



Thomas A. Garst

December 4, 1931 - October 11, 2024

Thomas A. Garst passed away on October 11, 2024 after suffering a severe fall while at home. Tom was born on December 4, 1931 in El Paso, Texas, and spent his early childhood on the family farm in Terre Haute, Indiana. In 1942, the family moved to Merced, California. After graduating from high school, Tom enlisted in the Navy and served aboard the battleship Iowa during the Korean War. His service took him both to Korea and through the Panama Canal to the east coast and Europe. Tom loved to tell stories about his time onboard the Iowa and the fact that he was one of the youngest to make rank. Returning home, Tom completed his degree in Physics from the California State University, Fresno with further study of this subject at the University of California, Berkeley. During this time, he also met and married Betty Decker. Tom worked as a physicist for several years at Bell Labs and he and Betty moved to New Jersey for his work. Later, Tom moved to the Lawrence Radiation Laboratories in Livermore, California, participating in cutting-edge scientific research projects. In 1961, Tom and Betty moved to Fresno to be closer to family. Tom began work as a salesman for Contractors Equipment and Supply Company (CESCO), taking over the company in 1971 and winning numerous awards for his sales performance as an equipment distributor. Tom and Betty raised two children, Dan and Heidi, moving to Clovis and into the country so that they could enjoy raising their children, dogs and horses. Tom and Betty opened a small western wear store on the side for fun which lasted for several years. Tom ultimately retired from small business

in the early 2000s to devote all his time to his passion for riding horses, motorcycles and building projects in his shop. During his lifetime, he constructed all manner of metal and woodworking projects as well as welding trailers and other items. He was famous for his “bear chairs” and rocking horses for children and horsedrawn carts. Tom built the barn he used for a workshop (along with some rather large birthday BBQ’s). The huge barn still stands on the property where he and his wife lived for over four decades on Del Rey Avenue east of Clovis. Tom was passionate about riding horses and taking them on moonlight rides with the kids and numerous pack trips in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. He took pride in the fact that he crossed the Sierras 4 times on horseback to arrive on the Eastern side. Tom would say that when the price of hay went up, he sold his horses and bought a BMW road bike and crossed the US on that twice. Tom was a longtime member of First Presbyterian Church of Fresno and loved the FPC family. Tom outlived his three siblings and is survived by his wife of 66 years, Betty Garst, his son Dan along with daughter Heidi and her husband Skip, grandchildren Michael and Aaron and their wives Ally and Jenn and great grandchildren Colton, Mason, Blaire and Blakely. Tom lived a full life and will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him during his great adventure! There will be a service for Tom on December 7 th at 10am at First Presbyterian Church of Fresno, 1540 M Street, Fresno, CA 93721. Donations in leu of flowers may be made to the First Presbyterian Church of Fresno or the Salvation Army.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

DEC 7. 10:00 AM (PT)

First Presbyterian Church
1540 M Street
Fresno, CA 93721