



Thomas Vincent Smith

January 2, 1939 - September 5, 2024

Thomas Vincent Smith, 85, of Kensington, NH, passed away peacefully on Thursday, September 5, 2024, surrounded by the love of his family.

Born in Queens, NY, to William J. and Margaret (Walsh) Smith, Tom grew up in Queens Village. He was a proud graduate of St. Joseph's Novitiate in Barrytown, NY, and his love for learning led him to earn a degree from Catholic University in Washington, DC, and a master's degree from Boston College.

A gifted educator with an infectious passion for history and psychology, Tom left an indelible mark on every classroom he entered. Tom began his teaching career as a member of the Christian Brothers, an experience that deeply shaped him as a person. However, seeking more time with his family, he eventually left the order but his passion for teaching continued. He went on to teach in New York City and Long Island before finding his true home at Exeter High School in 1973. There, Tom taught World History, U.S. History, and Psychology until his semi-retirement in 2001. But Tom wasn't done teaching; his dedication to shaping young minds continued at Phillips Exeter Academy's Summer Program from 1980 to 2016, where he also served as chair of the History and Humanities department for eight years. His courses, particularly "The Art of Being Human," became legendary, sparking the imagination of students worldwide. Known for his quick wit, Tom could recall exactly where

each of his students sat, right down to "5th row, 3rd seat," and wasn't shy about reminding them of it years later.

Tom often joked that his real education began when he married the love of his life, Ann "Nancy" (Dore) Smith, in 1972. For 45 years, they were inseparable, sharing adventures from gardening to times spent with family on the Long Island Sound. He would often say, "I was a different man before I met Nancy," and it was clear she was his guiding star until she passed in 2017.

Tom had a deep love for animals and was known for his compassion toward them. Along with his passion for cycling, he was a dedicated gardener, tending to his beautiful English garden with a koi pond. Tom also enjoyed skiing, coaching, and opera, and was a devoted Red Sox fan, particularly when they triumphed over the Yankees. His curiosity about the world knew no bounds, as he loved refinishing furniture, staying informed on current events, and engaging in lively debates over the dinner table."

A fervent believer in democracy and the power of civic engagement, Tom never missed the opportunity to participate in the democratic process. His love for American history, particularly the Federalist Papers and the ideals of Alexander Hamilton, shaped his belief that voting was not just a right but a solemn responsibility. Long before "Hamilton" became a cultural phenomenon, Tom was an ardent admirer of the founding fathers' vision of a just and fair society. His commitment to voting in every election reflected his conviction that democracy thrives when citizens are informed and involved.

He was a man of unwavering faith, which was not just a part of his life but its foundation. He lived his spirituality with humility and devotion, serving as a layperson in the Order of Discalced Carmelites, where he found profound meaning in contemplative prayer and simplicity. His deep relationship with God was evident not only in his service to the Church but in how he lived daily

—with kindness, compassion, and an unshakeable trust in divine providence. Tom's faith was not something he wore lightly; it was the guiding force that sustained him through life's joys and sorrows, especially after the passing of his beloved wife Nancy. In the quiet moments of his life, whether tending to his garden or cycling through scenic trails, Tom found God's presence, and he sought to instill that same sense of peace and wonder in those around him. His faith was a testament to the belief that life is a sacred journey, filled with grace at every turn.

Surviving family members include his daughter Elizabeth Ann “Lizzie” Ford and her husband William of Hampton; his son Thomas J. Smith and his wife Shawna Wakeham-Smith of Williston, VT, and their sons Asa Thomas, Gabriel Fox, and Jude Reginald; siblings William J. Smith and his wife Margaret, Bernadette Murphy and her husband Thomas of Omaha, FL, and Stephen Smith and his wife Judy of Commack, NY; sisters-in-law Barbara of Buffalo, NY, and Madelaine and her husband Bill of Huntington, NY; as well as several beloved nieces, nephews, and his grand-dogs Charlie and Tugg, and grand-cats Coraline and Lucia.

In addition to his parents and wife, Tom was predeceased by his sister Kathleen Kohler and her husband Jimmy, his beloved mother-in-law Ann S. Dore, and his brother-in-law Joseph.

The family would like to extend their gratitude to the dedicated staff at Rockingham VNA & Hospice and the compassionate nurses of RiverWoods Exeter. Their exceptional care and unwavering support during Tom's final year provided immense comfort to both him and his family. The kindness, professionalism, and tenderness shown by these caregivers will forever be remembered. Their presence allowed Tom to spend his final moments in peace, surrounded by love, dignity, and respect.

Visiting hours will be from 4-7 PM on Thursday, September 19, 2024, at Remick & Gendron Funeral Home-Crematory, 811 Lafayette Road, Hampton. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 AM on Friday, September 20, 2024, at St. Michael Church, Exeter. Relatives and friends are respectfully invited. Private interment will follow in the Village Cemetery, Kensington. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Bessie & Faith N. York Educational Fund, Town of Kensington, 95 Amesbury Road, Kensington, NH 03833, or to Make-A-Wish Vermont by clicking here (<https://wish.org/vermont/ways-help-us>).

In the words of T.S. Eliot, "What we call the beginning is often the end, and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

Cemetery Details

Village Cemetery

Rt. 150
Kensington, NH 03833

Previous Events

Visitation

SEP **19**. 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Remick & Gendron Funeral Home - Crematory
811 Lafayette Road ·
Hampton, NH 03842
(603) 926-6500
info@remickgendron.com
<https://www.RemickGendron.com/>

Mass of Christian Burial

SEP **20**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Michael Church
9 Lincoln Street
Exeter, NH 03833

Tribute Wall

“As an insecure student, a youngest sibling by 9 years with parents too busy to participate in my growth, I had few positive influences besides music, reading, and the animals I loved. My life flowed like a lazy river following the path of least resistance. Nothing really challenged me to focus my intellect before Tom Smith’s classroom. Suddenly, easy answers became boring. Papers were written, rewritten, and edited once again, each time discovering new thoughts, new ways of seeing things, and in the process, discovering myself. Through the time spent in his classroom, and afterwards thinking about class, I found out that I had something to say and that someone thought it was important. The day that he returned a paper with a note saying that “I wish I had met you sooner, I would have you lecturing by now” changed my life. Not in an overly dramatic way, but something shifted. I felt taller. I stopped trying to hide in the background as much. I kept this to myself as a most treasured gift after showing it to my father who was unimpressed. (His goal for me was to be a secretary and marry the boss) I did not become a famous singer, writer or equestrian, but I did live a life filled with variety, challenges, passion and extraordinary opportunities fueled with the confidence that Mr. Smith had helped cultivate. I can’t tell you how many times I have drawn on the experience of being acknowledged by him when I needed a boost, or in the quiet moments like this morning, thinking about what I’m grateful for. I ultimately married, had three children and now have three grandchildren. I have tried to teach them as I was taught; with respect, encouragement, and an undying belief in their importance and ability to craft the life they dream of. I am immensely proud of them.

Mr. Smith came into my life at a time when I was adrift and helped me to set a course. I went back to Exeter High years after graduating in 1976, hoping that he was still teaching and that I could tell him how grateful I was for having been his student. I was sad that he’d moved on and that I couldn’t deliver my message, and sadder now that I’ve learned of his passing after an internet search. But I’d like his loved ones to know that his presence is still strong in the people whose lives he’s touched along the way, even 50 years

later. He was a blessing.

Lauren (Erlandson) Karosis - March 24 at 10:54 AM



“*Mr. Smith knocked my socks off the day I walked into his class as a freshman. He used to love to ask deep, strange questions and then cold call students to see what they thought. One day, he mentioned the "uncaused cause", and then, after staring to my left for a few seconds, whirled back around in my direction and said, "What do you think--William?" Flabbergasted, I said something like, "well, before we can understand that we have to understand what created nothing." He stared at me for a few seconds, as if he couldn't believe I said something so outlandish. Then he grinned from ear-to-ear and said, "Yes! I think you might be right!" Then, he followed up with, "how does a 9th grader think thoughts like that? I'm jealous!" Well, I don't think my feet touched the ground for the rest of the year. Here was a brilliant adult who recognized that I had a decent thought in my teenage-addled brain! I don't know how often I gave him thoughtful answers after that to his strange questions. But I felt he saw something in me in that one interaction, and I couldn't get enough of his class after that. I remember how excited I was to have him again as a senior in his psychology class, and how lucky I was to sit in his classroom TWICE as a student. I have been a teacher now for 30 years, and Tom Smith's spirit inhabits my classroom regularly. I am not as gifted a teacher as he was, but for a few minutes on certain days, I swear he is a muse whispering things into my ear to wake teenagers up to the joy of learning and thinking. Thanks so much for all the joy you have brought to students' lives. You will be missed, and never forgotten.*

Bill Maniotis - September 26, 2024 at 04:41 PM

JB

“ I was for Tom, a late-in-life friend. We met in 2019 at the funeral of a former Christian Brother. What we shared was our time in the Christian Brothers at Barrytown and Troy, NY and Washington, DC. We met at Tom's home several times and shared memories and so much more. Now I've read these tributes and viewed the photos and see how much I missed - he was a remarkable man. I wish we had had more time together. My condolences to his family. John Barrett, Dover, NH .

John Barrett - September 25, 2024 at 01:08 PM

EF

“ 9 files added to the album Thomas Vincent Smith



Elizabeth Ford - September 23, 2024 at 01:15 PM

WK

“ Tom Smith , What a wonderful man he was. Great teacher, husband, family man . He took part in the community at school and at home. A mentor to other teacher and faculty members as he worked in his trade. Always thinking of others as he would go about his day. I was on the same faculty with he and Nancy as I taught at the vocational school and then at the middle school level. I was around when their children Elizabeth Ann and Tom where born. Such wonderful parents to these children as well as their friends . Both these people and this family provided a picture to follow for all of us on earth to follow. Live! Love! Laugh! Friendship ! Family ! I know Nancy extended her hand to you as you have joined her with God ! Love to the family as they know a job well done faithful servant !!!!
Love and prayers! Wendy Mac Arthur-Keith retired teacher and friend

Wendy Mac Arthur Keith - September 20, 2024 at 12:51 PM

DA

“ Doug, Laini, Aubrie & Arriana purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.



Doug, Laini, Aubrie & Arriana - September 18, 2024 at 05:53 PM

AD

“ Tom was my friend. Tom, in fact, was a best friend. Nancy and I shared a classroom, and this was the start of a life-long friendship for Tom, Nancy, Charlie, and me. We became adopted family members as we lived life and shared its milestones, the good, the bad, the joyous, the sad. Whatever came along, we were there for one another for nearly 50 years. After the deaths of Charlie and Nancy, Tom and I maintained the friendship and shared our aging lives. Conversations were endless. Tom's care and concern for me was always expressed. I miss him. His was a life well lived, and now, again with Nancy, may he have peace.
Special love to you and your families, Elizabeth Ann and Tom
"Aunt" Andrea

Andrea Deardorff - September 18, 2024 at 11:50 AM

RO

“ Tom was a classmate of mine in Barrytown and together we shared seven years of religious formation. He had a beautiful singing voice for liturgical chant and a gentle, soothing manner in dealing with the peculiarities of our local priest. My memory recalls a graceful skater in hockey and always a pleasant companion.

rich O'Prey - September 17, 2024 at 09:05 PM

MH

“ Mary Ann and Frank Hackett planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas Vincent Smith.

Mary Ann and Frank Hackett - September 17, 2024 at 02:45 PM

MH

“ *Mary Ann and Frank Hackett purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



Mary Ann and Frank Hackett - September 17, 2024 at 02:45 PM

LT

“ *Love, Bernadette and Tom purchased the Country Basket Blooms for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



Love, Bernadette and Tom - September 17, 2024 at 09:23 AM

ED

“ *You can leave Kensington but it never leaves you. Sending peace and hugs to Lizzie and Tommy. Your father shaped so many young minds and for those of us lucky enough to also be called friends, influenced who we came to be well beyond the classroom. I was fortunate to have both of your parents during my time in Exeter high school... Peace to you both and to your families- Emily (Coffin) Daigle*

Emily Daigle - September 16, 2024 at 07:00 PM

“ One of a Kind: A Student’s Tribute to Thomas Smith

It’s a blessing for students to have a teacher they will always remember. Tom Smith was that kind of teacher for me, and I feel privileged to count the ways.

In the fall of ’78, I was the lone freshman in a class of sophomores, set to begin my studies in Tom’s class on World History at Exeter High School.

I can see that classroom now, as clearly as though it were just down the hall.

And even now, I can walk through its door.

A print of Pablo Picasso’s painting, Guernica, hung over the classroom entryway—and there were four rows of desks (seven or eight in each). They were older wooden chairs, with a writing arm surface on the right, often dotted with the names of past students—and also, close to the ceiling on one wall, a wooden plaque with what I now think were Hebrew letters carved on it. It became a standing challenge for anyone to unriddle what the letters meant. I don’t think anyone ever did—but Tom always liked putting that challenge to us.

But to return, and recall that 1st day of class.

Standing before two large blackboards that were, for the moment, blank, Tom told us about the journey we were to embark on. With rapid flashes of wit, he began a bracing overview of the sheer range of knowledge, over centuries, that lay ahead.

When the class ended, both panels of the large blackboard were full (and at the close of each subsequent class, they always would be). I can see the jumble of words and diagrams: animism, a priori, a posteriori, the haves and the have nots—on through to the

Enlightenment, and Hegel—interspersed with watershed events of history.

It all made sense, as each phrase or diagram went up on the board—Tom was narrator as well as the blackboard scribe. But here was the thing: if you hadn't heard it all "live," one look at the blackboards, shorn of Tom's narration, would leave an impression of something inscrutable—lines of chalk running pell-mell over twenty feet of grey surface.

I suppose that we, as students, could be forgiven, metaphorically, for thinking we were drinking from a fire hose. It all might have been quite intimidating, and it was a little—but when presented by Tom it was anything but that—at least for me. It was exhilarating. The sheer sweep of history and philosophy.

I'd had Honors Classes in history in junior high, and had some notion of a few things Tom was talking about—but he charted a frontier of knowledge with a wideness I'd never known. It was a bit daunting to follow on at first; but his enthusiasm carried the day.

World History became my favorite class, among all those I had in high school.

*Over the years, and after my student days were done, I've had the privilege of writing some twenty books, among them a biography of the British reformer William Wilberforce, required reading for a class at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, and working on a feature film, *Amazing Grace*, that grew out of the book.*

I hasten to say those experiences were shaped, in no small measure, by things I learned in Tom Smith's class. Even as he shared the wideness of his learning, he also urged us to aspire to things in life—to work hard and strive to achieve.

All are lessons that have stayed with me, and many are the occasions when I've spoken of Tom to friends, describing what it

was like to sit in his classroom.

It was, in a word, special. Tom had the gift of walking alongside students, and sharing the journey he asked them to undertake. Something rare, indeed.

Requiescat in pace.

*Kevin Belmonte
EHS, Class of 1982*

Kevin Belmonte - September 16, 2024 at 02:02 PM

LJ

“ *Love Stephen & Judy purchased the Strength & Solace Spray for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



Love Stephen & Judy - September 16, 2024 at 01:51 PM

CN

“ *Tom was very helpful to me when I came to Exeter in 1975. He gave me a book of the British historian Kenneth Clark which forever changed my method of teaching World History. He and Nancy are in my prayers always,
Sincerely,
Carlo Nittoli*

Carlo Nittoli - September 16, 2024 at 10:58 AM

YB

“ *When the whole world saw the destruction, the fear, the pain - Mr. Smith saw it too. He also saw the love, the bravery, the dreams. He saw us for who we were, even before we knew it to be true. And ever since, all the way from Exeter, a little bit of him travelled the whole world with(in) is...Like a true educator and an amazing human, he became the force that inspired us and through us, many others. People like Mr. Smith live on forever in all of us... Thank you for everything.*

your Bosnians - September 16, 2024 at 06:01 AM

AS

“ *Astrid, Imogen & Conor Smith purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



Astrid, Imogen & Conor Smith - September 15, 2024 at 10:26 PM

GR

“ *I met Tom back in 2005 when he was a mentor to me when I was taking the Franklin Pierce College Teacher Certification Program. He was a great help offering me many keen insights on what constitutes a high school instructor that can command and interest a teenage classroom. Thank you Tom for that as your gracious and urbane personality and especially your wit was appreciated greatly. RIP old friend.*

Greg Riley, Retired Social Studies Teacher, Spaulding High School

Greg Riley - September 15, 2024 at 08:47 PM

TF

“ *The Howcroft and Willey families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas Vincent Smith.*

The Howcroft and Willey families - September 15, 2024 at 07:48 PM

TF

“ *The Howcroft and Willey families purchased the Peaceful White Lilies Basket for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



The Howcroft and Willey families - September 15, 2024 at 07:48 PM

MG

“ *Tom Smith was my favorite EHS teacher - a brilliant, caring & faithful man. Since my 1978 graduation I'm thankful I visited Nancy & Tom a few times. They both shaped & inspired my life & no doubt hundreds of other students... To question WHY; travel & be curious; think critically; unlock history for the understanding of today; Think Globally & act locally.
My sincere condolences to the Smith family & praise for his excellent & apt obituary.
Most of all, Thank YOU & RIP Mr Smith. 🙏❤️*

Maureen McManus Gillum - September 15, 2024 at 07:38 PM

JO

“ *Tom was on a true spiritual mission and we enjoyed his inquisitive mind as a teacher and brother Carmelite! May his soul rest in peace!*

Joseph Iannone, OCDS - September 15, 2024 at 05:21 PM

JL

“ Nancy and Tom were wonderful teachers and friends! I will not forget them. My love and prayers to his family. Love Jane Shattuck LaBelle

Jane LaBelle - September 15, 2024 at 11:51 AM

EC

“ Liz- I am so sorry for your loss. I will always remember your dad as my freshman year homeroom & world history teacher. ❤️
Eliza

Eliza Condelli - September 15, 2024 at 11:43 AM

CR

“ I was so happy to have introduced Thomas to the Secular Carmelites :)

corinne m roberts - September 15, 2024 at 11:06 AM

KK

“ I was to send my deepest sympathies to Liz, Tommy and Tom's family. I was so blessed to be good friends with Tom and Nancy for many years. Each day of his life answered Christ's question: Who do you say I am?" I am sure he is now with Nancy, my husband, John and the Communion of Saints. So thankful for his life.

Kathy Krane - September 15, 2024 at 09:32 AM

FC

“ Tom was an absolute joy to know and care for. I'm so grateful to have met him. My sincerest condolences to the entire family. Sending you all love and light during this time.

Fay Cheney - September 14, 2024 at 10:33 PM

VT

“ *Mr Smith. He pushed me to understand history and how it shapes all we do. My favorite and most influential educator. I speak of him often and remember all he taught me. The Haves. The Have-nots. To question Why. He will always be remembered.*

Virginia Drew (Jenny Turner) - September 14, 2024 at 10:22 PM

JC

“ *Mr Smith will forever be remembered as one of my most treasured teachers. He brought life and love to history - but more than that - his passion for learning and different perspectives. He challenged me and taught me to think critically. I can still recall his summer reading and later the VHS tapes which also instilled in me a curiosity and love for England where I have lived for the past 19 years. His dedication and spirit touched many and I'm so sorry to hear of his passing. But what a life well lived. Thank you Mr Smith.*

Jennifer Candee - September 14, 2024 at 07:05 PM

PB

“ *Mr. Smith was that rare teacher who made the greatest positive impact on my young mind. What he taught me went far beyond the textbook-he taught me critical thinking skills that I carried with me through life. Our conversations about philosophy and life were so profound, and his influence shaped how I view the world. He challenged me in class with high expectations but always offered great compassion and judgment-free guidance. A remarkable man and a beautiful soul. Rest in peace, and my deepest sincere sympathies to his family.*

Pam Gauthier Bronson - September 14, 2024 at 01:27 PM



“ *Mary Lou Ayers lit a candle in memory of Thomas Vincent Smith*



Mary Lou Ayers - September 14, 2024 at 12:56 PM



“ *Love, Carol, Adam, Eric and families planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas Vincent Smith.*

Love, Carol, Adam, Eric and families - September 14, 2024 at 12:10 PM



“ *Love, Carol, Adam, Eric and families purchased the Crystal Cross Bouquet for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.*



Love, Carol, Adam, Eric and families - September 14, 2024 at 12:10 PM



“ *Tom Smith was one of my best teachers. I have thought of him many times over the years. Bill Thibeault*

William Thibeault - September 14, 2024 at 11:53 AM



“ *Emerald Garden Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Vincent Smith.* ”



September 13, 2024 at 07:49 PM