom fully engaged in all facets of community, business, and industry organizations. He adopted cutting edge practices in business that presented opportunities for growth and expansion. As the business flourished, the family built a new home one mile north of their first, where Tom and Liz enjoyed the remainder of their lives.

Tom’s longtime support of philanthropic organizations included membership in the Tehama Shrine Temple, and 56-year member as a Master Mason of the Shriners. He was actively involved in numerous social and community organizations: Grand Island Saddle Club, Riverside Golf Club, Stuhr Museum, and College Park. Tom also served as a Director of the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, member of the Ag Council, and Chair of the 4-H Livestock Sale Committee. He was a strong advocate for the establishment of Northwest High School, where he later served as a Board Member in the mid-late 1970s.

He held numerous leadership positions, including a seat on the St. Francis Hospital Board of Trustees, President of the Central Affiliate of the Nebraska Livestock Feeders Association, the State Nebraska Livestock Feeders Association, was a charter member of the industry analysis organization Cattle-Fax, and an Ambassador to AkSarBen. Deep and lasting friendships gleaned during his time with each affiliation remained precious the rest of his life.

One of the interests most meaningful to Tom was his relationship to Fonner Park. As the son of a founding member and first President of Fonner Park (Ray, 1953-54), Tom took particular interest in committing to the growth and opportunity that Fonner provided to both agriculture and the community. He served on the Executive Board, then as President (1988-89) of the Hall County Livestock Improvement Association.

Tom's passion for racing and innate instincts proved him to be an exceptional horseman. Beginning with his first thoroughbred purchase in 1986, he methodically built a successful breeding and racing program that brought the entire family tremendous adventures and exciting success at the highest levels. Extensive study, careful bloodline selections, a strong work ethic, and a determination to "raise the babies at home" was rewarded through multiple graded stakes winners and contenders, as well entries in the 2000 and 2005 Breeders Cups.

Above all, Tom was a loyal and deeply committed friend to many, near and far. Whether in times of boundless joy, challenging struggles, tragedy, or delight, he remained resolute in helping when possible, and celebrating good news. Together, he and Liz were surrounded by loving friends from all walks of life, near and far.

Nothing was more precious or held more closely to him than family. Always willing to counsel and share his experienced wisdom, he and Liz provided solid foundations for their children to establish themselves in the world, immensely proud of each, and deeply devoted to the extended family that resulted. Doting over grandchildren was not an uncommon occurrence for Grandpa and Grandma. Together, they continued to encourage continuing education, aware of the importance role that plays in life moving forward.

Preceding him in death (and waiting for him with open arms) were wife, Liz, his parents Ray and Irene, siblings LaRue Arline Wood, LaVerne Baxter, and James Baxter. Left to mourn his loss but celebrate his life are daughter Cinda Baxter of Minneapolis, MN; daughter and son-in-law, Gian Baxter-Collins (Michael) of Grand Island; and son and daughter-in-law, Greg Baxter (Adriene), also of Grand Island. Grandchildren include Miranda Baxter,

Washington, D.C.; Alec Baxter (wife, Emmaline) of Lincoln; Taylor Roberts of Grand Island; Kelsey Roberts of Lincoln; and Madison Roberts of Grand Island. Step-granddaughters are Ashley Collins of Grand Island and Shayla Collins of Cairo. Brother-in-law, Lynn Harwager, resides in Katy, TX.

In lieu of flowers and plants, the family asks that memorials be sent to the Tom Baxter Memorial Fund % Northwest Education Foundation (2710 N. North Road, Grand Island NE 68803).

Public visitation will be from 5:00-7:00 p.m. on Monday, January 18 at All Faith's Funeral Home in Grand Island. To help protect others, facemasks are required. Friends uncomfortable with public gatherings are invited to please call the funeral home to have their names entered into the guest book.

A private family service will be held the following morning, 10:30 AM Tuesday, January 19; the service will be livestreamed on All Faith's Funeral Home Facebook page—Grand Island's Facebook page (found here: [bit.ly/tommemorial](https://bit.ly/tommemorial)).

Private burial will follow at Grand Island Cemetery. A joint celebration of life honoring both Tom and Liz will be scheduled for a later date, when family and friends can safely come together to share warm memories, laughter, love, and fellowship.

# Cemetery Details

**Grand Island City Cemetery**

Grand Island, NE

# Tribute Wall



“ *Thomas Summerfield Baxter*

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October 08, 2023 at 11:02 PM



“ *Greg and Family,*

*As with Liz, we were very saddened to read about the passing of Tom. I have known your Dad for 40 years. The obituary very much described the same Tom Baxter that I knew.*

*You can be very proud of the heritage that he has created. We have some very great memories of both He and Liz. And I can tell you that more than once he was influential in my life. I always enjoyed any visit with him and will miss that. You are in our thoughts today.*  
*Dave and Carole Chmelka*

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**Dave Chmelka** - January 16, 2021 at 12:14 PM