



## John Thomas Hendrix

September 2, 1940 - August 17, 2014

John Thomas (Tom) Hendrix, age 73, breathed his final breath on August 17, 2014 at 2PM. He died peacefully at his lakefront home in Belton, TX where he has lived since 1991.

Tom was born September 2, 1940 in Galesburg, Illinois, the birthplace of the famous poet Carl Sandburg. He grew up in Harlingen in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas, and as a child was an altar boy at Saint Anthony's Church there. As an adult he identified with Saint Jude, whom he referred to as the patron saint of lost

causes. He graduated from Harlingen High School in 1959. He was, most notably, a poet.

Tom worked many different jobs in his early life, a few of which were: usher at the Arcadia theater, working in the cotton gin, spraying cotton with "Tommy Sprayrig", tying steel on a construction crew at Sangria Condominiums during the day and bartending at Little Italy at night on South Padre Island, working with his friend Charly doing clean-up in the aftermath of a devastating tornado in Wichita Falls, selling cameras and electronics at Gibsons, K-Mart, and Wal-Mart, and managing aloe vera production at Natural Way Labs in La Feria. He also worked as a freelance photographer doing weddings and live bands. He loved to tell the story of being up for 72 hours straight shooting 3000 photographs of Freddie Fender, and then crashing at Freddie's hotel, waking up the next day looking at each other and saying, "was it worth it?" And he worked with Falcon Records in McAllen to help produce Toby Beau, a local

band that became famous for the song “My Angel Baby”, which hit the top-ten chart in 1978.

Tom was in the Strategic Air Command (SAC) in the Air Force, and held a top-secret clearance as a member of the Atlas-F missile launch crew. He began his poetry career in 1966 while stationed at Wheelus Air Force Base in Tripoli, Libya, North Africa. When not writing, he loved to ride his motorcycle along the Mediterranean there.

In 1981 Tom met Penny Boekhoff (from Wellsburg, Iowa) at a photo session at Brownsville’s Gladys Porter Zoo. They were married in La Feria in 1983, and moved to Central Texas in 1989. She was dedicated to the idea of him being a poet, and she supported his writing career by illustrating and editing his books. Tom was published in over one hundred books of poetry, literary journals, and magazines. He received more than fifty awards, from first place to honorable mention, in national and international competitions. He served as a judge for several national poetry competitions and authored five poetry chapbooks: Love Brackets, Find Me a Sand Dollar, Drying in the Sun, Trinkets, and Notes on a Frayed Cuff. He abandoned his writing after years of frustration over the declining acceptance and recognition of poetry, and left behind several unedited and unpublished manuscripts.

He is survived by his wife Penny and his half-brother Michael Spangler of Alpharetta, Georgia. He was preceded in death by his father Merle Hendrix, mother Kathryn Spangler, step-father Don Spangler, and half-brothers Donnie Spangler and Patrick Spangler.

There will be no viewing or burial, and no memorial service is planned. Tom’s cremains will be offered to the wind, surf, and sand of South Padre Island.

Memorials may be made to Tender Mercies ([www.tendermerciestx.com](http://www.tendermerciestx.com)) and / or Gentiva Hospice ([www.gentivahospicefoundation.org](http://www.gentivahospicefoundation.org)), both of whom made it possible for him to spend his final weeks in the comfort of his own home.

# Tribute Wall



“ *John Thomas Hendrix*

October 05, 2023 at 10:58 AM



“ *John Thomas Hendrix*

October 04, 2023 at 06:25 PM



“ *John Thomas Hendrix*

September 26, 2023 at 10:57 PM



“ *Tommy was a person that I have known since elementary school. When he was in high school, he worked as an usher for my father at the Arcadia Theatre in Harlingen, Texas. My older sister had an unrequited crush on him in 1959 when the movie "Rio Bravo" was on at the show. Many years later, Tom came to a Christmas party that my sister had at our house and brought his brother Mike. Even though I had also known Mike, sort of, for years as we all went to St. Anthony's, it was my first real encounter with him as a teen in high school, and later we started dating and eventually got married. So Tom became my brother in law also. Rest in Peace Tom and God Bless you Penny.*

Madeleine Gilbert Spangler - August 28, 2014 at 07:37 PM