



Thomas W. Butters

January 7, 1941 - December 11, 2025

Thomas William Butters, 84, artist, adman and advocate, died peacefully Dec. 11 after a life filled with elevating the arts, animals, human dignity and the spirits of all he touched.

Seventy three of his paintings were exhibited in two One Man Shows this fall: One at the Art Depot in Union City and another -- entitled "Elevation" -- at the McDowell Gallery inside Reid Health in Richmond. The wide diversity in his work ranged from plein air landscapes to magic realism that often portrayed gravity-defying skyboats, animals, lighthouses, intriguing characters and racecars. Each painting told a story, designed to lift human dignity and good humor at the same time.

Tom was born January 7, 1941 in South Bend, Indiana to William C. and Jane Bassett Butters. He graduated from Riley High School in South Bend, studied at the South Bend Art Institute, privately with Edmund Basker, and majored in Fine Art at Indiana University, Bloomington, where he met his wife of 60 years, Mary Anne Gilmer Butters, who survives.

Tom drew a popular cartoon strip, "Spinoza." and was an accomplished courtroom artist and political cartoonist for the Indiana Daily Student and Bloomington Herald-Telephone. He continued to advocate for the IDS' survival this year. He also was a book reviewer, advertising copywriter and artist for the Indianapolis Star and News.

He retired to become a full-time artist after an award-winning 50-year career in advertising and public relations in Indianapolis, New York and St. Louis,

advancing brands including Pirelli, Lancia, Alfa Romeo, the All Volunteer Army, Budweiser, Pella Windows, Pallm software and numerous public office holders, most notably Senator Richard G. Lugar. He also enjoyed a successful run as a Sports Car Club of America race car driver, almost always winning podium finishes with his MGs in races throughout the Midwest with his Pepsi-sponsored cars. His knowledge of the global racing industry was surpassed only by his mastery of the history of film, art and world conflict, especially World War II.

An urban dweller all of his life, Tom somewhat reluctantly moved to his wife's family farm near Greens Fork in 2001 after the passing of Mary Anne's parents, John and Mary Alice Gilmer. He immediately discovered a new love of nature's wonder, plein air painting and a steady diet of allergy and asthma cures. The word soon spread throughout the homeless cat and dog population of the Nettle Creek Valley that they had a home on the lap, or in front of the giant fireplace of Tom Butters. He became a full-time painter after taking a workshop offered by the Indiana Plein Air Painters in New Harmony in 2007, inspiring his painting: "Skyboat Afternoon" that won Best of Show at the Richmond Art Museum's 109th Annual Exhibition.

Since that reawakening of his artistic calling, he was invited to exhibit One Man Shows at the Hoosier Salon, RAM, Indiana University East Salon, Henry County Art Association, Fayette County Art Association, Wayne County Fair, IU East, Preble County in Oxford, OH, and the Indiana State Museum. He also won many other awards at most of those organizations' competitions. In 2008 he became manager of the Hagerstown Museum and soon expanded it to include Arts Place, a learning and exhibit place for young and not so young painters, singers, poets, violinists, authors, and patrons of the arts. He taught more than 200 art classes during his eight years in that position.

He is survived by children: Meredith Laura Butters (Mark) Easley, Molly Avis Butters (Aaron) Hale, both of Indianapolis, and Lt. Col William Gilmer Butters (USMC-ret) (Col Michelle USMC-Ret) of Tampa, Fla.; grandchildren: Madeleine Jane Easley (Sergey Grokhovetskiy) of Washington, DC, Mary

Josephine Easley, Margaret Joan Easley, both of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Merry Alice Hale and Keller William Hale, both of Indianapolis. He is survived by a sister Mary Jane Butters (Fred) Hipshear of Dowagiac, Mich., nephew Alec (Katelyn) Hipshear of Royal Oak, Mich., and Nora Hipshear (Brett) Mason of Farmington Hills, Mich. In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his brother-in-law, Neil Gilmer, and is survived by his sister-in-law, Kay Crum Gilmer of Indianapolis, nephew John Dean (Shelaine) Gilmer of Indianapolis, and niece Ellen Marie Gilmer of Boynton Beach, Fla. He also is survived by a special cousin, Leland (Tina) Bassett of Detroit, Mich., and seven grand nieces and nephews.

Tom was a highly spiritual man, of deep commitment to the Red Words of the New Testament. He worshiped most of his life in the Congregational Christian faith, but believed he may have been the only person to ever be a Baptized Unitarian as a descendant of fervent Baptist and Unitarian clerics. He was a strong advocate of LGBTQ rights, the Second Amendment, the ACLU, women's rights, an avid campaigner for brave, moderate Republican candidates, numerous arts organizations, veterans support organizations, animal rights organizations, shelters, rescuers and many environmental support groups, especially the Arbor Day Foundation.

He received many honors during his life, including induction into the high IQ organization Mensa, a Distinguished Hoosier Award from his friend, Gov. Mitch Daniels, and was honored to be featured in a documentary by South Bend's public television station WNIT in 2023. To view Tom's art, go to: <http://tombutters.art>.

Visitation will be 1 PM to 3 PM on Saturday, December 27, at Culberson Funeral Home. Services will follow at 3 PM.

Rather than sending flowers, Tom would like for friends and family to adopt a cat or dog in need, or make a donation to: Animal Care Alliance, 1353 Abington Pike, Richmond, IN 47374 or go to <http://www.AnimalCareAlliance.com>.

Previous Events

Visitation

DEC 27. 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM (ET)

Culberson Funeral Home - Hagerstown
51 South Washington Street
Hagerstown, IN 47346
(765) 489-5511
info@culbersonfh.com
<https://www.culbersonfh.com/>

Service

DEC 27. 3:00 PM (ET)

Culberson Funeral Home - Hagerstown
51 South Washington Street
Hagerstown, IN 47346
(765) 489-5511
info@culbersonfh.com
<https://www.culbersonfh.com/>

Tribute Wall

NM

“ I worked with Tom at an ad agency in NY. He was a great guy to work with + always had something funny to share. My condolences to his huge family. N. Morehouse

N. Morehouse - January 13 at 10:53 PM

ME

Thank you for sharing. The NY ad agency days were a creative and fun time. Cheers, Meredith Butters Easley- not as funny or talented as my Dad, but he made me feel as if was. 🌴

Meredith Easley - January 17 at 01:05 PM



“ 2 files added to the album Funeral Service



Rick Culberson - December 28, 2025 at 08:49 PM

AJ

So sad to hear of the passing of Tom. He was a lovely gentle honest humble human being. RIP Tom. Condolences to the family. Anne.

Anne Johnson - February 25 at 07:22 PM

WB

“ 23 files added to the album *Through the Years*



William Butters - December 24, 2025 at 06:07 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet* was purchased for the family of Thomas W. Butters.



December 23, 2025 at 02:46 PM

PC

“ *I always enjoyed Tom's artwork and visiting with him at the Art Association of Henry County. I feel honored to have known him. Thoughts and prayers for his family.*

Pebbles Caudill - December 21, 2025 at 09:24 AM



“ *I didn't know Tom well but I spent many nights sleeping over at his parents house in the basement family room with my best friend, his sister. In that basement was one of Tom's early pieces, a contemporary nude that hung on the wall. Never forgot that piece!*
Lane Herring Theriac

Tim Theriac - December 20, 2025 at 09:12 PM

MB

Lane, how wonderful to hear from you! I will let Janie know you reached out to our family during this time of sorrow.

mary anne butters - January 10 at 06:05 PM