



## Thomas J. Gutknecht

April 10, 1953 - September 27, 2025

Thomas J. "Tom" Gutknecht, 72, of Bonita Springs, passed away unexpectedly on Saturday, September 27, 2025.

Born in Pittsburgh, PA, on April 10, 1953, Tom was the son of the late Ralph J. and Elaine M. (née Steinmetz) Gutknecht. He moved with his family to Southwest Florida 60 years ago from Mt. Troy, PA, and made the Bonita Springs area his lifelong home.

Tom graduated from Fort Myers High School in 1972 and began his career working with Seminole Plumbing, while also assisting at night for Englehart Funeral Home. He later worked as a mechanic for Sarlo Mowers. In 1977, Tom answered the call to public service by attending the police academy, beginning a distinguished career with the Lee County Sheriff's Department. He served the Bonita Springs community for 10 years with dedication and integrity, retiring as a sergeant.

Following his retirement from law enforcement, Tom continued his hardworking spirit through several ventures. He owned and operated Bonita Towing and shared his mechanical expertise at Bonita Auto, Butch's Auto Air, DeVoe Cadillac, Haskins, and Tomahawk. In 2017, alongside his wife, Susan, he embraced a new adventure by founding Liberty Balloons in Bonita Springs.

Tom was an active member of his community beyond his professional life. He proudly served for 25 years as a member of the Tropical Masonic Lodge #56 of Ft. Myers F&AM and Araba Shriner's and was a member of the Motor Division. He also belonged to the Lee County Retirees and the Lee County Pioneers, cherishing the camaraderie and friendships made through these organizations.

Above all, Tom was a devoted husband, father, brother, grandfather, great grandfather and friend. He will be remembered for his generosity, unwavering work ethic, and deep love for his family.

He is survived by his loving wife, Susan M. Gutknecht of Bonita Springs; his daughter, Virginia A. Wode (Stefan) of Bokeelia, FL; his brother, Frederick R. "Rick" Gutknecht (Phyllis) of Ellajay, GA; his sisters, Marianne Gutknecht (Sheila) of New Jersey and Elaine Scharon (Renee) of Ohio; three grandchildren, Zoe Shearn (Tanner), Neo Cole, and Kai Cole; one great-grandchild, Juda Shearn; and a second great-grandchild, Sora Shearn, due next month. He is also survived by many nieces and nephews including Chris Gutkencht (Delta), Ericia Garcia (Jose), Edward K. Hansen, III (Jennifer), Allison Goebel (Greg) John Hansen and Marina Mulligan (Steve).

Family and friends will gather to honor Tom's life on Saturday, October 4, 2025, at Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home. Visitation will be held from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m., followed by a funeral service at 11:00 a.m. with a reception to follow at The Stage Restaurant. Burial will take place at Restlawn Memorial Gardens in Port Charlotte, FL.

To sign his guest register or leave condolences online, please visit [www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com](http://www.ShikanyFuneralHome.com).

Arrangements are in the care of Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home, Family

Owned and Operated Since 1978.

# Cemetery Details

## Restlawn Memorial Gardens

1380 Forrest Nelson Blvd.  
Port Charlotte, FL 33949

# Previous Events

## Visitation

OCT 4. 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM (ET)

Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home  
28300 Tamiami Trail So.  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134  
(239) 992-4982  
bonitafhbill@comcast.net

## Funeral Service

OCT 4. 11:00 AM (ET)

Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home  
28300 Tamiami Trail So.  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134  
(239) 992-4982  
bonitafhbill@comcast.net

## Reception

OCT 4. 12:00 PM (ET)

The Stage Restaurant  
9144 Bonita Beach Rd. SE  
Bonita Springs, FL 34135

# Tribute Wall



“ Tommy Gutknecht you will be missed immensely. Mike and I will cherish our memories, we will pray for Susan, Virginia and your entire family. Thank you for your gift of friendship and all the great memories. Tommy, aka Bonita Beater, Aka Mullet Breath we pray you rest peacefully. Never doubt for a moment how much our memories will be forever cherished. ❤️



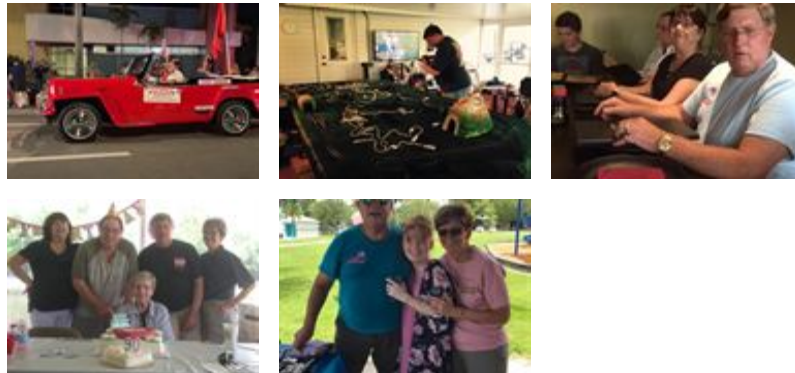
Your service today was just perfect, really enjoyed hearing from your family and friends as they share their stories.

---

**Laurie Bogard Peak** - October 04, 2025 at 09:51 PM



“ 48 files added to the album Life Tributes



---

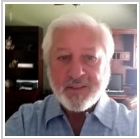
**Shikany's Bonita Funeral Home** - October 03, 2025 at 10:16 PM

TA

“ Love you all  
Love our fun at cookouts and bonfires  
Big hugs, prayers, strength, and peace to you all



Tisa Allen - October 03, 2025 at 08:01 PM



“ Ray Pyle lit a candle in memory of Thomas Gutknecht



Ray Pyle - October 03, 2025 at 01:10 PM

DS

“ David and Jerilynn Safran purchased the Divine Peace Bouquet for the family of Thomas J. Gutknecht.



David and Jerilynn Safran - October 03, 2025 at 09:26 AM

DS

“ David and Jerilynn Safran planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of Thomas J. Gutknecht.

David and Jerilynn Safran - October 03, 2025 at 09:26 AM

BG

“ To Tom's family ~ I have countless memories of serving alongside Tom on patrol and in CID. Several of those times were scary, many were just fall-down-funny, and some were very poignant. I was delighted when he became one of my readers a couple of years ago, and he attended a few of my book events. We posted a photo on his Tribute Wall from 2023 at Copperfish Books in Punta Gorda, FL. My wife, Nancy, & I will be there on Sat., Oct. 4th to honor Tom's legacy.

Bob Macomber & Nancy Glickman - October 01, 2025 at 05:11 PM

BM

“ Bob Macomber lit a candle in memory of Thomas J. Gutknecht



Bob Macomber - October 01, 2025 at 05:05 PM

BG

“ 1 file added to the tribute wall



Bob Macomber & Nancy Glickman - October 01, 2025 at 05:04 PM

JB

“ *Jan Bartley purchased the Simply Elegant Spathi phyllum for the family of Thomas J. Gutknecht.*



---

**Jan Bartley** - October 01, 2025 at 04:20 PM



“ *Basket Full of Wishes was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Gutknecht.*



---

October 01, 2025 at 02:57 PM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Gutknecht.*



---

September 30, 2025 at 02:16 PM



“ *A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Thomas J. Gutknecht.*

---

September 30, 2025 at 02:16 PM

TV

“ Tom, my brother, it was an honor to have served in law-enforcement with you. We had some really good times. You served our community well. You served your family well. My sincerest condolences to Susan and Virginia and the rest of the family. Godspeed, my friend. Rest in peace. 🙏  
Tony Vetter

---

**Tony Vetter** - September 30, 2025 at 10:08 AM