

PASSAGES

Memento mori: Tom Southworth

Old Pal Tom Southworth died, not unexpectedly, last Saturday night at home. He passed with his family nearby, and with the dignity, warmth, and sense of humor those of us fortunate enough to have known him and his clan will remember for the rest of our years. He was 74.

Without irony, Dana Southworth reported back to me this past week that he had just returned from monitoring the current cutting on a 40-acre parcel that Tom and his brother Harry had horse-logged four decades ago, almost to the day.

Also without irony, but perhaps with that grin, Tom explained to me three decades ago that he and Harry went from horse-logging to saw-milling because they were pretty darn sure that they wouldn't have to walk so much of the up and down (of which New Hampshire has quite a bit), and they could lose money even faster than they had been with that old team of horses.

Tom would be the one to make that call, since he had received a degree in economics (Cornell, 1966), all the while whitewater racing canoes at the World Championships level in slalom singles. Packing multiple accomplishments into 1966, he got married too, to this formidable gal he met on the whitewater circuit when they were but teens—Nancy (Abrams), who has been described as a top-notch kayaker, cyclist and skier, homesteader, and Mom, and more. In 1972, it



Brothers Tom and Harry Southworth, circa 1975.
Photographer unknown.



Dana Southworth

Tom Southworth wills up a Garland Mill timber frame—a man in his element.

was off to the Olympics in Munich, Tom at 160lbs and 5'6", all shoulders and no waist, to compete in canoe slalom doubles (with John Burton) and Nancy in tow and enormously pregnant with Ben. They returned in a hurry, Tom's hair allegedly still wet from his final Olympic run. The whole world knows what began to unfold in the wee hours of September 5, and the darkness that followed. Tom and Nancy watched it on TV, and Ben was born.

With all this accomplishment modestly behind them, somehow they had taken a fancy in their grown-up suburban lives to reading *Yankee Magazine* (a magazine read by no Yankee ever). This magazine, avidly studied by folks living far South of the Yastrezmski Line, featured traditional recipes, table runner configurations by season, authoritative and important information about period-appropriate wallpaper and drapes, and especially a monthly column called "House For Sale," featuring some side-road disaster of fading 18th or 19th century charm. Thereby Tom fell for the Garland Mill and bought it, without seeing the inside of the house they would live in and work out of for decades. ("Worked out," he reported.)

Tom and Nancy and Ben moved up in 1974, McGowen born shortly thereafter (1975). Harry and Cid joined the throng in 1977. What do you suppose it took to abandon the blandishments of the middle class, swapping paychecks and lawns and so forth for the kind of domestic tranquility that has one dipping washing and cooking and bathing water in buckets from a hole in the iced-over mill pond? What did those brothers even say

Remembering Anders Frøstrup



Photo courtesy Johannes Kästel

Anders Frøstrup (right) and fellow Guild member Will Beemer share a moment at the first meeting of Stolpverk Norden in Mariestad, Sweden, in early 2017.

Anders Frøstrup, longtime Guild member and founder of the new Stolpverk Norden (Nordic Timber Framers Guild), passed away on February 9, 2019, at his home in Tønsburg. Anders was one of our first Guild members from outside North America and maintained his membership continuously since. He is also known for his work as an author, writing books on carpentry theory and building rehabilitation, and for his vast knowledge and commitment to craftsmanship and timber framing. He has presented at a number of our Guild conferences, and through his membership with us he was able to link up with other members in Scandinavia, which in turn led to the formation of Stolpverk Norden. He was greatly admired by his friends and colleagues for his good nature, willingness to help and collaborate on projects, and keen sense of humor.

Anders' company, Timber AS, employs sixteen people and is widely respected for its fine work; the website can be viewed here: timber.no. — *Will Beemer*

to those redoubtable women to get them to turn their backs on lives more comfortable, more “normal” than the one they then faced and embraced up North. (I have heard another version of this family lore that has the unflappable Nancy announcing that SHE was moving to the Garland Mill with 2-year-old Ben, and the other three—



Dana Southworth

Tom Southworth.

Tom, Harry, and Cid—could follow as they would care to.) The single strongest and warmest memory of Tom is (one I share with Janet Kane, who can spin a story or two her own self) of a long and languid evening in the “new” house, in a pastoral valley that is likely the only flat spot at that latitude between Maine and the Connecticut River. It was an evening abundant with cheery food and drink and conversation, a long slow sunset showing the mountains to the north, south, and east to good advantage. We enjoyed hours of hilarity and kindness, intellect and empathy. Then up early off the couches for a breakfast reprise, and back to our real lives. What a family!

I had asked nephew Dana for the inside story on Tom's character, which we all found formidable,

thoroughly modest, and unfailingly kind . . . but still a bit of a mystery for all that. “Tom had strength of character even greater than that of body and mind. Integrity with a capital I and his patience and genuine delight in working with those around him regardless of size, shape, or ability was real. More than just a sense of humor and optimism, Tom made those who spent any time at all in his company feel better about themselves and the world, though sometimes not the wall we might be re-framing. He was about the most fair-minded person I've known—a real stickler in this regard, from running the Lancaster planning board through real headwinds, to playing every kid on the little league team (even me), to dealing with employees, contractors, suppliers, and even cantankerous clients. He led by example, at work, at home, at play, and at the dinner table. (Tom claims that only Doug Lukian could out-eat him!)”

Characteristically, Tom did not see fit to mention to me his dire straits in our final digital communications just a couple of days before he died. He was more interested in pursuing a tale told long ago by my own dad about his decision to enter the ministry directly from a minor league baseball career, upon facing his first series of major league inside curves. We chatted a bit about spring training, and that was it.

Gratitude is the only remedy for grief, and it is seriously incomplete and comes on all too slowly, but it comes on, and lasts as long as we do. So raise your glasses, ladies and gentlemen, to a man without equal in our time. — *Joel McCarty*