



Tom Guinney

September 6, 2019

Tom Guinney, beloved father, grandfather, friend, restaurateur, and entrepreneur, passed away on September 6th of natural causes at his daughter's home in Oregon City, Oregon.

Born in Hollywood, California on January 13, 1948 to Ted and Betty Guinney, Tom grew up in Orange County. His first restaurant job was a dishwasher at the age of 15 and even from such an early age, Tom knew that he had found his vocation. From that point on, Tom's career in the restaurant industry led him to numerous manager and executive chef positions in the state of California. From 1967 to 1971, Tom signed on for 3 combat tours in Vietnam's Mekong Delta with the U.S. Navy. He was a Food Service Specialist and Commissary man and completed his enlistment at Point Mugu Naval Air Station.

In 1979, Tom met Tom Sieg and John Williams, who convinced him to move to Salt Lake City to join them as partners of the fledgling Gastronomy, Inc. Tom developed the menu and recipes for which the Market Street Grill and Oyster Bar are recognized across the country.

While the restaurant business was Tom's first love, he was also very active in the community and served on numerous boards including the Downtown Alliance, Visit Salt Lake, the Utah Restaurant Association and the Salt Lake County Board of Health. Over the years, Tom and his partners received many awards for their contributions to the restaurant industry and Salt Lake City, and in 2017, Tom was presented with "The Key to the City" by Salt Lake City Mayor Jackie Biskupski. There is not a restaurant in Salt Lake that does not employ someone whose career was influenced by Tom and he will be sorely missed.

Tom is survived by his daughter Alexandra Bird (Jon) and beloved granddaughter Faye. He is preceded in death by his wife Dorothy Guinney and daughter Victoria Guinney.

Thomas Lawrence Guinney was the only child of Theodore (Ted) Guinney and Betty Guinney (nee Collette). Both families had deep roots in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Betty was a homemaker and like his son Tom, Ted was a cook and restaurateur himself.

Tom's father was also a merchant marine and sailor who narrowly survived his sinking ship after being hit by a German U-Boat torpedo in the Atlantic during WWII.

Though Tom was born in Hollywood, California, he was raised primarily in Orange County. Tom's childhood companion and best friend was a Boxer purebred he named "Mike". Tom's pet, who was sired by the Grand National Champion of the American Kennel Club, was acquired by Tom's father, who won the boxer puppy for

his young son in a poker game. Tom always spoke fondly of his boyhood surroundings "You had Disneyland to the east, (Tom was one of the first to go to Disneyland) the ocean shore to the west with the pervasive scent of oil drilling, and miles of cabbage fields!"

On Tom's 16th birthday, his parents took him to the bank for a \$400 car loan and Tom purchased his first vehicle. Tom serviced the loan by washing dishes at a local restaurant. Subsequent years had Tom working at his father's restaurant, as well as establishments such as Delaney's Berkshires by the Bay, The Crown House and the Bay Marie - all in seaside communities.

By his own recollection, Tom would say of his youth "I wanted adventure". So, acting ahead of the draft, and during the escalation of the Viet Nam War, Tom enlisted in the U.S. Navy. Needless to say, as an only child, this news did not go over well in the Guinney household - especially with his mother Betty.

After boot camp, Tom served as a cook and commissary man on the Aircraft Carrier U.S.S. Coral Sea and the U.S. S. Neuces. After sailing across the Pacific, Tom signed up for the combat duty of a "PBR Squadron" up the Mekong Delta. His youthful reason for doing so was simple - he wanted to escape the overpowering diesel fumes that hung over the galley of the Nueces. Subsequently, Tom was assigned to the four-man gunships of the river patrol. Years later, PBR Squadrons like Tom's were immortalized in the war epic Apocalypse Now. These comparatively small gunships were fast, but had few protections for the crew of four. Tom fought in three separate combat tours and did so during the Tet Offensive, one of the fiercest military campaigns of the Viet Nam War. In addition to combat action, Tom was a universal blood type, and so was continuously donating blood during the conflict, lying alongside wounded servicemen in makeshift settings, day and night, for emergency blood transfusions.

Ever energetic in spite of the harrowing experiences of Viet Nam, Tom's kinetic nature never let him sit still for long. After returning to the big ships as a cook and commissary man, he entertained his fellow sailors with movie nights - showing movies on a bed sheet screen, selling popcorn and holding impromptu poker tournaments. He won so many poker games himself that when he was discharged, he came home to nearly \$70,000 in military pay vouchers - a stunning amount in 1971. When asked how he could win so much, he would reply "Ah... young men's egos were at stake...and bet on!"

After his three tours, Tom returned home and purchased a condominium with his poker winnings and a yellow, 2-door Mercedes Benz convertible that, along with his new restaurant co-worker Robert Toler, he often pressed into service as an off-road adventure vehicle. Robert and Tom's friendship would flourish and endure but sadly, not the Mercedes!

In a few short years, Tom began to establish himself as more than a chef as he began to develop as a restaurant operator and manager, handling with precision the great and small details of the hospitality industry that would define his career and entrepreneurial gifts for almost 50 years.

It was during this season of his life that he met a tall, striking redhead who was also in the restaurant business. Dorothy Peters was a front-end restaurant manager, and to hear

either of them talk, it was love at first sight - with a sprint! They were married in Mason Park in Irvine, California in 1974.

Working life in the restaurant industry took Tom and Dorothy up and down California. Seafood and Steakhouses dominated the restaurant scene in the `1970's and saw Tom working for Charlie Brown's in South San Francisco and running his own restaurant, The Bay Marie, in San Clemente. Tom often reflected that he and Dorothy "had so much fun together - we always had a great time." On the rare occasion when Dorothy and Tom dined at home, Dorothy's favorite dinner from her husband was a spicy specialty called Gilly Gilly Chicken.

There was oddball drama too. Dorothy had acquired an enormous parrot in those days - a giant Blue Macaw that she named Rocky. The Macaw adored Dorothy but treated Tom as its mortal enemy in very "parrot" ways. They even took Rocky to a bird handler specialist to see what could be done and during that visit, Rocky chopped down hard on Tom's ear, drawing a fair amount of blood. Tom was fond of comically quoting what the bird handler said next "Um, you don't seem to be establishing a relationship with the bird" "No \$#% ?"

In 19870, when Tom accepted the invitation to come to Salt Lake City and form a partnership with developers John Williams and Tom Sieg to launch the Market Street Grill, it was with high hopes and a low-brow arrival. Tom and Dorothy rolled into town in an aging Dodge Dart with all of their belongings and forty dollars. When they pulled into a local 7-11, the dusty car sputtered and choked. As Dorothy got out of the car, a rather sarcastic stranger exiting the store walked past Dorothy in the parking lot and quipped "nice car, lady."

The remarks brought tears to his young wife, and Tom knew right then that he had his work cut out for him. But the uncertainty of their choice to come to Salt Lake City didn't last long. The Market Street Grill was immediately a rousing success. New restaurants would open and flourish and the public praise of their establishments would make headlines in their hometown newspapers. Lifelong friendships began to multiply, lasting through thick and thin.

And the rest, as they say, is history...cherished.

A visitation will take place on Monday, Sept. 16, from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.at Neil O'Donnell and Sons Mortuary, 372 East 100 South. A funeral mass will be celebrated Tuesday, September 17 at 12:15 p.m. at the Cathedral of the Madeleine, 331 East South Temple. Committal to follow at Mt. Calvary Catholic Cemetery, 4th Avenue and T Street.

As Tom would typically say "I'm gonna scoot off on ya!"

Comments



“ Wow! What an amazing man, and life he lead. Full of adventure, good-will and integrity. I did not know him personally, but would love to have met him. I have worked in the restaurant industry, and success relies on a great product, value and big personality; all that Tom seemed to possess.

Michael Clemen - November 26, 2019 at 12:26 PM



“ Today is October 18, 2019 and I just heard about Tom passing away. I met my friend and mentor back in 1978 when he partnered with my family in the Bay Marie restaurant in San Clemente, Ca. He was instrumental in helping me get accepted into the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He used to tell me that he was going to get a \"big toy\" in Salt Lake City with two other people (John Williams and Tom Sieg). What a toy! I was with him for 5 years as Chef of Market Street Grill from opening day til my departure to Southern Ca. During that time I learned more about operating a business with him than I learned during my time at the Culinary Institute. After leaving his mentorship, I opened one restaurant in San Diego County (Operating still) and three more in Colorado. I could always here him in the back of my mind and always made sure I considered \"perseived value\" for the guest. One last thing I always did was to check the dining room and make sure the \"salt and pepper shakers were filled\". My success was because of him. I wish now I would have told him. I wish he knew what a model he was for me.He really was a giant in the food service industry and also in my life. Thank you, Tommy. Rest well. You did everything you need to do and then some.

Yale Espoy - October 18, 2019 at 07:11 PM



“ Tom Guinney was a great restaurateur, businessman and friend, and his upbeat attitude and enthusiasm enriched all of us who knew him. Together with John Williams and Tom Sieg, he transformed forever Salt Lake City's restaurant scene. To have the last of these three amigos gone is a great loss for our city and state. May Tom's commitment to excellence continue at the Market Street restaurants for many years to come. To Tom's family - my condolences at the loss of a great father and a great man.

Harris H. Simmons - September 22, 2019 at 03:30 PM



“ Alex, I can only imagine the grief you are experiencing at this time. I was saddened to hear of your Fathers passing. As a neighbor across the street on 9th avenue Tom and I had many talks on the sidewalks and the times He would solicit my help to drive you and Victoria to school when He was busy. There are many Guinneys but only one Tom. May you find solace in your memories of your Father, Mother and Victoria. Tom will be remembered by many many friends and associates. May you be blessed with strength to cope with your profound loss.

Joe Barnes - September 17, 2019 at 01:14 PM



“ Dear Alex: I used to work for your Dad, as a GM for the Grill, Oyster Bar, Broiler , Cafe Pierpont & Baci. I had the honor of knowing him when you & your sister were born. Seeing his smiling & proud face talking about his girls.\r\n\r\nYour dad was a true force in the restaurant/hospitality industry. \r\n\r\nI enjoyed the trust of running many of his restaurants And the space he gave me to be creative. We definitely had our differences & own ideas over the years but behind the scenes we worked it out & added to, at least, my growth in life.\r\n\r\nAt my initial interview he shared his goal & dream was to have restaurants endure in a community for thirty years & provide good service and food. If he could create that he would accomplish his professional goals & dreams. He did that & more & I applaud him & honor his work ethic & commitment.\r\n\r\nI also had the pleasure & experience of knowing your mother & I definitely witnessed their adventurous & fun loving side, especially during our month long trip to Italy for research prior to opening Baci.\r\n\r\nHe loved & cherished you dearly and always shared that with the people he met.\r\n\r\nCongratulations on your babygirl & I am so happy Tom got to experience being a grandfather.\r\n\r\nI am sorry I cannot attend his service as I live in another state and just learned of his passing but my thought & heartfelt wishes will be upfront in my mind .\r\n\r\nTo honor him I will give a donation to the Boxer Rescue in his name.

Lenore Becker - September 16, 2019 at 11:37 AM



“ We are very sorry for your loss. He will be missed.

Henries Dry Cleaners - September 16, 2019 at 09:57 AM



“ I worked with the Salt Lake County Board of Health in the late 90\'s when Tom was very actively leading the Board. He was my first role model in how public agencies can and do make a difference in the community they serve. Gastronomy was always one of the dependable donors for non-profit fundraisers too. He did a lot of good work all while being a kind and professional person. My condolences to his many friends and family.

Julie Newland - September 14, 2019 at 09:55 AM



“ I was deeply saddened to hear of Tom’s passing. I couldn’t count the hours of joy, excitement and fun I spent in his restaurants over the years. The Oyster Bar in Downtown Salt Lake was always in my mind my favorite restaurant in the world. I never had a meal there I didn’t like. The food was always wonderful thanks to Tom, Tom and John. That restaurant was part of the fabric of my life for a period of 25 years for both lunch and dinner. It was where I met with people to conduct business and have fun with friends. Let’s meet at the Oyster Bar, was something I said hundreds of times while living in Salt Lake. Thank you, thank you, thank you Tom for the joy and happiness your restaurants have always brought to my life. The memories will never be forgotten nor will you and your kindness to me over the years. Thank you again for influencing my life in such a positively wonderful way. Love and joy are what you added to my life and i can’t think of anything better a person could share with others.

Barry Ellsworth - September 14, 2019 at 05:36 AM



“ Dear, dear Tom. A true gentleman, generous, kind, FUNNY, genuine and sweet. I met Tom in 2002 while managing the re-election campaign for Rocky Anderson. Tom would generously treat our hungry and oft overworked staff to gallons of his famous clam chowder and baci rolls. We remained friends for years. I could always count on Tom’s wise council and generosity. We profoundly will miss him.

Sheryl Ivey - September 13, 2019 at 07:29 AM



“ Dearest Alex: \nThis is Mary Holbrook-Henriksen, I am the Mother of Shanton Marie Browne and Ashley Jackson. I am writing you on behalf of my entire family. \nWe want to send you our thoughts and prayers, and to let you know how much we have missed you in our lives.. I am here to help you. If you need anything at all. I know how hard it is to lose a Father.

Mary Holbrook-Henriksen - September 12, 2019 at 09:49 PM



“ One of the greatest leaders of Utah, and instrumental in the 2002 Olympic Winter Games bid and revitalization of downtown Salt Lake City.

Craig E. Peterson - September 12, 2019 at 04:13 PM



“ What a shock. I guess I believed that Tom was always somewhere helping someone in the most amazingly profound way possible. We all felt he was our closest friend. We all are so so many. He meant so much to so many that were it enumerated it would be staggering. It makes me sad that I didnt know you were sick, Tom. You had no idea how loved, how respected, how profoundly influential you were in this state. I wished I had thanked you one more time before you left. Love you. Goodbye my friend.

Nancy Workman - September 12, 2019 at 03:53 PM



“ As long term friends & admirers, we wish to add some of TOM & gastronomy partners extra outreach & philanthropy! He served on the board of Guadalupe Scool, throwing some of the BEST MOST MEMORABLE & successful fundraising events in the schools history. Always the perfectionist in quality & ambience, it was not always easy to live up to his standards or to anticipate his unique surprises. We adapted & and were always happy w results- and then he would send me flowers free the events turmoil passed happily! The schools students benefited greatly from Their generosity and Tom's endless work and energy to pull things off and in a grande manner . Plus gUADALUPE is teachers will never forget his showing of respect and appreciation on teacher appreciation day with several of Gastronomy's most marvelous desserts sent to the school for them to enjoy . That too stays in memory as his generos legacy. He was a force of nature! Truly a good man contributing to giving low income children & Immigrants a chance to succeed through individually tailored educational programs @ Guadalupe Schools. Tom inspired fellow board members and others to take on unique ways to honor Suzanne Weiss the consummate educated who made GUADALUPE such a unique program . It was he who arranged to have a Noyle portrait placed in the entry so see you then would get some of the recognition she so richly deserved . He never quit caring about the important effect on Guadalupe is students both children and adults. As a restaurant tour he employed many immigrants and perhaps refugees giving them positive work experiences in their successful and beautiful restaurants . Tom abounded with apparent endless energy to give back to his community. He was also so grateful for & proud of his daughters, full of coiners about their accomplishments and achievements . My husband and I will lovingly recall being the recipients of his hospitality and fabulous meals with him at the oyster bar and others . How this wider Community will miss him and his ongoing endeavors in service to others . Thank you Tom for your life so well lived . Sincerest condolences to your daughter and her family . Great you had the gift of a Granddaughter to carry some of your DNA!

Freddie & Mark nebeker - September 12, 2019 at 01:18 PM



“ Admired this good man! Allene and Bob Fowler

Allene Fowler - September 12, 2019 at 10:00 AM



“ What a mighty good man you were Tom. You hired me and I will never forget the passion you had for the beast the beast being the restaurant industry. Thank you for the life lessons of hard work, the integrity you taught, your bar of excellence was held high. Working for Gastronomy has helped in my life in more ways than I thought possible. May you know how many lives you have touched. Grace be yours and peace to your family and friends. Say hello to those loved ones you will be celebrating with.

Amy Mayne Robinson - September 12, 2019 at 09:49 AM