



Thomas John Hritzko

January 3, 1923 - April 27, 2020

Hritzko, Thomas John Age 97 was born January 3, 1923 in Wilpen Minnesota and peacefully passed away April 27, 2020 at the Benedictine Health Center at Innsbruck New Brighton Minnesota. Tom was a loving husband and father, dedicated teacher, coach, referee, sports fan, World War II veteran, and devout Catholic. Preceded in death by parents, Dimitri and Anna (Billo) Hritzko, and siblings Mary, Eva, Steve, Ann, William, John, Mary, Dan, Mike, and Helen. Tom is survived by his wonderful wife of 63 years, Kathleen (O'Keefe) Hritzko, five children: Theresa Hritzko Gable (David), Ruth Hritzko (David), John Hritzko, Paul Hritzko (Sharon), Benjamin Hritzko, 9 grandchildren, and 11 great grandchildren. Tom's parents emigrated from Galecia Austria in the Carpathian Mountains to northern Minnesota, early in the last century. Tom was the 10th child of 11 growing up on the family farm in Wilpen, Tom helped out and milked three cows every day before heading off to school. Tom played football for Hibbing High School and was captain of the team his senior year and voted "All Range End." He went on to St. Thomas College St. Paul Minnesota on a football scholarship. His education was interrupted by World War II. He was an Army private and was the follow-up first replacements after the D-Day Landing. He was a scout, in reconnaissance, a radio operator, and occasional gunner. His favorite line from his war experience, "I dug a lot of foxholes." Tom returned from the war to finish his education and play football for St. Thomas College. While there he and his football teammates took the train to Tampa FL and played in the Cigar Bowl on January 1, 1949 in Tampa FL, featuring St. Thomas vs. Missouri Valley with a tie score of 13-13. Tom graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in math and science. His first job was teacher at Chisholm Junior High School where he met the love of his life, Kathleen O'Keefe. They married August 17, 1957 at St. Rose of Lima Catholic Church in St. Paul MN. They continued to live in Chisholm while starting a family. In 1967, Tom got a teaching position with the St. Paul School District. He taught most of his career at Battle Creek Junior High and Ramsey Junior High. In addition to teaching, he happily coached hockey,

basketball, baseball, and more. He was always ready to referee or umpire any sport game when needed. After 28 years with the St. Paul School District, Tom retired in June 1995. Tom was an avid golfer and dedicated sports fan. He enjoyed watching sports his entire life. While at St. Thomas, Tom converted to Catholicism and remained a devout Catholic till the end of his life. When asked at his 90th birthday, the secret of his longevity, his one-word answer was, "prayer." Throughout the last 50 years Tom was a member in good standing at St. Constantine Ukrainian Catholic Church, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, and St. Charles Borromeo Church. The family would like to thank the incredible staff at the Benedictine Health Center at Innsbruck New Brighton for all their loving care and support over the last nine months. Tom was one of those guys from the Greatest Generation who lived humbly and modestly. He fought for his country. He taught in Minnesota schools with enthusiasm and dedication. He always did what needed to be done. He had been weary, of late, but went peacefully in his sleep with family nearby. "We love you, Pop!" A private service has already been held.

Comments



“ Mr Hritzko I first met in the summer at the swimming Longyear beach in Chisholm. He was the life guard during the summer. He taught swim lessons also. Nicest guy who had a beautiful wife and children that would come down to the beach in the afternoons. Then I had Him for science class. Soft spoken all around good person. Rest In Peace Mr Hritzko, glad to have known you

Patty Badiali Levstek - May 07 at 04:25 PM



“ Mr. Hritzko was my science teacher at Chisholm Jr. High in the 60's. He was a great teacher but I knew him more because I babysat his 4 children on Sundays. My mother always stayed home by the phone while I was watching them because 4 children (including an infant) was a lot for a teen to manage. He was a kind and patient man and I feel sad but I know he had a wonderful long life. My thoughts are with his family. Janis Niemi

Janis Niemi - May 03 at 11:58 AM