

**Tom Galantowicz** interviewed by David Bledsoe



Tom was born in Buffalo NY on June 4, 1942. He attended Queen of Martyrs' Parish Elementary & St Mary's Catholic High School, graduating in 1959. During the school year & while on summer breaks, Tom took on many different jobs learning lots of lessons about hard work and financial responsibility. He had a newspaper route at age 11, and was a drug store stock boy, carpenter's apprentice and "soda jerk" (as he called it; making milk shakes, etc.) through his teen years. His favorite subjects were English, Math ... and Basketball. When Tom didn't make the high school varsity basketball team his sophomore year, his dad strongly suggested that he give up trying. But Tom loved the game so much that he began to practice almost constantly. His efforts paid off when he made the varsity team his junior year. He continued to enjoy the sport until giving it up at age 50 (when his body refused to do what his mind told it to).

Tom enjoyed growing up in Buffalo where pretty much everybody in his community knew and looked out after each other. "We felt safe, nobody worried about locking doors, etc. It was a great community." He always looked forward to the charm of the season's first snowfall. "It would get so quiet that you could hear the snow crunch."

Tom attended Buffalo's Canisius College for 2 years before enrolling at the University of Detroit where he received a Bachelors degree in electrical engineering in 1964. He received a masters in 1966 & a PHD in 1969 both in electrical engineering from Ohio State University. All through Tom's college years, he continued to foster his love of music, accompanying, directing & singing in college and church choirs.

Tom met his lovely wife, Mary in Hampton, VA where they were neighbors. After Mary returned home to Louisiana to work on a graduate degree, they continued their courtship primarily by mail and phone. Tom visited Louisiana on Christmas 1964 and proposed. They married on August 21, 1965 and honeymooned in Gatlinburg - Tom's first trip to Tennessee, where it rained the entire time. For the first five years of their marriage, they lived in Columbus, OH where Tom completed his masters & PHD as well as serving in his first teaching position at Ohio State University.

Tom taught electrical engineering and computer science at Union College in Schenectady, NY from 1970 – 1980. One cold winter day, the family decided to move to a warmer climate & he accepted a position with The Aerospace Corp. (1980 – 82) in southern CA. From 1982 – 1993 he worked for Newport Corp. which designed, manufactured and sold products to the laser & optics industry. Tom began there as a project manager and worked his way up to president of the company. He returned to

The Aerospace Corp (1993 – 1996), then relocated to northern California where he was Vice President of Engineering for Quester Corp (1996 – 99) and Torrex Corp. (2000 – 03). Retiring in 2003, Tom and Mary opted to leave sunny southern CA and head to Tennessee to be close to the grandkids in Franklin.

Tom & Mary, married 45 years, cherish their love for each other and take great pride in their three children & six grandchildren. With one of their daughters being severely burned at the age of two and a 5 year recovery period, their faith in God and the human spirit became an unbreakable bond. They share many common interests, love of family, church and an incredible sense of humor.

Upon moving to Franklin, Tom accepted a position as a Minister of Music of St Philip Catholic Church. This afforded him the opportunity to share his faith through his passion for music and realize the first of his three retirement goals. Tom fulfilled another retirement goal through part time teaching at Tennessee State University and Columbia State. He also finds fulfillment in a third retirement goal of doing handyman work through his volunteer service with Habitat for Humanity of Williamson County. He has volunteered on a regular basis since joining our ranks as a Crew Leader in April 2009. He enjoys working with all our partner families & volunteers. However, as one would imagine with Tom being a lifelong teacher, he finds great fulfillment in working with high school students on the Habitat High build. We are very appreciative of Tom's as well as all our volunteers' dedicated service as we work towards the goal of eliminating substandard housing in Williamson County.