



Thomas "Tom" Lawrence Yankus, Sr.

August 5, 1923 - May 29, 2022

It is with great sadness that we share the passing of our beloved father, grandfather, great grandfather and World War II veteran Thomas L. Yankus, Sr. on May 29, 2022 in Tallahassee, Florida at the amazing age of 98.

Tom was born in Queens, New York on August 5, 1923 to the late William A. Yankus and Margaret Skroblus Yankus. He is predeceased by one brother, William Yankus.

Tom attended Andrew Jackson High School in Laurelton, NY and worked for Sperry Gyroscope prior to enlisting in the US Army Air Corp.

Tom proudly joined the Air Corp in December 1942 at the age of 19 to serve his country during WW II. He was assigned to the Eighth Air Force's 95th Bomb Group, 335th Bomb Squadron as a B-17 Flying Fortress radio operator / top turret gunner. His plane was shot down on the crew's fourth mission on March 4, 1944 on its return from the first daylight raid over Berlin, Germany.

The plane crashed after all crew parachuted out in occupied France. Once on the ground Tom was able to evade capture and joined forces with the "French Underground" where he was able to move civilians and soldiers alike through occupied territory to safety. Tom and other evaders hid and lived in a secret camp in the Freteval Forest, France. They were liberated in August 1944.

Upon his arrival back to the states he was awarded many medals for heroism including the Purple Heart, European Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal. In 2014 Tom was awarded the French Legion of Honor medal for his bravery. This is the highest award for military and civilian merits

awarded for service to France. He was a proud member of the 95th Bomb Group and of the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society (AFEES).

After the war Tom married his high school sweetheart Eileen Murray in New York on April 21, 1945. Eileen wore a wedding dress that was sewn with a piece of the very same parachute that saved Tom's life.

During their lives together he and Eileen were involved in several business ventures. They began by owning a paint and decorating store on Long Island, New York. Their next adventure led them to be the builders, owners and operators of Fairview Acres, a motel in the Adirondacks' mountains. They moved to St. Petersburg, Florida in 1956 in search of a milder climate. There Tom owned a residential home building business. In the 1960's Tom went to work for Eveland Brother's General Contractors and ended his career with Rowe and Newberry General Contractors where he built many commercial buildings that still grace St. Petersburg. After retirement Tom and Eileen moved to Palm Bay, Florida. Eileen sadly passed in February 1996.

In 1999 Tom met Vivian Harris who became his companion for the next 21 years. During this time Tom was able to return to France where he and Vivian were greeted by many of the people he had worked with while Tom was with the French Underground. Vivian passed in February 2022.

Survivors include his son, Thomas L. Yankus, Jr. (Annie), daughter, Jane Yankus Collins (Steven) and daughter in law, Kathleen Aerts.

Grandchildren include Jennifer Yankus Bonnell (Brad), Shelley Yankus Colston (Jon), Sara Yankus Lovell (Wood), Jon Yankus, Tanya Collins de Leon (Abe), and Lindsay Collins Whelan (Mike).

Tom is also survived by nine great grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held on June 16th at Bevis Funeral Home in Tallahassee, Florida with interment to follow on June 17th at the Florida National Cemetery, Bushnell, Florida. Todd Wahlquist with Bevis Funeral Home (850-385-2193, www.bevisfh.com) is assisting the family with their arrangements.

In lieu of flowers donations may be made in Tom's memory to Wuesthoff

Brevard Hospice, 8060 Spyglass Hill Road, Melbourne, FL 32940.

Dad, Grandpa, Great Grandpa, Tom - We will never forget you. You are and will always be our hero.

Cemetery Details

Florida National Cemetery

6502 SW 102nd Avenue
Bushnell, FL 33513

Previous Events

Funeral Service

JUN 16. 3:00 PM (ET)

Bevis Funeral Home & Crematory
200 John Knox Rd
Tallahassee, FL 32303
(850) 385-2193

Graveside commital

JUN 17. 1:00 PM (ET)

Florida National Cemetery
6502 SW 102nd Avenue
Bushnell, FL 33513

Tribute Wall



“ 1 file added to the album Service 6-16-2022



Bevis Funeral Home - June 16, 2022 at 05:20 PM



“ *It's with great sadness that I found Tom has passed away. I had the privilege to meet him and Vivian in Mons in 2004 together with fellow crew members Donald Egan, David Wolter and their spouses, at the invitation of my friend, the late Philippe Save. Another of that Greatest Generation has left on his last flight. Sending herewith my sincere condolences to all his family*

ED - Edouard Renière, Brussels Belgium - See Tom's pages at <http://www.evasioncomete.be/fyankustl.html> and [.https://www.americainairmuseum.com/person/212100](https://www.americainairmuseum.com/person/212100)

Ed Reniere, Belgium - June 13, 2022 at 10:21 AM

KE

“ I had the honor of taking care of this gentleman at WUESTHOFF inpatient unit. I cried reading all of his great accomplishments. I wish I had known all these intimate details of his life; know it was our privilege to honor his life at the end with our great HOSPICE love.

Dear family,

Thanks for allowing us to be a part of your families life... Rest in peace sir!

Kelly RN

Kelly - June 06, 2022 at 05:46 PM

CH

“ Tom was very special to me an all my family
He was a wonderful husband to my Aunt Vivian an always took good care of her. Will miss him, the wonderful meals we shared, the football games we watched an our visits. May he rest in peace.
Carolyne Hensel an family.

Carolyne Hensel - June 03, 2022 at 11:54 PM

MF

“ So sorry to hear of Tom's passing....we have good memories of visits with him and our Aunt Vivian. Jack and Mary Fitzpatrick. They shared a good life!

Mary and Jack Fitzpatrick - June 02, 2022 at 11:32 PM