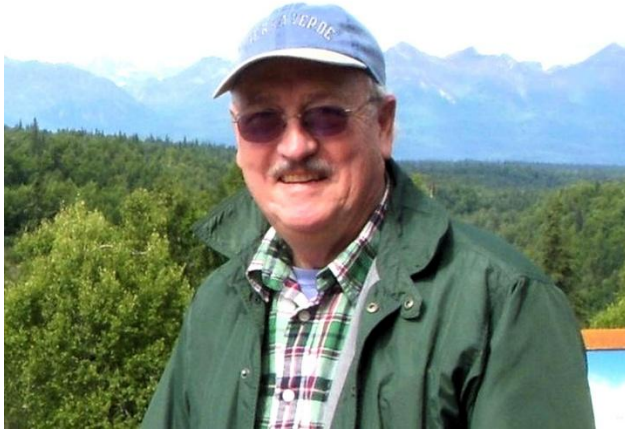


Thomas William Merrick obituary



Thomas (“Tom”) William Merrick was born on May 11, 1939, in Omaha, Nebraska, to Donald Merrick and Rosalie Merrick (née Cusick), the oldest of four children. After Tom came his brother Jim, then his sister Mary Margaret, and finally the youngest of the family, his brother Mike. Tom remained close to his siblings throughout his life, especially in his later years.

Early on, Tom learned the value of studying the classics, often recalling that needing to study his Greek flashcards would frequently excuse him from doing chores. He attended Creighton Preparatory High School, where his scholarship was recognized and rewarded. At the University of Pennsylvania, he earned his Ph.D. in Economics, developing a lifelong focus on the relationship between demographic change and economic development.

Based in Washington, D.C. for much of his career, Tom became an influential voice in the field of population and development. Early in his career he worked at the U.S. Department of State as an economist for the Agency for International Development 1968-1971, administering aid to Latin America. He went on to hold teaching and research appointments at institutions including Georgetown University, the University of Pennsylvania, George Washington University, and spent four years teaching at the Federal University of Minas Gerais in Brazil. Over the course of his career, he gained field experience in more than a dozen countries, bringing a practical, on-the-ground perspective to his work.

Tom later served as President of the Population Reference Bureau, where he helped expand the organization’s role as a trusted source of data and analysis on global demographic trends, including population growth, fertility, family planning, and public health. From 1992 to 2001, he worked at the World Bank as a senior advisor on population and reproductive health, contributing to programs aimed at improving health outcomes and reducing poverty in developing countries, particularly through advancing family planning and women’s health initiatives.

After the World Bank, Tom continued teaching and mentoring and served as a consultant and advisor to international organizations, including the World Bank and the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). He also served on boards and in advisory roles for a range of institutions, including the International Women's Health Coalition, the U.S. Agency for International Development, UNFPA, the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Hewlett Foundation, the American Public Health Association, and the National Academy of Sciences.

Throughout his career, Tom was known for his ability to bridge disciplines—bringing together economics, demography, and public health—and for his commitment to evidence-based policy. Colleagues and students remember him as intelligent, fair, generous with his time, and deeply kind.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Tom was a devoted husband, family member, and friend. He met his wife, Elaine Murphy, in 1987 when they worked together at the Population Reference Bureau—Tom as its newly appointed president and Elaine as Director of International Programs. Tom is survived by his beloved wife, Elaine Murphy; his stepsons, Steven Murphy and David Murphy (and his wife, Avigale Cayaba-Murphy); his step-granddaughter, Brianna Cayaba Castillo; his siblings, James (Jim) Merrick (Terese Merrick), Mary Margaret Berendzen (widow of Harry Berendzen), and Michael (Mike) Merrick (Catherine Merrick); and many nieces, nephews, and friends. He was predeceased by his parents, Rosalie Merrick (née Cusick) and Donald Merrick of Omaha, Nebraska.

In his personal life, Tom was as engaged and thoughtful as he was in his work. He was an avid reader—especially of history and mystery novels—and enjoyed tennis and bicycling. After retiring in 2010 and relocating to St. Petersburg, Florida, he embraced an active lifestyle, swimming and riding his bike daily. He also loved to cook and was known as the family's chef.

Tom's life was marked by intellectual curiosity, integrity, generosity, and kindness. He made lasting contributions not only to his field but to the many people whose lives he touched—as a mentor, colleague, and friend. Those who knew him will remember his warmth, integrity, and the quiet but lasting impact he had through his work. A family celebration of Tom's life will be planned at a future date.

Donations may be made in Tom's memory to Save the Children and to the Population Reference Bureau.