



Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger

August 13, 1956 - October 21, 2024

Thomas (Tom) Phillip Kruger, 68, of Grand Island, died on Monday, October 21, 2024 at Grand Island Regional Medical Center, with his wife by his side. Funeral services will be held on Monday, October 28, 2024 at 10:30 am, at Third City Christian Church in Grand Island. Reverend Scott Jones will officiate. Visitation will be on Sunday, October 27th from 5-7 pm, also at the church. A private burial will be at the Grand Island Veteran's Cemetery at a later date. All Faiths Funeral Home is assisting the family with arrangements. Condolences may be left at www.giallfaiths.com. In lieu of flowers, memorials are suggested to the family who will forward to the Shelton Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department.

Tom left a lot of boxes checked for all whom were lucky to have known him. As a student, athlete, farmworker, soldier, sportsman, teacher, coach, school administrator, and author, but most importantly, friend, husband, father, and grandpa, he shared his love of family, duty, and country for all to see.

Thomas Phillip Kruger was born August 13, 1956 in the hospital at Yankton, South Dakota, to Bob and Joanne (Angus) Kruger.

Tom went to elementary school at Saint Ludgers Academy in Creighton, NE. He received his first communion and was confirmed in the Catholic faith and was a proud St. Ludgers Comet.

Tom's father worked for Consumers/NPPD and the family moved in 1986 to Shelton, NE, where he attended school for 7th- 12th grade. Tom graduated with the class of 1974. Always proud of his Bulldog roots, Tom enjoyed going

to school. He was Student Council President and Homecoming King. He played football and was a state champion wrestler. Tom's fondest memory of his Senior year was representing Shelton at the NE State wrestling tournament when the team finished second place and losing only by one point.

Tom had a great experience working in high school and through college at Gangwish Farm and Grain Elevator and Gangwish Seed Farm. He loved the hard work and meeting all of the farmers while dumping their grain. He often commented that every other truck was a veteran of wars from WWII to Vietnam. This was the start of his interviews of America's Gallant men. After receiving a scholarship for wrestling, football and ROTC, he entered Kearney State College. He wrestled and also played football and ROTC all four years. Tom received an Education degree in History. When he left his senior year, the football team was ranked 4th in the nation and Tom was an All-American wrestler.

In ROTC, he was awarded the distinguished Military Graduate Award and was commissioned a second Lieutenant in the US Army armor branch (Tank). He entered the US Army at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. After his service at Ft. Knox and graduating from Armor Officer Basic Course, he returned to Nebraska to teach and coach.

Tom's first job in education was at St. Paul Schools teaching history and government. He coached wrestling and was an assistant football coach. In 1988, Tom's young family moved to Lexington for teaching and coaching. After he earned his Master's in Administration Degree, he later became the Principal at Lexington Senior High School and then Assistant Principal at Grand Island Senior High School.

Tom met Ronda in class at Kearney. He said she took good notes and that was his best excuse to spend extra time with his classmate. Tom and Ronda dated for the last two years of college. Tom always said, "college was the best job he ever had." But the best thing about college was Ronda.

Tom married Ronda (Ernst) in Aurora on August 7, 1982. The couple was

blessed with three sons, Heath, Cole, and Tad. They raised the boys in St. Paul, Lexington, and Grand Island. Not only was Ronda a great elementary teacher, but an even better mother. Tom gave Ronda all the credit for raising the boys. He was often gone weekends and summers with Army Guard training or schools.

Tom took a break from education to work on his second career in 1985 for a return back to active duty in the army at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. Ronda followed him as he attended the Advanced Armor Officer School. After returning, Captain Kruger commanded Company B 1-195th Armor company in Lexington, NE from 1985-1989. Tom retired at a major from the Guard/ Army Reserves as an operations officer for the 195th armor battalion.

Tom cherished his time and the soldiers that he got to work with during his military career. He credited it for giving him color and character to his life and access to military history documents and interviews with the veterans he met. If you want to learn history, do it from a tank turret outside a thousand-year-old village in Germany, on ground that our fathers fought and died on. Tom was always proud of his soldiers.

Tom had many notable achievements, honors, and awards in his life: Being inducted into the UNK Athletic Hall of Fame for wrestling and football; Lifetime member of the American Legion; and Knighted to the Order of St. George for honorable service to armor and cavalry units.

Mr. Kruger planned and carried out over fifteen trips to Washington, D.C., with high school seniors from St. Paul, Lexington, and Grand Island, all trips were by bus, including sack lunches. The first trip cost \$175, for a week, per student. He worked hard to keep a low cost so nearly all students went.

Gettysburg Battlefield was always his favorite location.

Another educational experience was he started and planned annual Veterans Parades on Veterans Day, up to the VA home in Grand Island. We marched with 3,000 middle and high school students to honor the "Gallant Men and Women of the Armed Services."

After retiring from education, Tom coauthored a book, "Cornhuskers Go to War" plus wrote other publications.

Tom's favorite hobbies included; spending time at the cabin at Harlan County Reservoir with family and friends fishing for walleye; time spent at "Deer Camp" with his brother Al at the Duck Inn Cabin on the Platte River (established 1929) where they hunted white tailed deer; great memories hunting pheasants, around Shelton and later hunting with his best pheasant hunting dog, a pointing black lab named Yukon; known for his cooking, especially for big family holiday meals, he always believed "the more the better."

At this time of grief, Tom wants us to remember and celebrate his life well lived and his enduring commitment to family and country.

He was preceded in death by his father, Bob Kruger; mother, JoAnne Campbell; and sister, Letha Brooks. Tom leaves his wife, Ronda; sons, Heath (Sydney) of Omaha, Cole of Kilgore, TX, and Tad (Brooke) of Ord. Grandchildren, Nash, Willa, and August Kruger of Ord and Josie Kruger of Omaha. His brother, Alan (Carol) of Hastings; sister, Crystal Gangwish of Shelton; and a host of family, friends, teammates, and former players.

Previous Events

Visitation

OCT **27**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Third City Christian Church
4100 W. 13th St.
Grand Island, NE 68803

Funeral Service

OCT **28**. 10:30 AM - 11:30 AM (CT)

Third City Christian Church
4100 W. 13th St.
Grand Island, NE 68803

Tribute Wall

JC

“ Sorry for your loss. Mr. Kruger left a legacy behind him. Blessed to have met him and his family. Raised extortionary young men.

Jonathan Carlisle - October 29, 2024 at 01:26 PM

CD

“ Rhonda and family, very sorry for your loss. Tom was a great teacher and coach. As a coach he taught me and many others the value of humility as there was much more than just ourselves as the team made the victories. As a teacher, he was a positive influence. As a Patriot, he taught me pride and inspired me to be more. The most impactful thing Tom did for me and others was our trip to Washington DC. This motivated me to join and serve and has been a great part of my foundation that I continue to live by. Tom will always be a part of I and many, and I'm forever grateful to have known him. He will be missed for certain. Craig Dixson Class of 87.

CRAIG A DIXSON - October 28, 2024 at 10:14 AM

TE

“ Kruger, I bet Yukon was glad to see you.

Tim Ernst - October 26, 2024 at 08:26 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.

October 25, 2024 at 05:02 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.*



October 25, 2024 at 05:02 PM



“ *Ord Girls Basketball purchased the Enduring Grace for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.*



Ord Girls Basketball - October 25, 2024 at 04:53 PM



“ *Jamie, Derek, Tony & Allie purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.*



Jamie, Derek, Tony & Allie - October 25, 2024 at 03:24 PM



“ *Rhonda and family, so sorry for your loss. Tom was such a great person, teacher and coach. I learned so much from him. He had such an inspiration on me on how I live my life to this day. I always talk about that time after high school graduation when Joe Janke and I flew out to stay with you guys at Fort Knox and go to Tom's ceremony on becoming a Captain. That truly was a great week. I will miss him. Pat Hellwege*

Pat Hellwege - October 25, 2024 at 03:08 PM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.*



October 25, 2024 at 10:51 AM



“ *Ronda, we are praying for you and your family after reading about your husband's passing. May God comfort you. Mike and Glenda Allen.*

Glenda Allen - October 25, 2024 at 09:28 AM



“ *Mr Kruger was such a positive force in the lives of the Roe kids. His family was so important to him and we were lucky to know them as well. My thought and prayers are with the family*

Susie Frei Roe - October 25, 2024 at 08:36 AM



“ *I had both the pleasure and privilege to work with and learn from Tom as a fellow administrator at Grand Island Senior High. He taught me how to build positive relationships with students and staff and yet hold people accountable and make people better. Our (Lynn and I) deepest condolences to Rhonda and the boys on the loss of such a great man. He truly made a big impact on those around him.*

Jeff Johnson - October 24, 2024 at 11:56 AM



“ Florist Choice Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.



October 24, 2024 at 10:55 AM



“ Melissa Rinehart (USACE-NWP) planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.

Melissa Rinehart (USACE-NWP) - October 24, 2024 at 10:55 AM



“ Tom was first and foremost a good man. Those are scarce. He will be missed.

Steve Rose - October 24, 2024 at 10:26 AM



“ Tom Kruger, brother of my best friend, Crystal, in Creighton, NE. We all went to St. Ludger Academy. Alan, was younger and Letha came later. Crystal and I rode horses almost every day and Tom was always around. I was at the Kruger home as much as I was at my own home. Tom was always happy and always busy with all of the neighbor kids. When they moved to Shelton they took my heart. When I ran into Tom at Grand Island High it was such a great day. I am so sad to read Tom's own obituary but yet so excited to read about his life. ! AND we bought his book a while back. Jody Manion Ritzdorf

Jody Manion Ritzdorf - October 23, 2024 at 03:49 PM

GU

“ Tom was an outstanding assistant principal at Grand Island Senior High School. He always treated us with great respect and dignity. We all loved Tom. He knew how to work with students and staff and get the best out of us. He will be truly missed. Coach Greg Uhrmacher

Gregory Uhrmacher - October 23, 2024 at 12:53 PM

DB

“ Tom and I were on the wrestling team at Kearney State. What a wonderful teammate and person he was. I have the book he authored and appreciate the effort he put into everything he did. A kind soul, he will be missed.

Darrell Barnes - October 23, 2024 at 12:26 PM

MB

“ The trips to Washington, D. C., were as much or more fun for the adults as for the students. We learned so much. It was an honor to know such a patriotic man.

Margaret Bader - October 23, 2024 at 10:33 AM

MT

“ Mark Tonniges planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas "Tom" Phillip Kruger.

Mark Tonniges - October 23, 2024 at 09:20 AM

MT

“ Mark Tonniges purchased the Large Basket Garden for the family of Thomas "Tom" Philip Kruger.



Mark Tonniges - October 23, 2024 at 09:20 AM

JK

“ I was so privileged to have had Tom Kruger as my principal in high school. I was a kid who needed accommodation and did not generally get the help I needed. A gifted kid with ADHD—high test scores created higher expectations than I could meet. I couldn't make the grade and had a lot of trouble. This was the norm then, but I was lucky enough to have a principal who wanted to help and teach, rather than punish and judge. I never forgot his kindness and support, even when other teachers and students complained about it. It not only made a huge difference at the time, but influenced, and still influences me in so many ways today. He was proof that one person can make so much difference and I cannot impart how important this has been to me throughout my life. There were also a very few teachers who helped, but had he not been the principal, I think the outcome would have been very different. Such a good man and I know he will be missed by many. My condolences to his family and friends. His kindness and willingness to help was ahead of its time. It carries on through those he taught. I will never forget it.

Jennifer Maloley King - October 23, 2024 at 08:58 AM

SK

Thank-you so much for sharing this memory!

Sydney Kruger - October 22, 2025 at 12:06 AM

HG

“ I remember Tom Kruger as a good man and an effective school administrator. I enjoyed my time working with Tom at Grand Island Senior High. I have fond memories of working with Tom, Tex Harvey, Doug Jensen, Jeff Johnson, and Kent Mann. Tom will most definitely be missed as a colorful character. His contributions to the lives of young people will not be forgotten. Harry Grimminger

Harry Grimminger - October 23, 2024 at 08:34 AM

TS

“ So sorry for your loss. Tom was my first Commander when I joined the Guard. He was truly inspirational to us. Loved going to Hastings to train on the tanks with him. Lots of good memories of training at Ft. Carson with B Co.

Tim Keesecker SR - October 22, 2024 at 11:47 PM