

Stamper Family Vocational/Technical Scholarship



Thomas Frank Stamper, 89, of North Bend, Oregon, died on December 2, 2023, at Bay Area Hospital. Many will remember him as the owner of Stamper's Tire Co., the local Les Schwab dealer, as a generous supporter of the Bay Area community, and as a husband, father, and friend.

Tom was born to Florence and Jack Stamper on March 14, 1934, in Seattle, Washington. They had moved from Coos Bay to live with Florence's family and find work during the Great Depression. Shortly after his birth, the family moved back to Coos Bay. Jack reopened his tire store, which he had established in 1923. Tom graduated from Marshfield High School in 1952, and headed to University of Oregon, where he was a Sigma Chi and manager of the men's basketball team, graduating in 1956 with a BS in business.

Tom served two years in the Army, stationed in Germany. He took every opportunity to explore as much of Europe as he could. This ignited his life-long passion for travel. Following his service, he returned to UO to take accounting classes. When standing in for someone else on a blind date, he met his future wife, Joan Long. They married June 12, 1960, and settled in Portland. Tom spent two years working at Price Waterhouse as a CPA, saving Joan's salary, and living on his so they could quit their jobs in 1962 and travel through Europe for three months.

They moved to Coos Bay following their European adventure and Tom joined his older brother, Charles "Chuck" Stamper, running the tire stores in Coos Bay and Coquille. Tragically, Chuck died in a small plane crash in 1963, leaving Tom alone at the helm of the stores.

He grew the business over the years, adding stores in Reedsport, North Bend, Brookings, and Crescent City, California. In the early '70s, he met Central Oregon tire dealer Les Schwab. Schwab became a mentor, and that partnership changed the course of the company and of Tom's life. The Les Schwab business model, philosophy of customer service and employee loyalty aligned with Tom's principles and values and allowed the business to prosper. Tom shared his Les Schwab Story with friends through Rotary Club, as a teacher at Oregon Business Week, and with classes at S.W.O.C.C., thinking that others could benefit from his experiences.

Tom and Joan believed in giving back to the communities that made the business successful. They gave generously, usually without fanfare, often under The Stamper Family moniker. They established a trust for the Boys & Girls Club of Southwestern Oregon, supported Bay Area Hospital, the Coos Art Museum and The Devereux Center, helped the Coos History Museum build a new facility, set up a fund with the Oregon Community Foundation to give grants to nonprofits throughout Coos and Curry counties, and countless other philanthropic endeavors.

He and Joan had two daughters and built a house and a life together in North Bend. Whatever interests and hobbies he took up, he fully committed to, and the family joined in. Whether it was sailing and racing at the Coos Bay Yacht Club, cross country skiing in the Cascades, or going to a car show or the Oregon Symphony, Tom brought along his girls. Tom was always looking to improve himself. He was a life-long student, a curious researcher, and a meticulous record keeper, chronicling every workout beginning in 1972 when he started running and every bottle of wine he bought, cellared, and shared. He took up black-and-white nature photography later in life and developed his work in the basement dark room he set up. His patience and attention to detail were on full display in every photograph.

Tom shared his love of travel with his family, planning trips to explore the western National Parks and taking them on vacations all over the country. As empty nesters, Tom and Joan began cycling and took bicycle tours each fall for 20 years, traveling to all parts of the U.S., Canada and Europe with their bike shoes and helmets. After Tom retired in 2000, they began spending winters in La Quinta, California, and summers in Sunriver.

While dementia took away a lifetime of memories at the end of his life, it did not diminish who he was. Tom was a kind, honest, generous man who loved his family and friends, and was, according to his wife, "the best man ever born." He was a gentleman and a truly gentle man.