

MA '66 #

Thomas Koppenheffer



February 6, 2015

Thomas Koppenheffer died Friday, February 6, 2015, after a struggle with cancer of the larynx. He was 72 years old.

Tom, who grew up in the hills of Central Pennsylvania, became an immunologist and a passionate supporter of undergraduate science education. He was the longtime chair of the department of biology at Trinity University in San Antonio, where he was dedicated to his students and their research, and he inspired many to go on to careers in immunology, biochemistry, and medicine.

Tom always had an interest in the natural world. His passion for fishing and trapping and his inquisitive nature led him to major in biology at Bloomsburg State Teachers College and then pursue an M.A. at Williams College and Ph.D. at Boston University.

His career spanned enormous advances in the field of biology, from the first days of human organ transplantation to gene sequencing. Through it all, his love of laboratory experimentation never wavered. For years, he kept a flock of pigeons, which lived on the roof of Trinity's science building; he and his students studied the pigeons to gain insight into the development of the immune system.

Tom's involvement in the international community of immunologists led to travel all over the world, which was one of his greatest pleasures. Presenting his findings at conferences connected him to scientific colleagues equally enthusiastic about their work.

Tom was a devoted father. He never missed a baseball practice, let alone a baseball game, often providing vocal encouragement from the bleachers. Intensely proud of his children and grandchildren, he relished their accomplishments, whether it be sitting up, learning to read or riding a bike.

Tom is survived by his wife Julie Koppenheffer, his sons Michael and Alex Koppenheffer, and grandchildren Minnie, Iris, Rowan, Miles, and Selah Koppenheffer.

A memorial service will be held at Trinity University's Center for the Sciences and Innovation Room 448 at 4 PM on March 27. Donations in his memory can be made to Trinity University Biology Department for research in biology and biochemistry.



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