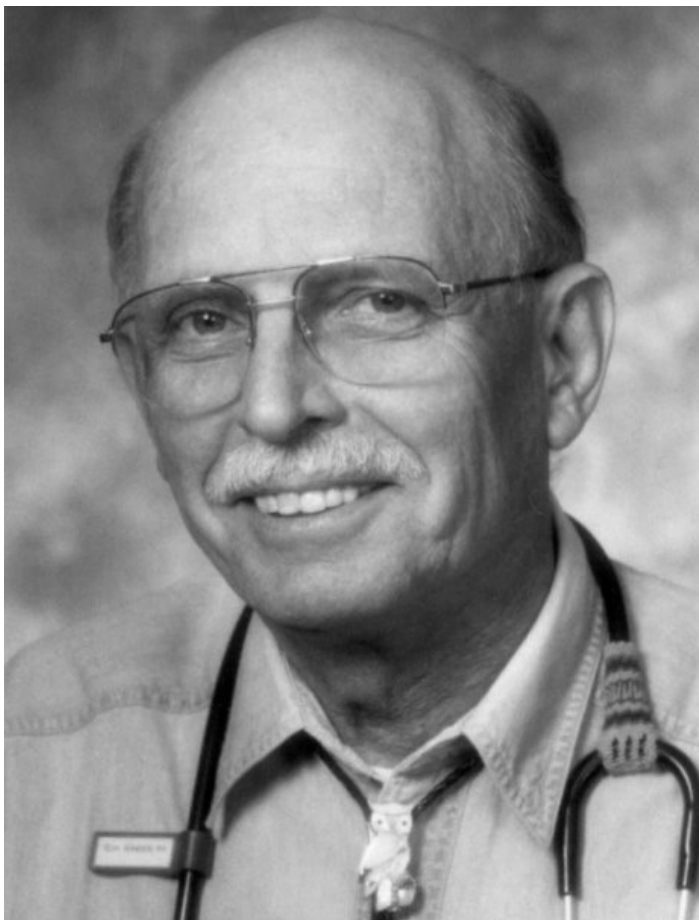


## In Memory of Thomas Richmond Harris, MD

Jill Koster



**Dr. Thomas Richmond Harris**, 88, passed away on May 19, 2022, while undergoing a surgical procedure in Riverside, California. He was surrounded by his family before the surgery.

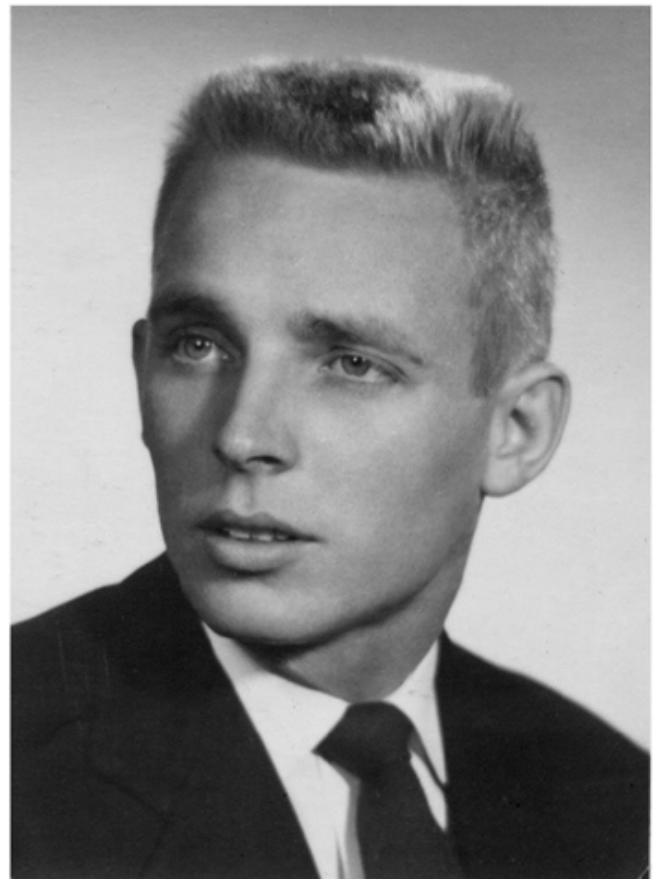
Tom was born in Long Beach, CA, on September 21, 1933, to **Richmond Ralph Harris** (born 1909 in Long Beach, CA) and **Ellen Crandell** (born 1911 in Ann Arbor, MI). As a young boy, he was diagnosed with severe asthma and a cat allergy, so his mother, a cat lover, sent him to a boarding school. Unable to return home on weekends or holidays, Tom was prone to self-pity and had a deep-seated fear of abandonment. But he channeled that energy into his activities; he learned camping and survival skills, could identify birds and plants by their species, took up building model airplanes and woodworking, and became an excellent swimmer.

A local newspaper once wrote about young Tom putting peanut butter on trees to lure animals near him on Christmas. As he matured, Tom became self-reliant and was a natural leader among his peers. In applying himself academically, Tom found that he excelled, building the confidence that would later propel him to success as a doctor and educator.



**NEONATOLOGY TODAY** is interested in publishing manuscripts from Neonatologists, Fellows, NNPs and those involved in caring for neonates on case studies, research results, hospital news, meeting announcements, and other pertinent topics.

Please submit your manuscript to: [LomaLindaPublishingCompany@gmail.com](mailto:LomaLindaPublishingCompany@gmail.com)



Tom obtained his BA in History in 1955 from Pomona College in Claremont, CA. While there, he spent a formative semester as an exchange student at the historically black Fisk University at the start of the Civil Rights Movement. In the summers, he worked as a firefighter and came to know the Southern Californian mountains and valleys like the back of his hand.

Primarily to please his mother, Tom attended Union Theological Seminary in New York City on a Rockefeller brother's fellowship from 1955 to 1957. But ultimately, Tom found the answers to his religious questions wanting, and so he left the seminary to pursue pre-med courses at Columbia University.

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***“Tom obtained his BA in History in 1955 from Pomona College in Claremont, CA. While there, he spent a formative semester as an exchange student at the historically black Fisk University at the start of the Civil Rights Movement.”***

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Tom was drafted into the Army in 1957 and served until his honorable discharge as a “Specialist 4” in 1963. While stationed in Germany, Tom learned German well enough to continue his pre-med studies at the University of the Saar in Saarbrücken and to obtain his MD magna cum laude in 1965 from the Free University of Berlin. The Berlin wall was erected shortly after he moved to the American sector of West Berlin, and Tom would later fondly recount helping smuggle personal items in and out of Communist-controlled East Berlin.

Tom interned in medicine in Augsburg, Germany, and Tucson,

AZ, from 1965 to 1968, before undertaking a pediatrics residency and a neonatology fellowship at Stanford University Hospital from 1968 to 1971.

During his lengthy career as a neonatologist, Tom taught and worked at the following institutions of higher education and medicine:

- **In Tucson, AZ:** Arizona Health Sciences Center, University Medical Center, The University of Arizona School of Medicine, and Tucson Medical Center (1971-1980);
- **In Salt Lake City, UT:** University of Utah College of Medicine, Primary Children's Medical Center, and University of Utah College of Nursing (1980-1985);
- **In Philadelphia, PA:** Temple University School of Medicine and University Hospital (1985-1987);
- **In Denver and Grand Junction, CO:** University of Colorado School of Medicine and St. Mary's Hospital (1987-1992); and
- **In Phoenix and Yuma, AZ:** various hospitals serviced by Neonatology Associates, Ltd., and Yuma Regional Medical Center (1992-2004).



Tom is credited with many innovative ways of saving babies, in-

cluding the transport to tertiary care centers of high-risk pregnant mothers and sick babies in rural areas. He gave hundreds of lectures on neonatal critical care and pulmonary physiology, and his talks received awards for their inventive use of visual aids consisting of diagrams Tom meticulously drew, photographs he took, and tables and charts illustrating data he painstakingly collected. Tom also published 28 scientific articles and five book chapters and served as editor or reviewer of many more.

In 1983 Tom wrote an open letter to then-Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD, on the proposed "Baby Doe Law" to defend and protect medical practitioners. From then on, Tom was frequently called on as a source for comment by journalists and medical publications addressing the subject. Tom also served as an expert witness in numerous malpractice and criminal cases involving the untimely death of newborns, usually in support of medical caregivers.



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*"In 1983 Tom wrote an open letter to then-Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, MD, on the proposed "Baby Doe Law" to defend and protect medical practitioners. From then on, Tom was frequently called on as a source for comment by journalists and medical publications addressing the subject."*

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Tom was dedicated to improving neonatal nurse practitioner programs wherever he worked. He was also instrumental in the development and FDA approval of the Bunnell high-frequency jet ventilator; his tireless efforts in gathering data, developing treatment strategies, and founding an annual international conference to exchange ideas for improving this ground-breaking technology have helped save over 200,000 infants to date.

As the recipient of numerous awards and honors, Tom will be remembered at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City as the namesake for the "Harris Care Team" in their Neonatal Critical Care program. He also received a "Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Children's Health and St. Joseph's Medical Centers in Phoenix, AZ.

Although medicine was his first love and prioritized above all else, Tom's personal life was notable too.

While stationed in Germany with the Army in 1959, he met and married a local pediatric nurse, **Irmgard Maria Harris** (nee: Sporer). Tom and Irmgard traveled Europe extensively: rolling their little VW bug through Italy, attending bullfights in Spain, and smuggling artwork out of Russia. Together they shared two children: **Michelle Elizabeth Goetz** (nee: Harris), who was born in Tucson, AZ, in 1967 and still resides there with her two children (**Aaron James Goetz**, 31, and **Tyler Mark Goetz**, 28); and **Mark Richmond Harris**, who was born in Tucson, AZ in 1972 and resides there as well.

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***"As the recipient of numerous awards and honors, Tom will be remembered at Primary Children's Hospital in Salt Lake City as the namesake for the "Harris Care Team" in their Neonatal Critical Care program."***

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and Utah and overseas, including Germany, Denmark, and New Zealand. When Pat was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, Tom spent years studying the illness and lovingly caring for her.



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Tom later met **Susan Louise Dennerly** (nee: Ammon), a pediatric nurse in the ICU Nursery at Tucson Medical Center. Susan shared Tom's love of children, camping, and fishing. Together they had two children: **Jared Thomas Harris**, born in 1973 in Tucson, AZ, who resides in Denver, CO, with his wife **Rene Lynn Harris** (nee: Seiler) and their three children (**Joshua Jared Harris**, 25, **Hunter Michael Harris**, 21, and **Taylor Rene Harris**, 19) and grandchildren; and **Jill Rochelle Koster** (nee: Trumbull-Harris), born in 1975 in Tucson, AZ, who resides in the US Virgin Islands with her husband **Scott Allan Koster**.

After relocating to Utah, Tom met and married **Dr. Claudia Stevens Harris** (nee: Harris), a professor of graduate-level business management classes who minored in mathematics. Claudia shared Tom's love of academia, scholarship, and classical music. Together they shared two children: **Alexis Stevens Harris**, born in 1975 in Salt Lake City, UT, who resides in Chapel Hill, NC; and **Jessica Anne Harris**, born in 1981 in Salt Lake City, UT, who resides in New York City.

When that marriage ended, Tom reconnected with **Patricia Ann Jensen**, an executive secretary who had worked with him in Salt Lake City, UT. Pat had since lost her long-time husband to a protracted illness. With their subsequent union, Tom became the fill-in patriarch of a large and loving Mormon family. Tom and Pat enjoyed many peaceful years together, traveling between Arizona



Not one to give up on romance, Tom later married **Kimhuor Tieng**, mother to **Vitou Tieng**, born in 1981 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and two other children whom she lost to starvation while working in the killing fields of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge. Kimhuor came to America in 1994 and worked for many years as a chef. When videotaping and photographing Kimhuor cooking, Tom and she hit it off. Their union in 2015 enabled Tom to immerse himself in an entirely new culture surrounded by another large and loving family. In addition to becoming stepfather to Kimhuor's son Vitou and his wife **Yun Kil Khounphithack**, Tom became a grandfather to their three young children (**Kanchnatevi Weiran Tieng**, 14, **Vi-**

**tom Chen Tieng**, 12, and **Amrita Tieng**, 6) who reside with their parents in Las Vegas, NV.

Together Tom and Kimhuor bought a house in Riverside, CA, with a large gravel pit of a yard and devoted the last seven years of Tom's life to rehabbing the house and planting hundreds of trees, bushes, plants, and flowers, turning it into a lush garden oasis from the hot Southern California sun.

In his spare time, Tom enjoyed traveling to visit family and going sailing or fishing. He helped his kids with their home improvement and building projects. And Kimhuor introduced Tom to meditation, which, although challenging, brought Tom solace. Tom and Kimhuor frequently hosted family and friends at home until the Covid-19 pandemic began.

Tom's final project in life was transcribing the over 750 pages of Civil War diary, and letters home written by his great, great grandfather Francis B. Harris while serving in the Union Army. Tom proudly donated the original diary and letters, as well as his thorough transcriptions, to the Huntington Library in San Marino, CA.



In addition to his life-long struggle with asthma, in 2004, Tom underwent a triple bypass and aortic valve replacement. In 2020, he began coughing up blood periodically due to intermittent bouts of pneumonia. This past December, Tom fell while gardening, causing a gash in his head and significant blood loss, revealing his need for a pacemaker. Tom seemed to be on the mend this Spring until the coughing resurfaced and worsened. Strong antibiotics were prescribed to clear up what appeared to be a lung infection, but on May 17, 2022, Tom began coughing up copious amounts

of blood, and a bronchoscopy was scheduled for the following day. That procedure led to discovery of a vascular tumor blocking Tom's right ventricle. With his heart and kidneys slowly failing, Tom chose surgery to have the tumor removed, knowing full well the risks involved. He insisted that if he were to go on living, it would be only with the full use of his body and intellect. While sedated in surgery, Tom's lungs collapsed, his blood pressure dropped, and doctors honored his medical directives, allowing him to pass away peacefully on May 19, 2022.

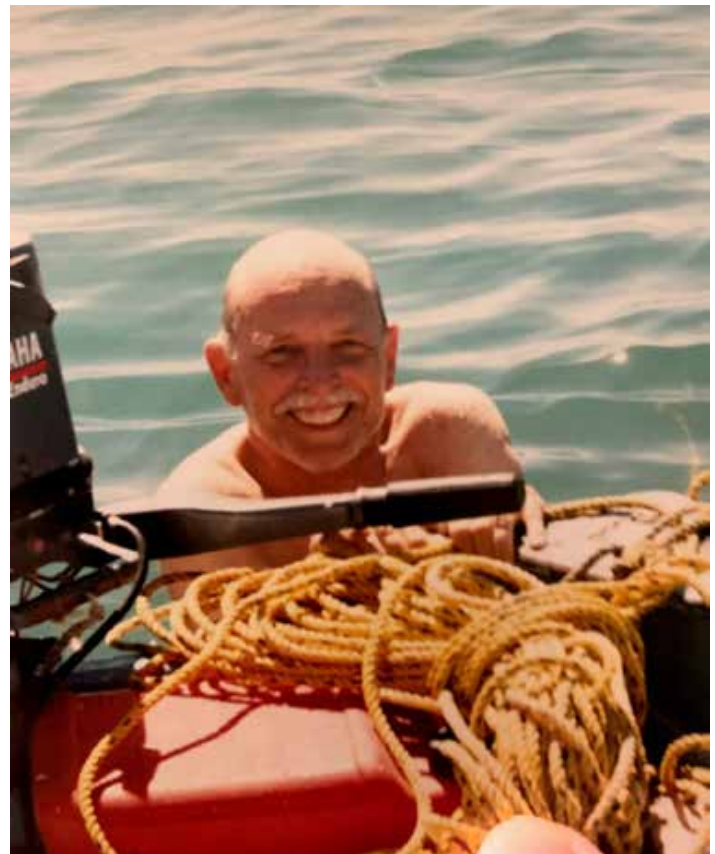
Tom was preceded in death by his parents and former wives, **Irmgard Maria Harris**, **Claudia Stevens Harris**, and **Patricia Ann Jensen**. He is survived by everyone else named herein as well as his older sister **Betty Salinas** (nee: Harris).



Tom's loved ones describe him as driven, ambitious, and incredibly disciplined. He was perpetually intellectually curious up to his final hour. An adventurer at heart, he deeply loved and appreciated wildlife and nature. He enjoyed traveling, camping, hiking, skiing, sailing, and birdwatching and was an excellent photographer. He was an avid fly-fisherman and a true artist when it came to fly-tying and the building of custom fly rods. And surprisingly (given his profession), Tom's penmanship was impeccable, which was greatly appreciated by his clinical colleagues.

No matter the project—whether in his workshop, his garden, writing a letter, or preparing a lecture—Tom took great pride in his work and gave every task his absolute all.

Tom was also honest to a fault, which made him a comically bad poker player but an incredibly accurate historian. Those who knew him well also knew that Tom sometimes did not react well to adversity and could succumb to his temper, though he directed most of his frustration inward and rarely lashed out at others. Thankfully Tom also had a great sense of humor and could laugh about his failings. Tom was deeply intellectual and never shied away from a difficult or complicated subject. On the contrary, he had a knack for spurring meaningful discussions. An ardent Democrat, Tom followed politics closely, volunteered for local and national political campaigns later in life, and was passionate about a woman's right to choose and other socially liberal causes.



Tom was also a passionate, caring, and sentimental man. Upon his passing, he left each of his six children a box containing the important cards and letters they had exchanged, their school photographs and drawings, school reports and essays, newspaper clippings, and various other childhood mementos. Tom also saved every "thank you" card or letter he received. Since his passing, the letters written by parents of premature or sick babies Tom treated but could not save are particularly moving to his children. Even in the face of unspeakable loss, tens of bereaved parents took the time to praise his heroic effort to provide around-the-clock and fastidious care while keeping a direct, honest, and sincere line of communication and steadfast emotional support and professional guidance.

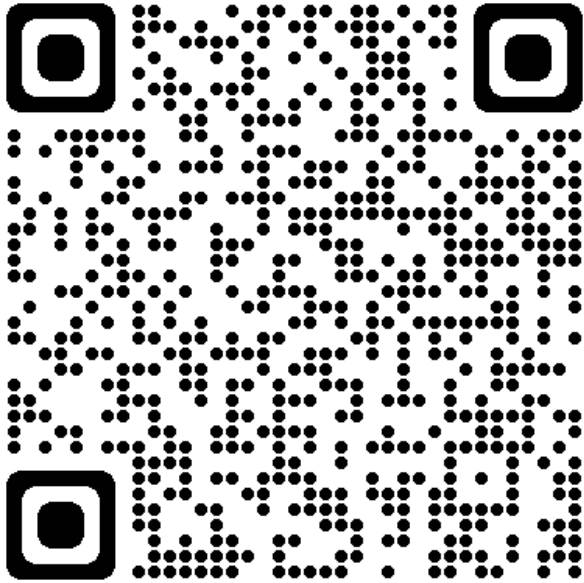
In sum, **Dr. Thomas Richmond Harris** loved fiercely, lived independently, and worked tirelessly to build a long and successful career and a diverse and vibrant family. He lived a fascinating and full life and did so his way up until the very end. He was deeply loved and will be sorely missed.

Tom's ashes will be interred at Riverside National Cemetery on Thursday, June 9, 2022, at 11:30 am. His family and friends are planning a virtual memorial ceremony for what would have been Tom's 89th birthday: September 21, 2022, beginning at 8 pm Eastern. If you would like to participate in either event, sign up here, and we will be in touch with details.

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<https://drtomharris.com/>

The Dr. Thomas R. Harris Memorial is scheduled for Wednesday, September 21, 2022, 8 pm EST on Zoom

#### Tom Harris Tribute

My friend, Dr. Tom Harris, left us on May 19, 2022, while undergoing a surgical procedure in Riverside, California. I urge you to read the dedicated website detailing his extraordinary life his daughters created at [drtomharris.com](https://drtomharris.com/).

To my knowledge, Tom was the first person to use a high-frequency ventilator to treat newborn infants using a fluidic device created by Dr. Jerry Calkins at the University of Arizona Medical Center in 1980. That device utilized two Suave shampoo bottles housed in a shoe box. When he moved to Salt Lake City not long after that, he was instrumental in the development of the first FDA-approved HFV, for which over 200,000 infants to date are eternally grateful.

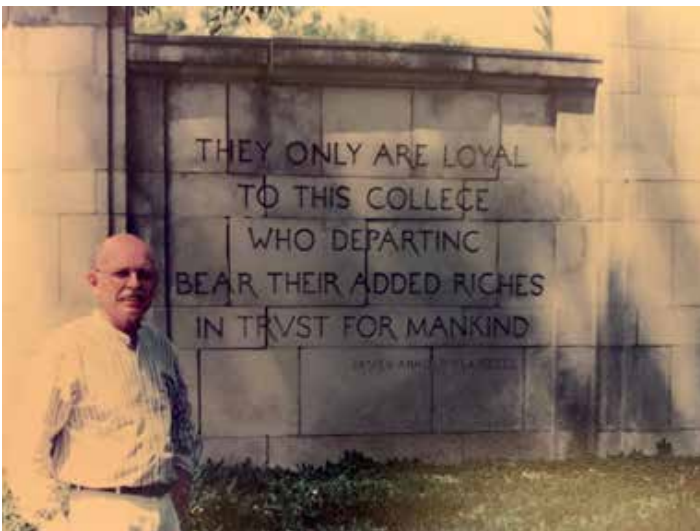
Tom was passionate, caring, incredibly disciplined, and adventurous. He taught me how to fly fish, and we both broke our arms at a conference we co-founded at the Snowbird ski resort in Utah.

I miss him terribly.

Bert Bunnell, ScD







#### **A Tribute to Dr. Tom Harris**

I first met Tom Harris in 1995. Relative to other neonatologists here, I was a latecomer. Tom was a fixture at the Snowbird High-Frequency Conference. For someone like me, a brand new Neonatologist in 1995, he represented the voice of reason, experience, and bedside acumen. He was a mix of the practical bedside clinician and academician. Tom knew his physiology well and how to translate it into clinical effects. We missed having him at Snowbird these past few years. With our moving the conference to Ontario, CA, we hoped that Tom might be able to attend. This coming year, we plan to hold a memorial lecture to honor his life and contribution to our knowledge. He truly made a difference.

Mitchell Goldstein, MD

Professor of Pediatrics

Loma Linda University Children's Hospital



#### **A Tribute to Dr. Tom Harris**

Tom Harris; I met Tom at the first High Frequency Conference. We toured the Nursery at the old Primary Children's Hospital where he showed me the jet ventilator. Tom was a great clinician and physiologist for neonates. He was responsible with Burt for its use in preterm critically ill newborns. I agreed to assist Tom with the High Frequency meetings and when Tom moved to Philadelphia at his request I took it over. Tom continued to support the meeting. He was always a resource and a friend. I will miss him.

Don Null, MD



### A Tribute to Dr. Tom Harris

It is with great pleasure I write this tribute to Tom. I met Tom in December 1976 when I moved from the University of Cincinnati to join the faculty at the University of Arizona, where he was the medical director of the Neonatal Intensive Care Units and the transport services. Although we both left Tucson in 1980, we continued to be in touch and exchanged personal and professional stories. We chatted for long periods on his birthdays during the last decade.

A great **Clinician**- Tom was passionate about providing the best care to every baby. He earned the respect of nurses, parents, and other staff (note: we did not have respiratory therapists and nurse practitioners then). I want to share several stories which come to mind: (1) During the early 'dark days' of Neonatal care, he taught me how to use negative-pressure ventilators. Nurses disliked this ventilation mode because these babies developed neck ulcers resulting from the cuff around the neck. (2) Use of the inverse inspiratory-expiratory ratio popularized by Dr. Reynolds (Oxford) led to air leaks. This gave him the impetus to develop 'high-frequency Jet ventilation' in conjunction with our Anesthesiology faculty and subsequently Bert Bunnell; the rest is history! (3) A baby with Ectopia Cordis (1 in 5.5 million births with poor prognosis) was ventilated for more than a year at Tucson Medical Center, raising ethical discussions! In conjunction with Dr. Harlan Giles, he started the joint maternal-Fetal medicine Neonatology Care program.

An articulate **Teacher**- He was excited to teach physiology to our residents, nurses, and Neonatologists. This provided an insight into the changing pathophysiology we often see in many disease states and incorporated strategies to improve their outcome. He started the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner program in conjunction with the College of nursing.

A great **PERSON**- He went out of his way to help others. I remember when he installed skylights in our house in Tucson. He taught me how to fly fish, and ski. Our children would later interact with him at the slopes at Alta and Snowbird, Utah. They enjoyed his company, and he shared the stories of his early college days with my daughter; his wife Patricia was fond of her.

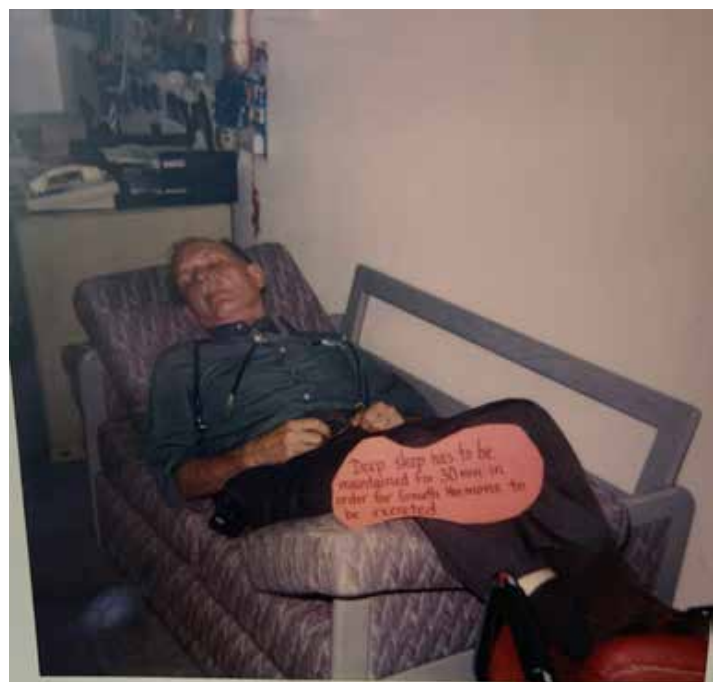
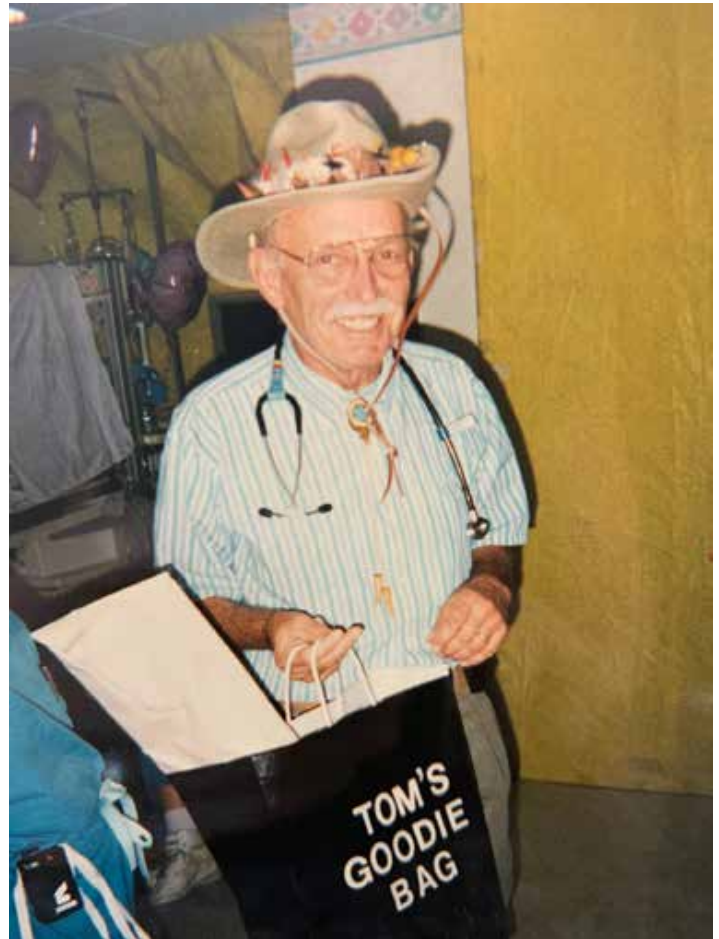
In summary, Tom has been a role model and an inspiration to many, including me. He instilled the importance of providing good patient care with compassion and balanced that with self-care, love of nature, and family.

Arun Pramanik, MD., DCH, FAAP, FIAP.

Professor of Pediatrics

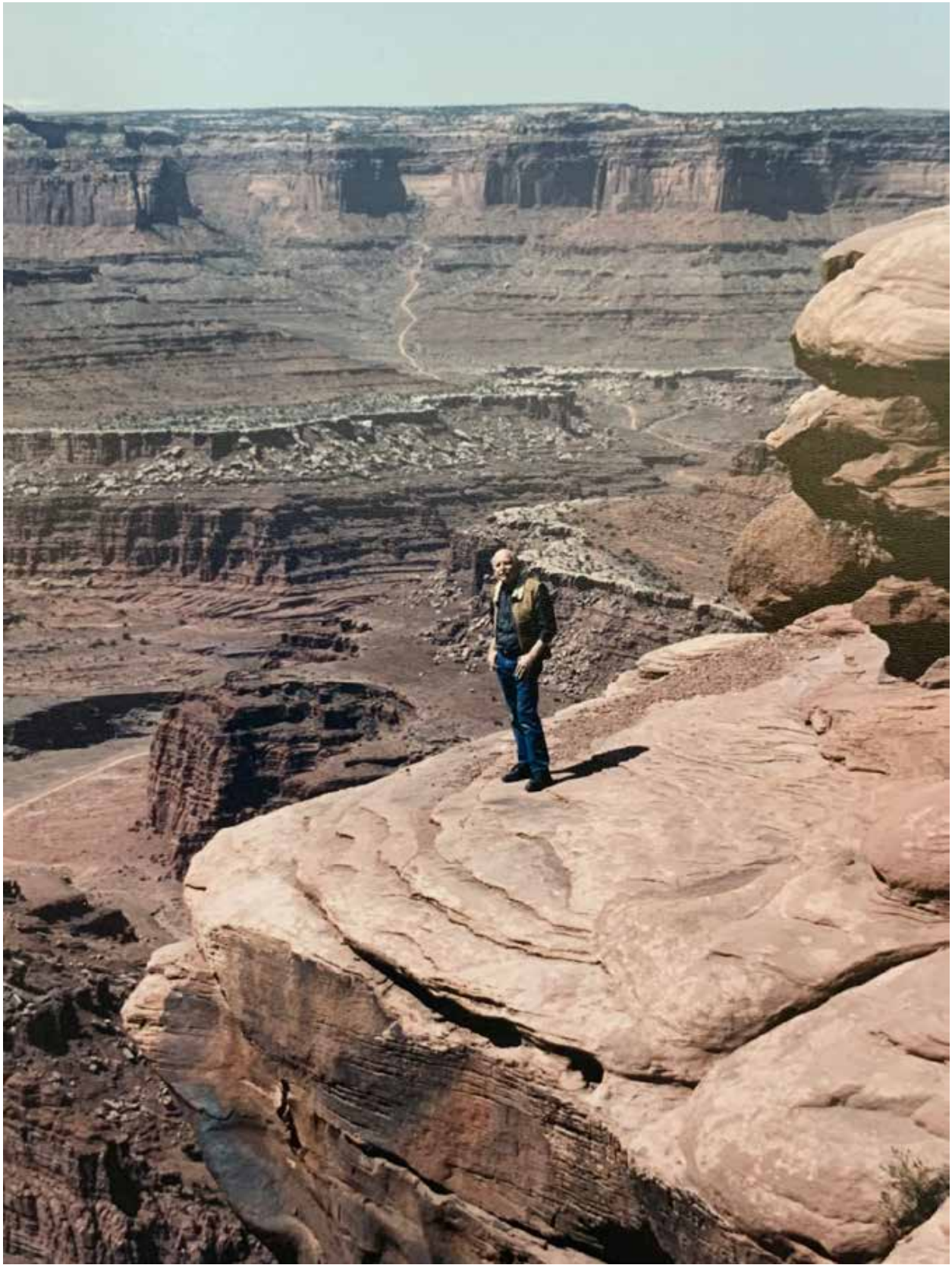
LSU Health, Shreveport, LA.





Growing like a weed!  
6-11-94

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<https://drtomharris.com/>



**Dr. Thomas R. Harris Memorial  
Wednesday, September 21, 2022,  
8 pm EST on Zoom**

**NT**

*Corresponding Author*



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