



Thomas "Tom" Bray

January 7, 1935 - March 23, 2026

Thomas "Tom" Bray, age 91, passed away unexpectedly on March 23rd following a routine outpatient medical procedure.

Born on January 7, 1935, in Sioux City, Iowa, he lived a life marked by integrity, faith, philanthropy and was a man of intelligence and unwavering honesty.

In 1941, at the age of six, he began his first newspaper route, marking the start of a lifelong dedication to hard work, responsibility and savings.

As a small child Tom loved to read. He visited the library weekly with his mother, enjoying books under a tree in the summer or indoors when the weather kept him inside. His sharp mind and curiosity made reading stimulating, and that passion stayed with him throughout his life.

Tom's love of baseball was evident from a young age. As a youngster, he spent countless hours playing the game, and as a teenager, he shared that passion by coaching boys' baseball for the Sioux City Park District. His dedication and talent later took him to the minor leagues, where he continued to pursue the sport he loved so much throughout his life.

Tom attended the University of South Dakota, where he joined the Alpha Tau

Omega Fraternity. The summer after his freshman year, financial hardship led him to enlist in the U.S. Army, determined to complete his education through the G.I. Bill.

Tom served in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. While on a ship headed to Korea, an officer came aboard and called out three names—Tom's among them—and, due to his military occupational specialty, he was reassigned to Anchorage, Alaska. He spent two challenging years there during some of the coldest conditions on record, with temperatures reaching 60 degrees below zero and snowfall of 89 to 100 feet. Stationed in Alaska with Jim Landis, who would later become one of the greatest center fielders for the Chicago White Sox, Tom enjoyed playing baseball with him during the warmer months.

After returning from service, Tom resumed his studies at the University of South Dakota and was elected president of Alpha Tau Omega, exemplifying the leadership and dedication that defined his life. Tom graduated from University of South Dakota in 1959.

Tom's first job was in Chicago with U.S. Steel as an accountant . On October 26th, 1960, after the JFK Chicago parade he met the love of his life, Janis Bray, from Anderson, Indiana.

Tom pursued Janis, but she initially refused to go out with him—until her roommate mentioned seeing him standing on the steps of Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue. The next time Tom called, he said, “only dinner” and Janis agreed. They married on March 23rd, 1962, and were married for 64 years.

Tom was recruited from U.S. Steel to join the EJ & E Railroad. Tom was transferred to the marketing department where he built a long and successful career, serving in management for 36 years.

Throughout those years, he was also a devoted father who took immense pride in his two daughters, BethAnn and Susan. He was a “girl dad” before the term was even coined. He taught them to believe they could do anything a boy could do—and do it just as well, if not better. His daughters loved him deeply.

Tom was a family man and was always present for his wife of 64 years and his two daughters. He cherished his family more than anything, and they were the heart and meaning of his life.

Tom was a devoted, lifelong fan of the Chicago Cubs. His love for the Cubs began in his youth, when baseball was still segregated, and he remembered watching Jackie Robinson help change the game forever. Tom often recalled traveling with his father from Sioux City to Chicago to see the Brooklyn Dodgers play the Cubs—memories that stayed with him for a lifetime. Over the years, he followed legendary Cubs players such as Ernie Banks, Billy Williams, Ron Santo and Fergie Jenkins, further deepening his connection to the team.

A true highlight of Tom’s life was witnessing the Cubs win the 2016 World Series—a moment he had waited a lifetime to see, and one he was grateful to share while watching the game with his daughter BethAnn.

Tom was a devoted member and Elder of the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago Heights for 58 years, and attending Sunday services with his family was a deeply important part of his life.

Tom was the beloved husband of Janis Bray and a devoted father to BethAnn (née Bray) (David) Fitzgerald, and to his late daughter, Susan (nee Bray)

(Thomas) Staab. He was a cherished Papa to Kate and Jack Fitzgerald and Edward Staab.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Howard and Claire Bray, his sister, Fran (nee Bray) Chasson. He is survived by his cousin, Edgar Hardy; his nephews, Tom and Craig Haverley; and his niece, Susan Haverley.

In lieu of flowers, donations in Tom's memory may be made to The Salvation Army, an organization very dear to his heart.

<https://give.salvationarmyusa.org/campaign/763216/donate>

Visitation and Service

Sunday, April 12th, 2026

Kurtz Memorial Chapel (Frankfort)

65 Old Frankfort Way Frankfort, IL 60423

Visitation 1:00 p.m. and Service 2:30 p.m.

Military Burial Service

Monday, April 13th, 2026

Funeral procession will depart at 11:00 a.m. from Kurtz Memorial Chapel

65 Old Frankfort Way Frankfort, Illinois 60423

to

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery

20953 W. Hoff Road Elwood, IL 60421

12:00 p.m. military burial service

Cemetery Details

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery

20953 W. Hoff Road
Elwood, IL 60421

Previous Events

Visitation

APR 12. 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM (CT)

Kurtz Memorial Chapel (Frankfort)
65 Old Frankfort Way
P.O Box 1031
Frankfort, IL 60423
(708) 444-2266
info@heartlandmemorial.com
<https://www.heartlandmemorial.com/>

Funeral service

APR 12. 2:30 PM (CT)

Kurtz Memorial Chapel (Frankfort)
65 Old Frankfort Way
P.O Box 1031
Frankfort, IL 60423
(708) 444-2266
info@heartlandmemorial.com
<https://www.heartlandmemorial.com/>

Procession to Cemetery

APR 13. 11:00 AM (CT)

Kurtz Memorial Chapel (Frankfort)
65 Old Frankfort Way
P.O Box 1031
Frankfort, IL 60423
(708) 444-2266
info@heartlandmemorial.com
<https://www.heartlandmemorial.com/>

Committal service

APR 13. 12:00 PM (CT)

Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery
27034 S Diagonal Rd
Elwood, IL

Tribute Wall

TS

“ *Tom, Craig, and Sue. purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Thomas "Tom" Bray.*



Tom, Craig, and Sue. - April 09 at 06:44 PM