



Thomas William Knipstein

DEC 2, 1936 - FEB 25, 2026



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Dr. Thomas William Knipstein passed away peacefully on February 25, 2026 at his home in Escondido following a short illness. His wife of 63 years, Nancy, and oldest daughter were at his side.

Born in Fort Wayne, Indiana to Esther and Alvin Knipstein, Tom was a cross-country runner and an avid learner, who was always curious about the world around him. Tom graduated in 1954 from South Side High School in Fort Wayne and enrolled at Purdue University School of Pharmacy in 1958.

He was a member of the Delta Chi fraternity, forming life-long friendships with his brothers. He was Editor of the Purdue Pharmacist Journal.

After graduating from Purdue, he enrolled in Indiana University's School of Medicine. During a summer break from medical school, he worked as a pharmacist in a medical clinic and met a nurse, Nancy Zurbriggen, who would be the love of his life. She shared his curiosity and ambitions of adventure and experiencing life.

They were married in Nashville, Indiana in 1962 and Tom graduated from medical school in 1963. He accepted an internship at San Bernardino County Hospital, and they followed their dream of living in the West. Soon they welcomed their first child, Ellen.

As the internship was ending, the war in Vietnam was growing and not even a young doctor at the launch of a career could outrun the draft. He was drafted into the Navy and stationed at Camp Pendleton, assigned to an anesthesiology residency at Balboa Hospital in San Diego and afterwards into practice at the Navy Hospital Subic Bay, Philippines. Fortunately, the whole family followed him in his travels. Along the way they gathered life-long friends and two more children: Steve (Camp Pendleton) and Ann (Subic Bay).



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After his Navy discharge in 1969, he became an anesthesiologist on the staff of Palomar Hospital in Escondido, and welcomed their fourth child, Greg. He was a leader in the medical community and served as President of the Medical Staff in 1986. He later was certified in Family Practice and operated a private practice for decades, then later joined The Graybill Medical Group until his retirement in 2004. Many patients recall his easy office manner and energetic love of the outdoors.

Tom was an active member of the Escondido community for more than 50 years. He served on many committees with city government, the Escondido Center for the Arts and local ecology groups. Tom and Nancy attended San Diego Opera for 40 years. He was also a member of the International Palm Society. He grew nearly 100 different species of palms around his Escondido home.

His greatest accomplishments of all were as a husband, father, grandfather and friend. There was nothing more enjoyable to him than to be with his growing family, singing along with family music sessions after an amazing meal. He was German through and through and life was perfect after a meal of brats and sauerkraut. He loved German cars and owned several VW camper vans which were used to travel across our beautiful country. Tom and Nancy visited 49 states, only missing Alaska. His favorite memories were camping and hiking with the family in the Sierras, especially the Eastern Slopes, and climbing Mt. Whitney. Tom also loved sailing at Mission Bay in their Coronado 15.

Yes, he was a true Californian but his roots in the Midwest ran deep. There were few Memorial Day Weekends that didn't feature the Indianapolis 500. He loved March Madness Basketball, rooting for his beloved Purdue Boilermakers and adopted Indiana Hoosiers.

His legacy lives on through his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who will remember him for his passion for life, thirst for knowledge and love of his family. He will live forever in our hearts.

Tom is survived by his wife, Nancy, children Ellen Erath (Glenn), their children Andrew Warrick-Erath (Anna) and son Leon; Laura Escarcega (Kibsaim); and Kate Macfarlane (Will) and their son Henry; Steve Knipstein (Julie) and children Max and Zoey; Ann Wight (Don) and their children Jacob, Gavin and Caroline; Greg Knipstein (Shannon) and their children Nolan and Weston. Brother, Richard Knipstein (Gwen) of Carmel, Indiana.



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A celebration of life will be held at Dittus Hall at Redwood Terrace Community in Escondido on Sunday, May 3rd at 2pm. A private burial will be at Miramar National Cemetery.

En lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to Team Max at the Illinois Chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation through the following link.

<https://passion.cff.org/memorial-for-tom-knipstein>





Events


Thomas William Knipstein

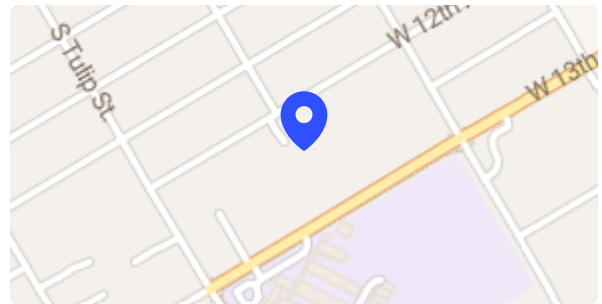
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Celebration of Life

 **Sunday**, May 3, 2026

 2:00 PM PT

 **Dittus Hall Redwood Terrace Community**
710 W 13th Ave, Escondido CA 92025





Memories only last if you share them

Join us in honoring Thomas by contributing to a collection of shared memories.



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