



"Sport is a preserver of health." ~Hippocrates

January 16, 2010~ Surprise 90th Birthday Party was held at the Holly Beach Volunteer Fire Hall for Tom Jorgensen



Jim, Tom & Tom Jorgensen



Rev. Jim & Kristen Zozzaro and their 3 sons, Jacob, Joey & Joshua



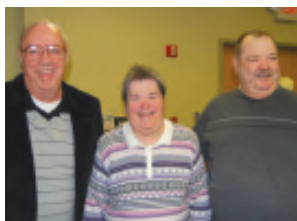
Joan Flickenger, John & Jane Freeman, Jon & Marian Stevenson, Ron & Bunny McGowan



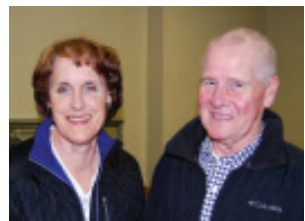
Joe MacClain & Tom Jorgensen



Ray & Beth Forbes



Jay Heritage, Bev & Butch Roach



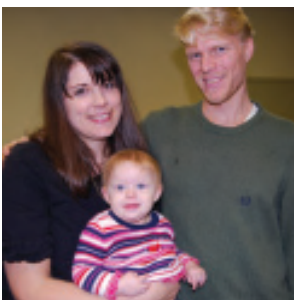
John & Carol Hauser



Tony Chrietzberg presents his coach with a special birthday gift~ a framed print of his 1968 championship team.



Mike & Alice Savino



Tim, Renee & Anna Jean Cummings



Dave & Carol Troiano



Charlotte DeVries

Tom Jorgensen - Wildwood's Living Legacy

by Michael Kutepow

Sometimes it is hard to think of the right adjectives to describe someone. The term noble elder is most fitting to the character of Tom Jorgensen, a 90 year-old Elder of Calvary Orthodox Presbyterian Church on Rio Grande Avenue and member for over 55 years.

Tom's personal life story is a classic American dream that adds to our culture here in Wildwood and it all began January 18, 1920 in Stavanger, Norway. He was born Asbjorn Tarald to his father Gunnar, a Norwegian whaler.

His father found work in Texas, saving enough money to move his family from Norway to Staten Island. Young Asbjorn, along with his mother Theresie and one brother and one sister came through Ellis Island in 1925. They lived on Bodine Street in Staten Island. Everybody in the neighborhood was poor and life was very hard. Nobody in his family spoke English very well. His brother died of Polio at the age of four.

By the time Asbjorn entered kindergarten, he was picking up some street English from his friends. The first day the teacher asked what his name was and he said, "Asbjorn Tarald Jorgensen," in his thick Norwegian accent. Without a pause the teacher said, "That's no good. We'll just call you Tommy," she replied and the name followed him throughout his life.

At a young age Tommy's passion was sports. He and his friends played everything, year round, from dusk till dawn. He excelled in baseball and soccer. He enjoyed basketball, football, and even boxing. But baseball in that era in New York City was every kid's dream. No one could afford real equipment in those days so they played tireball. They would chop a rubber bicycle tire into small pieces for a ball and use a broomstick as a bat. The object of the game was the same as in baseball but the difficulty was greatly increased. Because of the odd shapes of the tire pieces, they would curve like screw balls every time they're tossed. And trying to hit them with a broomstick demanded extra practice.

But practice is all Tom would do. He had the personality as to where he would train diligently every day, almost to the point of obsession. Even as a child, those endless hours of practice had the opportunity to pay off. He was once offered a place on the Staten Island Soccer Club but his mother forbid him to play with the much older guys in fear that he may get injured.

He was invited to try out for the New York Giants baseball team at the old Polo Grounds. He was one of the youngest on the field but had a true talent for hitting due to his practice from playing tireball. It was a real honor just to be invited and a chance of a lifetime; he was just too young at that time. It was a long, unforgettable train ride back to Roe Street in Staten Island.

He was a freshman in high school on Staten Island when he moved to Wildwood with his sister and brother-in-law. His sister Sigarid married Arthur Andersen who worked for

Fairbanks & Morse and then soon opened a machine shop on Burke and Arctic Avenues. Tom was employed but restless as a teenager. He claims he rode his bicycle all the way back to Staten Island in sixteen hours just for fun, to meet his parents and friends again. When he arrived he kissed his mother hello and went and played a game of tireball. The story typifies Tom's personality and discipline. When he puts his mind to something, there is no turning back.

He continued to play baseball throughout his teenage years with the American Legion in Wildwood. He played on the Wildwood High School baseball team, then later on Cape May County's adult league. Pop Risley's sponsored the Wildwood City Team he was playing for when a pro scout approached him from the Detroit Tigers with a contract in hand. It was one of the harder decisions Tom had to make when he declined the offer. He couldn't, with a clear conscience, just up and leave a steady job at the machine shop and more importantly his new wife.

World War II was threatening everyone in the country at that time. Tom knew his number would eventually be called so he enlisted after Pearl Harbor in the U.S. Navy's ship fitter 3rd class 82nd construction battalion. He was sent to the South Pacific where he would build airfields and repair damaged equipment. Of all his war stories the one that seems most eminent was how the atomic bomb probably saved his life. He and his forces at Okinawa were about to invade Japan. It would be a certain D-Day and a likely tragedy for thousands if that plan went forth. But after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan surrendered and the war soon ended.

Tom returned to Wildwood, eventually starting his own Wildwood Welding Works business, and became a very influential coach to hundreds of kids in the Wildwood little league. He was very successful as a coach on top of raising his own three children- Tom, Jim and Sharon.

Tom's conversion from a self-centered life to a life lived for Jesus Christ is the most significant day in his biography. On that fateful day, Pastor Dunn of Calvary OPC paid him a visit at his welding shop. Tom was asked to repair the bracket in the bell tower of the church. He was invited to a church dinner and reluctantly attended. God used Tom's craftsmanship to bring him to a saving knowledge of Christ. Since then, that bell has continued to ring for the past 60 years in the very church that Tom worships in every Sunday.

From his youthful days in Staten Island to his life now in Wildwood Crest, God blessed Tom with a full life. Tom Jorgensen, a Norwegian immigrant, child of the Great Depression, World War II Veteran, and a believer in the Gospel, is a beacon of light in our community. With these blessings behind him and an eternity of glory before him, he can be found as a smiling, helping hand at the Calvary OPC.

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{Most of above are from Tom's church family}