

HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY TOM WILEY!

Tom Wiley was born in 1923 in Columbus, Ohio. His life journey has taken him from serving in World War II as a pilot, to building a family and a successful career in Pittsburgh, to an interest in the history of the North Hills and involvement with the North Hills Genealogists. Beginning in the early days of NHG in the 1990s, Tom served as Vice President for two years, then as chair of the Nominating Committee, and after that worked for four years as the Programs Chair.

In 1941, just a few months after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Tom enlisted in the US Army Air Corps, attended flight school, and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant. Assigned as a B-17 co-pilot with the 15th Air Force in Foggia, Italy, Tom completed 35 missions over Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Yugoslavia, and northern Italy. One mission particularly stood out, when his crew encountered severe weather conditions and narrowly avoided crashing into a mountain. Tom transferred to the Mediterranean Air Transport Service and flew C-47 and C-46 aircraft, performing vital transport duties such as delivering mail, transporting military personnel, and delivering supplies. His experiences included landing a plane loaded with tank parts in a small grass field in Yugoslavia, where he had to navigate past fences, tall trees, and even a cathedral steeple. On November 6, 1945, he transitioned to inactive duty and eventually served in the Air Force Reserves until his honorable discharge on May 13, 1955.

Just before leaving for military duty, Tom married Mary Norman in a small, rural Episcopal Church in Haymarket, Virginia. They settled in Columbus, Ohio, where Tom resumed his studies at Ohio State University. In 1948, he graduated and subsequently worked on a large dairy farm in north-central Ohio before moving to Madison, Wisconsin, to pursue a Master's degree in Agriculture. During this time, he worked on fellowship projects sponsored by U.S. Steel Corporation, unknowingly foreshadowing his future career. Tom and Mary welcomed four children into their lives: James in 1948, Janet in 1950, John in 1954, and Joseph in 1956. Over the years, they experienced the joy of becoming grandparents, great-grandparents, and even great-great-grandparents.

In 1960, Tom relocated to Pittsburgh and embarked on a 22-year career with U.S. Steel. Mary's passion for genealogy and an intense interest in the history of Pittsburgh's North Hills (she was editor of the North Hills News Record) helped to spark Tom's own interest and eventual involvement in leadership roles with North

Hills Genealogists. Mary was often a speaker at NHG meetings, sharing her knowledge of the North Hills.

Tragedy struck when Mary passed away on her 77th birthday in 1999, after battling Parkinson's disease for many years. In the midst of grieving, Tom found solace in sharing his loss with Joan Dawson, who had recently lost her husband Al. They connected and supported each other through phone conversations and, after two years, began dating. Tom and Joan have been together for over twenty-two years, finding love and companionship in their shared experiences of loss and resilience.

Tom Wiley's life reflects the indomitable spirit of those who served during World War II. From his heroic missions as a pilot to his dedication as a husband, father, and later in his successful career, he embodies the values of bravery, resilience, and service. Tom's ability to find solace and forge a meaningful connection with Joan speaks to his resilience and capacity for love even in the face of adversity. HAPPY 100TH TOM, FROM THE NORTH HILLS GENEALOGISTS!

[Want to learn more about Tom and watch him share his WWII and Life Experiences? Go to our website at www.NorthHillsGenealogists.org/about.php and click on "NHG In the News"]