



## Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz

October 17, 1935 - December 14, 2023

Sir Thomas F. Zdanowicz – Papal Knight

FRANKFORT – Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz, age 88, passed away in peace and tranquility on Thursday, December 14, 2023, in the comfort and dignity of his home with his wife and loving family by his side.

Thomas was born in Utica on October 17, 1935, the first child of the late Frank Leo and Catherine Eva (Jecen) Zdanowicz. He was educated in local parochial schools, St. Stanislaus Elementary and Utica Catholic Academy High School. He went on to study at the New York Institute of Applied Arts and Sciences in Utica, the forerunner to Mohawk Valley Community College.

Tom answered the call to serve his country in the United States Air Force, training at Sampson A.F.B. and Technical School at Scott A.F.B., Illinois. He was then stationed at Kadena A.F.B, Okinawa, assigned to the 1962nd Airways and Air Communications Squadron with the 5th Air Force. This was during the height of the Cold War between China, Taiwan, and the United States. Okinawa served as the Central Communications Center for the entire Far East, and Tom took responsibility for maintaining the base's Air to Ground Communications Center, including the Control Tower and Air Route Traffic Control facilities. After two years, he was transferred back to the Air Training Command and returned to Scott Field, IL. as a Microwave Communications

Instructor.

While in the Air Force, Tom married his childhood sweetheart, the former Jeanne Ferrese on June 29, 1957, at St. Anthony of Padua Church in Utica. After a brief honeymoon, they returned to Illinois until Tom was honorably discharged from the Air Force in November of 1957.

Upon returning to Utica, and after a short stint at the General Electric, Radio Receiver Plant and the Wonder Bread Bakery Co., Tom was then employed at ROAMA for the U.S. Air Force as a Field Engineer, specializing in the repair and maintenance of Instrument Landing Systems (ILS). In this capacity, he traveled extensively to Air Bases throughout the northeastern United States, the Maritimes, Labrador, and Thule, Greenland.

When he and Jeanne Started their family, the travel demands of his job were more than he desired. Tom made a career change and became an Insurance Claims Investigator, a job he loved, and which was well suited to his outgoing personality. He trained for two years with the National Grange Mutual Insurance Co., and then worked for 22 years with Merchants Mutual Insurance Co., and for 15 years with the Utica National Insurance Group before his retirement in 1997. He was past President of the Utica Claims Association and a member of the International Insurance Arbitration Commission.

Tom and Jeanne were deeply in love and boasted that their marriage was made in heaven. Tom and his bride celebrated their 66th wedding anniversary this past year. They were especially proud of their two children, Tom, Jr. and Susan Maria, whom they loved dearly. Tom and Jeanne were involved with the Marriage Encounter Movement for many years as the "Executive Team Couple," sharing their love, their highs, and even their lows with hundreds of couples who were seeking to make their good marriages better. During that

time, they were members of the Covenant Community located at the Newman Center of Utica College. This involvement was a profound spiritual experience for Tom until the community disbanded.

He and his Jeanne loved all sorts of music and theater. From line dancing to country western music, to the jitterbug, they enjoyed the arts in all its forms. They were members of the Utica Broadway Theatre League, known as Broadway Utica, from its inception in 1957, and still hold their front row seats. Tom starred in the Paduan Players production of "The Music Man" in the role of Harold Hill. In a review of the show, the Observer-Dispatch's theater critic's headline read "Tom Zdanowicz IS the Music Man." He played various roles in the production of "My Fair Lady," and he had the adult lead in the Utica College/City of Utica production of "Take Me Along," a role that was originally written for Jackie Gleason. Tom studied classical piano at the Parker School of Music, and for many years sang with the Hamilton College Oratorical Society.

Tom gave back to his community in so many ways. He was past President and a Board Member of the Utica Jaycees, and for his dedication he was honored and named Jaycee International Senator #11218. Tom's biography is included in the 1970 edition of "Outstanding Young Men of America." He served on the Board of Directors of Your Neighbors, the Association for Developmentally Disabled Children, Mayor Frank Dulan's City Beautification Committee, and was appointed to the Urban Renewal Committee by Mayor Michael Caruso. He taught a practical politics program for the Utica Chamber of Commerce and ran for the office of the Utica School Board and for the President of the Common Council in 1972. Proud of his Polish heritage, he was also a member of the Kopernik Association and the Polish Community Club.

Tom volunteered for many years with the Peacemaker Program and served as its President and on its Board of Directors. While with this organization, he was made a Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) by Justice Frank Cook and represented abused and neglected children in the Herkimer and Oneida County Family Court Systems. He also served them as an arbitrator for the New York State Lemon Law.

Tom was a Fourth Degree Member of the Knights of Columbus #189. In 1993, he became a member of St. Anthony of Padua Commandry #385, Knights of St. John International, a semi-military fraternal Order of Catholic Gentlemen. Tom served that Order as Commandry President, Commander of the Military Rank, New York Grand President, and was elected for life as the Supreme Secretary/Adjutant General with the rank of Lt. General. He retired from that office in 2020 and was still active as Supreme Secretary-Emeritus. He was exemplified in all five degrees of the Order, the last being the Noble and Exalted Degree of the Holy Cross. He was also honored by his Commandry with the "Jewel of Honor." Tom worked closely with members throughout the world and visited Commandries in London, England; Hamburg, Germany; and traveled throughout Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. During those trips, he met and dined with the President of Liberia, Secretary of State and Speaker of the Senate in Nigeria, and a Supreme Court Justice and Secretary of Tourism in Ghana. Throughout his travels, a visit to the local bishop, cardinal, or the papal nuncio was a must. On his first trip to Nigeria, Tom was made High Chief of the Igbo Tribe and given the name Ichie Ezedioramma 1, which means "wisest advisor to the king."

Tom was a deeply religious man. Originally a member of St. Stanislaus B.M. Parish, he later joined the parish of St. Anthony of Padua Roman Catholic Church, where he served as a lector and extraordinary minister of the Holy Eucharist. For 25 years, he attended yearly retreats at Christ the King Retreat Center with members of St. Anthony's parish. He completed the Diocese of

Syracuse's Formation for Ministry Program and was commissioned as a lay minister by the Most Rev. Bishop Thomas Costello in 1984. He was a representative to the Diocesan Parish Council and served his parish as a member of its Parish Council and as a Trustee.

Tom was most proud of the honor bestowed upon him and his Jeanne by Pope Francis on November 23, 2013. The Vatican proclaimed them as Knight and Lady of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher. The investiture was exemplified at St. Patrick's Cathedral in Manhattan by their Eminences Timothy Cardinal Dolan and Edward Cardinal Egan of the Archdiocese of New York, Eden Cardinal O'Brien (Pope Francis' legate to the order), and six other Bishops in attendance. The evening was made even more special because it was witnessed by their children and their spouses, their grandson, and clergy from their parish church. In October 2021, Tom was promoted to the rank of Knight Commander with Star at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Tom and Jeanne travelled to many places together - from the oldest cities of Europe to the islands of Hawaii, to the golden beaches of Jamaica and most notably, the ancient city of Jerusalem.

Tom viewed life as a continual adventure. And each adventure was eagerly anticipated, thoroughly enjoyed, and relished over and over again as he shared each adventure with those he loved.

Tom believed that "Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a pretty and well-preserved body. But rather, in the end, one should skid in broadside in a cloud of smoke, thoroughly used up, totally worn out, and loudly proclaiming 'Wow! What a ride!'"

Tom leaves to mourn him his beloved wife, Jeanne "Du"; his son and daughter-in-law, Tom and Rhonda Zdanowicz; his daughter and son-in-law,

Susan and John "J.K." Klein; four grandchildren, Dana and William True, Candice Barefoot, Kevin and Kelsey Barefoot, and Jecen Zdanowicz; nine great-grandchildren, Brooklynne True, Ariana and Jasmir Krupic, Brayden True, Elicia Barefoot, Nautika Morales, Takice Johnson, Wyatt Parker Barefoot, and June Raegan Barefoot; a brother and sister-in-law, Francis and Sylvia Zdanowicz; sisters-in-law and brother-in-law, Sharon Zdanowicz, Kathleen and Charles "Budd" Osborn, and Donna Ferrese; and many loving nieces, nephews, great-nieces, great-nephews, and cousins. Tom also leaves some very special friends, his "Merchants Girls," Karen Burton, Wendy Seeger, Marianne Czupryna, and Clemmy Vivacqua; and his Wednesday morning coffee buddies, Guy Cristallo, Ron Weise, and the late Joseph Ruffule. (You are going to have to solve the world's problems without Tom's help now.)

He was predeceased by his parents; brother, Joseph Zdanowicz; father-in-law and mother-in-law, Frank and Rose Ferrese; and his in-laws, Marie and Fred J. Grimaldi, Jr., Thomas Ferrese, and Rosemarie and Frank Percacciante.

Tom's family would especially like to acknowledge Hospice and Palliative Care, Inc. and the healthcare workers for their compassionate care for Tom.

To perpetuate Tom's love for his church, please consider memorial contributions in his memory to St. Anthony and St. Agnes Church, by mail to 422 Tilden Ave., Utica NY, 13501; envelopes will also be available at the service.

Visitation will be held on Wednesday, December 27, 2023, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at St. Anthony and St. Agnes Church, 422 Tilden Ave., Utica NY, 13501. The family will remain until all have been greeted. Members of the Knights of St. John's Commandries will hold their ritualistic services at the conclusion of

the viewing. Thomas' Mass of Christian Burial and Celebration of Life will commence on Thursday, December 28, 2023 at 12:00 p.m. at St. Anthony and St. Agnes Church with Military Honors conferred by the U.S. Air Force. Interment will take place in St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Cemetery at the convenience of the family.

"Deus lo vult." ~ "God wills it"

The Lord bless you and keep you "Du," Tom, Dad, Papa, Grandpa, "Unc," General.

For those who were unable to attend Tom's Mass of Christian Burial and Celebration of Life it may be viewed at <https://t2videoprod.video/TZdanowiczFS>.

# Cemetery Details

## **St. Stanislaus Bishop & Martyr Cemetery**

Whitesboro, NY

# Tribute Wall

AT

“ *Aude TONOU lit a candle in memory of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz*



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**Aude TONOU** - January 28 at 07:18 PM

JS

“ *So sorry for your loss. Tom was a pleasure to work with (Utica National). He always had a smile, words of wisdom and could make anyone laugh. I am glad our paths crossed. My heart goes out to Jeanne and the family.*

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**JoAnne Securra** - January 01, 2024 at 11:15 AM

MN

“ *Tom and family,*

*I know this is a very difficult time, but my thoughts and prayers are with you and your family. May his soul rest in peace, Michele Nicoletta*

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**Michele Nicoletta** - December 28, 2023 at 10:39 AM

MS

“ *JEANNE AND FAMILY so sorry to learn that Tom has passed. He was a good friend to my dad and our family. I know he is with my dad and the discussions must be wild. My dad thought of him like a younger brother always trying to give him sage advice and Tom would give him the younger perspective. So sorry for your great loss.*

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**Maria DeCola Salamida** - December 27, 2023 at 04:17 PM

JM

“ *Sending condolences to the Zdanowicz family from the family of Margret Montanaro ... God's Speed ...*

Joseph A Montanaro - December 27, 2023 at 11:14 AM



“ *Medium Dish Garden was purchased for the family of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz.*



December 27, 2023 at 10:41 AM

JJ

“ *Sue and john we send our condolences to you and your family i am sure your father will be missed by all may he rest in peace John & Phyllis*

john gottuso jr - December 26, 2023 at 01:08 PM



“ *Every once in a while you meet and get to know someone extraordinary - who does something remarkable for you personally, that you can never forget or repay. Early one morning in the 1990's our young daughter managed to unlock our front door and walk outside and down the sidewalk in our neighborhood, while Pam and I were still asleep. I awoke just as a heard the door close behind her and sleepily walked into the living room. Our neighbor had seen her and came to our door, then pointed her out to me. She was by then a full half-block away, and I ran barefoot down a wet sidewalk in November to retrieve her. I thanked him profusely and told him he saved her life. It takes only one person to see something and care enough to say something. And that was Mr. Tom Zdanowicz....*

Bruce Youmans - December 26, 2023 at 12:57 PM

BO

“ My condolences Sue, your mother and the entire family. Sue reading the things your father has done and accomplished amazed me. He had so many achievements in his life. He had a wonderful life and I guarantee he had a Golden Pass to thru Gates of Heaven. I will keep you all and your father in my prayers. 🙏💕

**Bobby Ollerenshaw** - December 26, 2023 at 12:31 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz.



December 25, 2023 at 08:00 AM

LF

“ Lynette Franco lit a candle in memory of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz



**Lynette Franco** - December 24, 2023 at 12:35 PM



“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz.



December 24, 2023 at 12:08 PM

JK

“ I will cherish the memories and laughter forever. You were my go to guy and as you always said I was "Your Man". Rest in Peace, Love you Pop Z, JK

John Klein - December 24, 2023 at 11:57 AM

BT

“ I remember Tom and Jeanne very well from St. Anthony's Church. I never knew he was part of my son's extended family. Bill, this is Dad, and I'm very sorry for your loss, and Dana's. I don't know how to reach you. I love you and miss you. I hope and pray every one is well otherwise. Hope to hear from you soon. Love, Dad.

Bill True - December 24, 2023 at 09:28 AM

JN

“ I was a member with Tom in the Utica Jaycees and then a coworker at Utica National Ins. Co. He was a complete gentleman and friendly to all. He will be missed by so many.

John Scala NC - December 24, 2023 at 08:32 AM



“ Crystal Cross Bouquet was purchased for the family of Mr. Thomas F. Zdanowicz.



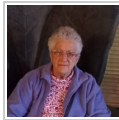
December 23, 2023 at 01:48 PM

CZ

“ *My sincerest condolences to the family Tom lived a great life. I do not have many memories of Tom but the fondest memory I have is at my cousin Joe Zdanowicz's home. Tom, Frank, Joe and my father Chuck Zbytniewski were sitting in the back yard drinking beer at a cookout. The laughter was VERY loud. They were a bit buzzed having a great time. God bless you Chuck Zbytniewski*

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**chuck zbytniewski** - December 20, 2023 at 11:06 AM



*My most recent fond memory was our pilgrimage to the Holy Land and our times at Theology Uncorked. Jeanne, please accept my condolences. ,over Penny*

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**Penny Mahar** - December 28, 2023 at 09:01 PM