



## Thomas C. Millen

June 20, 1958 - October 18, 2025

Thomas “Tom” Charles Millen died October 18th at the Bloomington Hospice House after a six year struggle valiantly fighting neuroendocrine cancer. He was 67 years old. Tom was born on June 20, 1958, in Greensburg, PA. Just 10 days later, he moved with his family to Bloomington, IN, where he spent most of his life. He graduated from Bloomington High School South in 1977. During his high school years, he was on the football team and wrestling team. As an extracurricular activity he was a member of the Civil Air Patrol where he made the rank of captain. In pursuit of a lifelong interest in space and aeronautics, Tom received his bachelor’s degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Arkansas and his master’s degree in Space Studies from American Military University. One of his most celebrated achievements was the acceptance, and presentation, of a paper on plasma propulsion at the IEPC (International Electric Propulsion Conference) in Kobe, Japan. Tom was a valued member of the Maritime Targeting & Unmanned Systems

Branch for more than 15 years. In his time at Crane, he served as a project engineer for laser targeting and gun weapon systems platforms. He was involved in numerous engineering, shipboard, and training efforts – including serving as the Branch Laser Safety Officer. He has traveled to multiple areas of the globe for direct engineering and fleet support efforts for Maritime systems. His contributions and dedication to serving our United States Navy have provided a direct and immediate impact on the Electro-Optics Technology Division's support of the nation's warfighters and was in keeping with the highest standards and traditions of the United States Naval Service.

Tom was devoted to helping others, as demonstrated by over 30 years of work with Search and Rescue, where he served as Director of Education for the National Association of Search and Rescue. Later, he held leadership positions in INSAR (Indiana Search and Rescue). He developed certification programs and training for rescuers. Tom taught FUNSAR (Fundamentals of Search and Rescue) courses offered through Indiana University for more than 25 years.

There are many people alive today because of his knowledge, experience, and willingness to share. He also received the Distinguished Hoosier Award for his work in Search and Rescue in Indiana. He also served in the Indiana Guard Reserve, retiring at the rank of

Captain in March  
2022.

Tom is remembered for his kind heart and love of animals, particularly cats of all shapes and sizes. Tom was loyal to family and friends. He attended Millen family reunions in PA with his siblings where he connected with aunts, uncles, and cousins, and he was a regular attendee of U.S.S. Turner Joy reunions with his brother David, who served on the Turner Joy during the Vietnam War. When visiting his dear friend, Anne Dickison, in Peoria he attended St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which Tom considered his church. In addition to cheering on his Arkansas Razorbacks and Indiana Hoosier football teams, he bled Black and Gold as a super Pittsburgh Steeler fan.

Tom is preceded in death by his parents, Walter and Thecla Millen, his brother, Stephen Millen, and brother-in-law, Steven Smail.

Surviving are his siblings, David Millen, Marian (Bob) Lankston, and Esther Millen Smail, nephews Robb (Caitlin) Lankston and Evan (Ally) Smail, his dear friend, Anne Dickison, dear friends Mike and Barb Gilmore, and his beloved cat, Delilah. He leaves behind many other beloved friends, co-workers, and was loved and respected by so many. Fair Winds and Following Seas.

Funeral Service will be Friday, November 7 at 3:00 pm at Allen Funeral Home



# Previous Events

## Celebration of Life

NOV 7. 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM (ET)

Allen Funeral Home and Crematory  
4155 S. Old State Road 37  
Bloomington, IN 47401  
(812) 824-5905  
<http://www.allencares.com>

# Tribute Wall

AD

“ 1 file added to the album Tom Millen



Anne Dickison - November 04, 2025 at 06:56 AM

AD

“ 2 files added to the album Tom Millen



Anne Dickison - November 03, 2025 at 09:15 PM

AD

“ 3 files added to the album Tom Millen



Anne Dickison - November 03, 2025 at 05:47 AM

AD

“ 1 file added to the album *Tom Millen*



---

**Anne Dickison** - November 02, 2025 at 07:19 PM

AD

“ 1 file added to the album *Tom Millen*



---

**Anne Dickison** - November 02, 2025 at 03:18 PM

AD

“ *NASAR Response Magazine, October 2025  
Executive Director Christopher Boyer Message*

*I also wanted to mention that Life Member and Veteran Tom Millen (IN) passed away this month. Tom was a giant contributor to NASAR and the SAR community, in so many ways. Tom was our Vice-President of Education at one point, a member of the Board of Directors, and instructor. Not many people know that Tom was an astronaut candidate with NASA. I was looking forward to seeing his face looking out a window on the ISS. Tom did fancy laser stuff for the Navy and was quite often overseas. I will miss his odd-hour calls from Bahrain or whatever layover airport he was at when he had a SAR idea, or course material criticism. There just wasn't anything he wouldn't strive to accomplish. We are both Hoosiers at heart and he was a good friend.*

*Tom, you did more than make a difference my friend. You defined stewardship, a giving heart, and commitment. Your life was consequential and impacted more people than you could have ever imagined. Fair winds and following seas.*

---

**Anne Dickison** - November 02, 2025 at 03:08 PM

ES

“ *2 files added to the tribute wall*



---

**Esther Smail** - November 02, 2025 at 02:11 PM

ES

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



---

**Esther Smail** - November 02, 2025 at 01:59 PM

AD

“ Tom and I have been in each other's orbits for thirty years now. We were both active in the National Association for Search and Rescue, he with developing certification programs and training for rescuers and me with the Swiftwater Rescue Special Interest Group and NASAR's Medical Advisory Committee. Working with others on the MAC, I spearheaded a proposed curriculum and teaching materials for a Search and Rescue Medical Responder (SARMR) course and was tasked with presenting it to NASAR's Board of Directors. Tom was NASAR's Vice President of Education at the time. He found himself in political crosshairs because of this proposed course, but continued his lifelong advocacy of accuracy, quality, and the practical usefulness of educational materials. Two years later, he and I co-hosted the first SARMR course in the Hoosier National Forest near his home turf in Indiana. He continued teaching FUNSAR (Fundamentals of Search and Rescue) courses offered through Indiana University for another 25 years until his health deteriorated. He also held leadership positions in INSARA (Indiana SAR Association) and several other SAR organizations and programs. Because of his dedication to Search and Rescue, he was recognized for the Distinguished Hoosier Award by the Governor of Indiana.

While doing all this volunteer SAR work and developing educational materials for NASAR, and with his background & degree in Electrical Engineering and practical experiences in Radar, he also taught at Bloomington's IVY Tech. Through various course practicals and student participation labs, he became familiar with nearby Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), and ended up applying for a position there. Just two weeks ago he celebrated his 15-year anniversary at Crane as a civilian contractor and a lead laser safety officer. While with Crane, he was dispatched on 17 or more tours to Bahrain for implementing laser technology & training personnel for its maintenance and troubleshooting. Each time he went overseas, he brought back lovely momentos for his family and friends. He also made friends with all the feral cats on base, and devoted himself to making sure they got frequent treats.

Tom aspired to be an astronaut some day, and was passionate

*about flying and learning everything there was to know about aviation history. When I moved from FL to Dayton OH, he was more excited about visiting the Wright Patterson AFB and National Air Force Museum than doing anything else. Already well established in his engineering and technology careers, he went on to get a Masters Degree in Space Studies from the American Military University. A highlight of his fascination with lasers and plasma propulsion was being accepted to present a paper at the 34th International Electric Propulsion conference in Kobe, Japan in 2015. Tom is one of the most generous, loyal, and trustworthy people I have ever met. He was my most trusted confidante, and for him I served as a major figure behind the scenes when he struggled with one thing or another. I also introduced him to worlds, concepts, and certain practical skills he was missing at the start of our association with each other. As time went on, we attended numerous professional conferences with each other, overlapped friends, and cross-fertilized each other's knowledge bases. He became part of my family in Illinois and my circle of friends from all walks of life, and I became part of his family and in the loop with his many associates as well. We made each other better people. He was the Yang to my Yin, and I am going to miss him and feel unbalanced without him.*



---

**Anne Dickison** - November 01, 2025 at 07:34 AM



“ *My condolences go to his family.*  
*Colleen M*

---

**Colleen Mulinix** - October 27, 2025 at 07:53 AM