

**Alter, Thomas Behr (04/15/1938 –06/28/1995).** Tom was born in Davenport, Iowa and attended its public schools before transferring to Shattuck School in Faribault, MN, from which he was graduated in 1956. He attended the University of Wisconsin his freshman year and then transferred to Grinnell College where he majored in history and economics. At Grinnell, he lived in Dibble Basement and was active in theatre, KGRW and intramural sports. In addition, he was a self-appointed cheerleader at all football games and was a founding member of the Black Friars, an informal social group dedicated to having fun.

Tom married Catherine Foster ('60) on June 25, 1961 at the home of her parents in Silver Spring, MD. The couple lived in Chicago for two years, he working at Electric Supply Corporation and she as Special Events Director for Carson Pirie Scott & Co. They then returned to Davenport where Tom joined the family business, Alter & Sons, an industrial equipment and supply wholesaler. Tom was President of the firm until he sold it in 1990. In 1994 he joined with his son Stephen in opening G.K. Industries in Tipton, IA, where they produced porcelain-making materials. Tom and Catherine were members of Temple Emanuel in Davenport for 30 years.

Living life to the fullest, Tom had many eclectic interests and passions. Foremost, he loved sailing and could be found every Sunday afternoon (March through November) in his latest racing dinghy on the Mississippi River above Lock 12 competing with the Davenport Sailing Club. He constructed four boats from scratch by hand, some more successful than others.

Tom enjoyed listening to his extensive collection of jazz, folk and symphonic music—first records, then reel-to-reel, cartridges, and finally CDs. He also liked to spend time in his dark room processing his latest film and playing with his Bessemer enlarger; through the years he became a notable photographer.

Tom read every issue of *Foreign Affairs* cover to cover and would debate anyone at any time on any foreign relations topic. During the Vietnam War era, many local young men came to sit with him on the front porch and talk through their options regarding the armed services; Tom was a good listener.

He was fascinated by technology and was the original gadget guy. He had a first run Apple II computer and was the first in Davenport to own a car phone. He worked pro bono with many inventors over the years to produce prototypes and patent applications, some of which actually made it to production.

But Tom will be remembered most by family and friends as a storyteller. His ability to adopt any dialect and remember hundreds if not thousands of punch lines enabled him to entertain an audience for hours. He is missed by everyone who knew him.

Tom died suddenly of a heart attack on June 25, 1995 at age 56 in his home in Iowa City, IA. He is buried in the Alter family plot at Mt. Nebo Cemetery, Davenport, IA. Tom was survived by

Catherine and their three children: Sarah Behr (b. 1962), Susan Penn (b. 1964) and son Stephen Louis (b. 1966).

By Catherine Foster Alter