



Thomas Benner

March 29, 1964 - July 11, 2021

'May your Spirit be Guided by the Hawk, May your Soul Rest with the Lord.'

Thomas Edward Benner, 57, of Toledo, Ohio, passed away on Sunday, July 11, 2021, at McLaren St. Luke's Hospital in Maumee, Ohio, after a 9 year battle with his CIDP illness. He was born the youngest of seven children, on March 29, 1964 in Sylvania, Ohio to James and Marilyn Benner.

He graduated from Robert S. Rogers High School in 1982. After high school, Thomas attended the Ohio State University with studies in Wildlife Management. When Thomas wasn't spending time with his family he enjoyed everything about life and spent his free time fishing, hunting, and exploring nature. Tom was employed by the Toledo Zoological Society from 1985 till 2012 where he was a Large Mammal Keeper, over the years he worked with several kinds of mammals including snow leopards, primates and bears. Tom ended his career as the primary keeper for the Arctic Exhibit where he developed his love for the Polar Bears, Seals and Wolves. As a Polar Bear Keeper, he was afforded the opportunity to embark on an Arctic adventure to study these magnificent animals in their natural habitat and became an advocate for their preservation. He enjoyed long road trips, the Ohio State University football team and most importantly being a father to his two beautiful daughters.

Thomas was preceded in death by his parents, James and Marilyn Benner. Thomas is survived by his two daughters, Paige and Madison, the mother of his two daughters, Angela Benner; brothers, Steven (Debra), Michael (Karen), John (Karen), James, Richard (Janice) Benner and his sister, Laura (James) Kerste, as well as many nieces and nephews who he always spoke so highly and proudly of.

Friends may visit at the Coyle Funeral Home, 1770 S. Reynolds Rd., on Saturday, July 24th from 10:00 a.m. until the time of the Memorial Service at 2:00 p.m. Interment will be private.

Memorial donations in Thomas's memory may be made to The Toledo Zoological Society, 2700 Broadway, Toledo, Ohio 43609, GBS/CIDP Foundation International, 375 E. Elm St. Suite #101, Conshohocken, PA 19428 or to the charity of the donor's choice. Please view and sign our online "guest registry" at CoyleFuneralHome.com

Events

JUL **Visitation** 10:00AM - 02:00PM

24

Coyle Funeral Home

1770 S. Reynolds Road, Toledo, OH, US, 43614

JUL **Memorial Service** 02:00PM - 03:00PM

24

Coyle Funeral Home

1770 S. Reynolds Road, Toledo, OH, US, 43614

Comments



“ James Benner sent a virtual gift in memory of Thomas Benner



James Benner - July 23 at 10:51 PM



“ 1 file added to the album VIDEO TRIBUTE



COYLE FUNERAL HOME VIDEOS - July 23 at 02:44 PM



“ Beautiful tribute video
angie benner - July 23 at 03:28 PM



“ This is a wonderful tribute to Thomas. It really expresses his love for his family and his animals.

Next time we meet make sure to have that Chess board set up. You'll probably still beat me because you know I could never close a game out. AND YOU WOULDN'T TEACH ME HOW!

Love 'YA Bro. And I will never forget the good times we shared and later laughed our butts off remembering them.

You will always be a big part of my life. I will never forget you.

James - July 23 at 10:35 PM



“ Very well done. Tom is loved and will always remain in our hearts.
Rich

Richard Benner - July 23 at 11:44 PM



“ So Beautiful. Lots of Good Memories.
You will Always be part of my Life Tom.Forever in my ..

Oh,Don't you go Scaring little girl Angels by fooling with their babydolls and making them scary.

How I do Remember.

Rest In Peace now Baby Brother.

Laura Kerste - July 24 at 08:36 AM



“ 1 file added to the album VIDEO TRIBUTE



COYLE FUNERAL HOME VIDEOS - July 22 at 07:05 PM



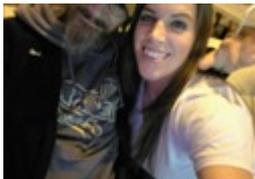
“ Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas Benner.



July 21 at 06:12 PM



“ This photo was back in 2016, Thanksgiving at my house. I miss you Uncle Tom, grateful to have shared some recent laughs with you. I know you are in a better place, no longer struggling with illness and that gives me comfort. I love you



Nikki Kerste - July 20 at 04:39 PM



“ He always spoke so highly of you Nikki. He was very proud of you and the responsible young woman you became. He loved you to the Moon and Back.

James - July 20 at 09:31 PM



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Benner.



July 19 at 02:35 PM



“ I met Tom and his brother Steve at Biggby's where a group of us used to hang out. Tom was intelligent, gifted, and kind. That is what I remember about him the most - his kindness. He loved his family and he loved God's beings that he cared for at the zoo and elsewhere. I am so sorry that this beautiful soul had to suffer so much. His passing is such a loss for all of us, especially his family. I send my deep condolences to his loved ones. So very sorry for your loss. Patricia Donatelli

Patricia L Donatelli - July 19 at 01:53 PM



“ Thanks Pat for that memory. But it was me...James who hanged out with you at Biggby's. Steve was our oldest brother and I don't think he even drank coffee. :)

James - July 20 at 11:03 AM



“ Oh, James! So sorry! I may have gotten your name wrong, but I remember how much you loved and cared for your brother! I send my condolences and prayers for you and your family.

Patricia Donatelli - July 21 at 02:29 AM



“ Brother Tom, what can I say, so many memories. Making gravel roads in the driveway for our cars when we were 6 and 4. As I worked on gathering 18 kids from the neighborhood for a pickup baseball game, I knew you would agree to be the 18th if we needed you even if your thrill for the game wasn't as strong as mine. Pushing the mattress up with your feet because you were mad That I got the top bunk bed. Going exploring in the woods and hanging out by the frog pond. You and I running with the same friends. Watching you rehabilitate the hawk in high school and then setting it free as well as the squirrel, letting it go in the park. Tom had to run away 3 times. The squirrel did not want him to leave. In time, Tom went his own way with new friends and did his own thing but was always the conservationist. Going to OSU to study Wildlife Management and finally taking a job at the zoo. Tom flourished at the zoo. He became an expert of sorts on large cats, seals, wolves and bears. The polar bear became his favorite. So knowledgeable that even the Sydney Australia zoo reached out to him. I could go on and on so I will end here. I know Tom is in heaven with mom and dad and listening to dad say "Tom grab get me a cup of mud" dad's term for coffee. If there is a zoo or conservation work to do in heaven, I am sure that is why he was called. Until we meet again. I will have to be content in writing my memories out and reliving them in my thoughts. I miss Tom and will always see him in a cloud or whenever I look at nature.



Richard Benner - July 19 at 09:51 AM



“ Richard. This is Beautiful. Started crying.
What wonderful memories.

Laura Kerste - July 20 at 12:00 AM



“ Richard,
One story Tom always shared was the day Dad woke him up and shouted 'Wake up and help your brother deliver those newspapers. It snowed out overnight and you need help'.

Tom got up, dressed, and opened the front door only to find a 10' drift covering the entry. You and he had to shovel a tunnel through the the snow just to gain access to the outside.

BLIZZARD OF '78

James - July 20 at 11:09 AM



“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas Benner.



July 18 at 12:59 PM



“ I just learned this very sad news this afternoon. Tom was indeed one of my favorite people at the zoo, being a dedicated employee and he was a wonderful friend to education. He helped explain Arctic animals to Snoozers in a way that fully engaged and mesmerized them. He was equally popular and memorable to teachers at teacher workshops. Anytime a program needed the extra pizzazz of a “real”keeper or a secret peek at polar bears or wolves, Tom graciously said yes...and always with a warm smile and enthusiastic persona. We shared conservation ethics and also the honor of being chosen to become Arctic Ambassadors for PBI. Mostly, he was just a really good guy...a little bit quiet and a whole lot kind. This is a true loss for his family, friends, polar bears, conservation, the zoo and me!

Linda Calcamuggio - July 17 at 07:38 PM



“ Thank You Linda. One of Tom's favorite things to do at the Zoo was the Zoo Snoozing program. He always looked forward to educating the young ones on conservation issues and especially the plight of the Polar Bear. He loved kids!

James - July 20 at 11:12 AM



“ I met Tom in 1985. We were both working grounds crew at the Toledo Zoo then. Four of us hit it off and were close friends. Much fun and mischief was had, but lots of work was accomplished too. Time and changes in geography changed our friendship over the years, but we remained friends. Tom helped me understand why a degree of change in the ocean, is a big deal. I never got to know the secret password to make the navy trained seals drain their exhibit, some secrets are meant to be kept! To Tom's family I offer my sincere condolences.

La McEwen - July 16 at 07:01 PM



“ Thank You La. He always was proud of being the first crew for hanging the lights for the 'Lights Before Christmas' program while on the grounds crew. Whether on Grounds or as a Keeper the Zoo was his second family. He lived for and the loved the Zoo.

James - July 20 at 11:16 AM



“ Rose Tribute was purchased for the family of Thomas Benner.



July 15 at 06:21 PM



“ Tom was one of the first people I worked with at the zoo. I learned a lot about training from him and his love for the animals always shone bright. He was so supportive, always made me laugh, and I will never forget him. My thoughts are with his family and all who cared for him.

Trudy Kuhrt

Trudy Kuhrt - July 15 at 04:43 PM



“ Thank you Trudy.

James - July 20 at 09:33 PM



“ My deepest sympathy to the entire Benner Family. I worked with Tom at the the for 25+ years, with big cats, sea lions and bears. Tom was an exceptional trainer and just a good guy to have around.

Dave Ross

Dave Ross - July 15 at 02:40 PM



“ Thank You Dave. When he had to give up his job at the Zoo was one of the saddest days in his life. He reminisced about his career all the time. He missed those bears the most. He always refered to them as 'my bears'.

James - July 20 at 11:20 AM



“ 5 files added to the tribute wall



Lisa Kerste - July 14 at 09:06 PM



“ I miss you already Little Brother. I'll make sure to take good care of DoJo for you. Hope you can get Ohio State Football where you're at. Don't be a stranger and give me a sign from time to time. Picture below are some of your favorite things.



James Benner - July 14 at 08:20 PM



“ 7 files added to the tribute wall



Angie Benner - July 14 at 06:37 PM



“ I was sorry to hear of Tom's passing. He was dedicated to the Zoo animals and had a great sense of humor. My sincere condolences and prayers to all of his family and friends.

Carol Zielinski

Carol J Zielinski - July 14 at 08:43 AM



“ Thank You Carol. His witty sense of humor was a strong character trait that he never lost.

James - July 20 at 11:21 AM



“ Our deepest sympathy to the Benner Family

May peace be with you.
Rick & Traci Eller
Tucson Az.

Rick - July 13 at 07:04 PM



“ RIP Tommy. Ed Nauman

Edward - July 13 at 07:11 PM



“ Thank You End.

Laura Kerste - July 13 at 09:46 PM



“ Thank you Rick. Thank you Eddy.

James - July 14 at 07:58 PM



“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Ryan Van Duren - July 13 at 06:40 PM



“ I met Tom almost 9 years ago while he was first in the hospital with CIDP. I was in his place a year before. We played words with friends for hours and hours building our friendship. Boy did he kick my butt !! Then in July 2012 we finally met, I went to Ohio. Met my Big Bro, Jim and gained another family. I'm heartbroken that this rare debilitating disease took him from his family.

Christine Manniello - July 13 at 06:32 PM



“ Thank you Christine.

James - July 14 at 07:59 PM



“ 3 files added to the album Tom



Ryan - July 13 at 06:14 PM