



Thomas "Tom" V. Harris

October 19, 1951 - December 31, 2025

Thomas (Tom) V. Harris passed away on December 31, 2025 at age 74. He is survived

by his beloved wife, Diane Van Arsdale-Harris, and several nephews and cousins. He

was predeceased by his father, Van T. Harris; his mother, Claire L. Harris; and sisters

Mary Claire Harris Dixon and Carol Jean Harris Appenzellar. A 1973 graduate of the

College of William and Mary with a B.S. in Chemistry, Tom completed his Ph.D. in

Chemistry at Cornell University in 1978. After completing a Post Doctoral position at

Princeton University from 1978-1979, he worked as a Research Chemist at Gulf Oil in

Harmarville, PA from 1978-1985.

Tom married the love of his life in 1982 and they shared 43 years of a happy marriage.

They supported each other to have two parallel successful careers.

Tom and Diane headed to California in 1985, when Tom began his second career as a

Research Chemist at the Chevron Research Center in Richmond, CA, where he worked

from 1985 until he retired in 2013. His love of chemistry and his love of teamwork brought him back to the Research Center several times as a consultant until March 2025.

Tom dedicated his career to the development and commercialization of novel processes. Tom was especially proud of his work in developing a safer chemical manufacturing process deployed in Normandy, France and a clean fuel manufacturing process deployed in Salt Lake City, Utah.

In addition to his love of chemistry, Tom loved nature. He was an avid birder and

frequently participated in the annual Benicia Bird Count. He enjoyed hiking and being

out in nature. He lovingly planted a Native Plant garden on the hillside in our yard. He

and Diane loved taking trips to the Monterey Bay area as well as trips to Europe.

Tom will be remembered as a highly intelligent and kind man who always put others before himself.

Tribute Wall

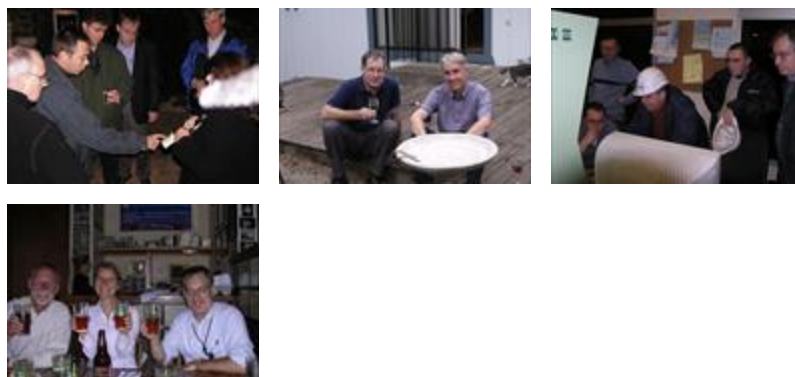
CC

“ *Tom's pictures with Gonfreville colleagues and me.*

The wine tasting in Burgandy, France with some of the Gonfreville folks (Piere Tequila, Gilles Siquin, Jean Louis and Todd Brookhart and Thom - from the US).

Beer tasting was somewhere in the US with one of the Gonfreville engineers, myself and Thom.

Curt Campbell



Curt Campbell - March 24 at 08:29 PM

MK

“ *My work with him in alkylolation catalysts was enjoyable and rewarding. He was always willing to tell me what to look for in his research and if I could find new ways of analyzing his possible inventions. Him and I worked as a team. What a joy.*

Muigai Karigaca

Muigai Karigaca - March 24 at 08:07 PM

CC

“ Dear Diane,

here are my and Annabel's deepest condolences on Tom's passing. May memory heal your soul. I knew Tom even before I joined Chevron in 1995. I met him in 1992 at a conference. He was an excellent scientist, co-worker and human being. It was a great privilege to work with him on many zeolite related projects. After his retirement, he came back to Chevron and helped us on several projects including one closely with me. His advice and knowledge were invaluable. In October 2023 Tom and I enjoyed a wonderful lunch together at Hotel Mac in Point Richmond. The memory stays forever in my heart. One of the milestones in his excellent career was the development of a commercial process in 2005. We had a wonderful celebration with Tom and you for his success at the Pyramid Brewing Company in Berkeley. A few memorable photos from that event are attached. We all will miss him dearly.

C.Y. Chen



C.Y. Chen - March 24 at 07:52 PM

“ In Memory of Tom

I have known Tom for over 46 years. We started our professional career at Gulf Oil Company in Pittsburgh, PA. Tom started a year ahead of me. As a matter of fact, Tom being the freshman in the group, was asked to act as the host for my interview and took me around to talk to other people after my presentation. He took me out for lunch and we talked about our graduate work and about Gulf Oil. We worked in the same team and shared a lot of ideas and insights about our projects. Tom was engaged to Diane, who was working on her PhD degree at the time, so he was still single. We invited him many times to our house and so we became friends.

Tom and I joined Chevron Research in 1985. We moved to the same neighborhood in Benicia. We saw each other frequently and our families became close friends. We shared many celebrations and meals together and shared a lot of memories.

At Chevron, we worked in different groups and projects. But we still talked a lot about our projects and exchanged ideas. Tom was a solid scientist and knew his field very well. He was creative and an excellent problem solver. He was very well accomplished and highly respected. Tom was a strong experimentalist and his approach was patient and detailed. His contributions were highly appreciated and successfully applied commercially by Chevron. He achieved a very strong career as a scientist. He was the lead scientist for a project to solve a serious environment problem for a Chevron plant in France that threatened to shut down that plant. Tom worked hard at this project. It required an alternative technology that needed a new solid catalyst. It also included many trips to France. In light of that, Tom learned to speak french which helped to make progress on that project. Tom talked to me many times about developing a catalyst for this project. I made a few suggestions. Tom finished this project successfully and received a patent for the catalyst. He really surprised me when he told me that he included my name in the patent. I honestly did not think that I deserved to be on that patent. It was all his hard work that supplied the solution and the catalyst. But that was Tom. He never hesitated to give credit to his colleagues,

no matter how minor their contribution.

Tom had many interests and hobbies. He was an active member in the National Audubon Society. He shared this activity with his wife, Diane. He had an extensive knowledge of different bird species and their habitat. He participated yearly in the bird counts around the area.

Tom was also an accomplished carpenter. He was a "purist" and only used manual tools as he worked. No power tools. He was not bothered if a project took a year or more before completion. He took his time and was very patient at the task. In their house, you find many pieces of furniture that he lovingly created; well built and very solid.

Tom and Diane loved gardening, a topic that we shared with them. Tom's main interest was in growing native plants that he researched deeply. Their terraced backyard is full of beautiful California wild flowers.

Finally, Tom loved to cook. He enjoyed trying different recipes, no matter how complicated or involved they were. We had many delicious dinners at Tom and Diane's house. Tom not only liked cooking, but also, enjoyed good food in general, paired with an excellent wine to compliment the meal.

Tom was not much for small talk. However, he had a wide interest in history, cultures, travel and politics. Tom could discuss in depth many topics of conversation for hours, especially with the help of a good wine.

I truly miss Tom and will always remember him as a very dear friend and colleague. Rest in peace Tom. Your memory will always be in my mind and heart.

Mo Habib

2026

DM

“ I am saddened and still in disbelief at Tom's passing. I got to know Tom during his last major project before he retired. He was a valued colleague who's contributions made it possible for a new, safer technology to be implemented in a Chevron refinery. For readers who may not know the petrochemical R&D world, many people work an entire career without this level of impact. Project lore has it that Tom was investigating the properties of a new material when a test tube got hot - indicating that a chemical reaction had occurred. That glimmer was the beginning of a work team that became more like an extended family. During this time, I spent more time, had more intense conversations, and learned more about myself than I did with my "real" family. Tom was a central part of this family. He was calm, knowledgeable, and focused. He was also kind and supportive, even when the going got difficult. I will miss him dearly.

Don

Don Mohr - March 13 at 02:51 PM

AO

“ I am heartbroken for the sudden passing of Tom. I am beginning to come to terms with the unbelievable news! My thoughts and deepest condolences are with Diane and loved ones. I am holding onto Tom's memories of warmth and gentleness. They taught me to work with passion, live with kindness, and that legacy will continue to guide me as I cherish the memories of working with him. He will be deeply missed and never forgotten.

Rest in peace, my colleague, my friend! ☐💔

Adeola

Adeola Ojo - February 26 at 07:45 PM

“ Diane,

It took me some time to come to this blank page and write about Tom, because he represented so much to me. Putting these words down somehow materializes the fact that he is no longer here with us.

Tom was first a mentor. When I joined Chevron, he was the one who took the time—and had the patience—to work with a (back then) young, impatient research chemist eager to make an impact and change the world. With him, I learned to pace myself and to understand that there is no point in rushing. Wise, measured decisions and careful observations would often achieve the same result—if not a better one—with a fraction of the energy I was spending trying to get there faster.

Our discussions quickly expanded beyond chemistry to cooking and wine (not entirely off topic, after all, as they all involve processes and optimization). Over time, mentorship turned into friendship. I continued to learn from him—about science, about life, about almost everything. He even knew things about France that I didn't know.

What impressed me most was the depth of Tom's curiosity and the passion he brought to so many different subjects. He could talk for hours about his vegetable beds, wine, politics, astronomy, birds, sailing, or cooking—with a spark in his eyes that was absolutely contagious.

After I moved to Texas, I came back to California for work and had the opportunity to have dinner with him in Berkeley. We talked without interruption for hours, to the point that the waitress commented on it and said how nice it was to see people so fully in the flow of a conversation. With Tom, it was always easy.

I recall the many dinners the four of us shared, the rich discussions, the laughter... I will always value those deep moments of human

connection.

Tom left too early. I miss him dearly, and at the same time, I am profoundly grateful for the moments of life I was able to share with him.

Cedrick



Cedrick - February 25 at 09:45 AM

HL

“*I'm so sorry to hear the passing of Tom! Tom was such a genuinely nice person and was always willing to help out and share his wisdom. I learnt so much from him in last 20 years! Cannot believe he is gone now as it feels like just yesterday when we were talking about New Ionic liquid applications last year...*

May he rest in peace in heaven. 🙏🙏🙏 my heart goes to Diana and the family in this incredible tough time.



Huping Luo - February 05 at 01:35 PM

HL

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Huping Luo - February 05 at 01:31 PM

VH

“ Cousin Thomas or Tommy was very kind to me when I was as visiting my uncle. He took a few minutes to offer assistance with a math problem I was encountering. His passing comes as a shock.

Valerie Heinze - January 29 at 01:49 PM

LY

“ Diane,

Our deepest condolences.

Memories of Tom:

- sailing on RumTumTugger;*
- sharing a glass of wine afterwards,*
- conversations ranging across science and technology,*
- photography, birding, wine, and*
- many lunches and gatherings.*

Lyman and Marion



lyman young - January 24 at 07:27 PM

“ Tom,

We are all deeply saddened to lose such a wonderful friend and colleague. You live on in our fondest memories; we miss you dearly. Rest in peace.

Diane,

I hope that the beautiful memories you shared with Tom provide you with strength and comfort in the days ahead.

Tom was a visionary scientist, inventor, and mentor. He was an incredible colleague whose technical expertise I relied upon constantly. I want to share a few of his achievements that led to significant commercial success, driven by his unique dedication:

- *ISOALKY™ Technology: Tom dedicated the final decade of his career to developing this clean gasoline technology. His inventions were critical in making manufacturing safer and more efficient. Because of his persistence, those ideas moved from the lab to a successful commercial plant at a Chevron Refinery.*

- *The "Alpha Test": Tom had a profound understanding of chemical reactions. Together, we collaborated on a new testing method that guided the development of a new zeolite for second-stage hydrocracking catalysts—a technology now used worldwide. What was truly amazing was his drive: after one informal discussion, Tom worked tirelessly to successfully develop that test in just a few months. When Tom believed in a project, he delivered.*

Beyond the lab, Tom was a natural team builder who led with empathy. He was a gifted listener who saw the best in everyone, mentoring researchers and engineers alike. He didn't just build technology; he helped us become better collaborators.

After his retirement, I was grateful that our friendship continued. I could always count on him. We will all miss his incredible cooking, his taste in fine wines, his generous spirit, and our sincere

conversations.

Goodbye, Tom. You were one of a kind.

Hye Kyung Timken



Hye Kyung Timken - January 23 at 10:17 PM

VH

Yes, your description of our family member sounds correct.
Valerie Smith-

Valerie Heinze - January 29 at 01:57 PM

JZ

“ So sad that our technology community has lost another respected member. Tom was an extremely talented scientist and colleague, as well as a wonderful friend outside of Chevron. At work, he will always be remembered for his friendly demeanor, willingness to listen and involve himself in other's projects that could benefit from his unique understanding and expertise, and dedication to overseeing a valuable laboratory service that benefited everybody in the catalyst department through his exacting attention to detail and insistence of quality work. His computer modeling and programming skills were the envy of all who knew him. He was a scientist in the truest sense of the word that always loved discussing the fundamental chemistry of different projects (even those unrelated to his own field) and kept everyone around him honest with his thorough understanding of the basics. His involvement truly made a difference in the success of the entire department.

Tom was also an engaging friend away from work. He was funny, quirky (insisting on building quality furniture pieces using wood working tools that eschewed any sort of automation), and a connoisseur of fine wine and French cuisine. He was wonderfully supportive of other's hobbies and interests, and always listened respectfully to whatever rant-of-the-moment I happened to thrust upon him in social settings (with his trademark bemused smirk). And last but not least, his bilingual skills in French will always be remembered/appreciated the time that he graciously took time away from sightseeing opportunities one afternoon in Paris to help me negotiate the purchase of essential clothing items in a department store when my luggage was stolen off the street when we vacationed together in 2013.

May you rest in peace.

Jim Ziemer - January 20 at 08:47 PM

SS

“ *Diane, deepest condolences to you for your loss. Though we didn't get to see you too often, my fondest childhood memory was when you came to Illinois to visit and brought me a Benicia t-shirt. I asked Tom many questions about that part of CA. Tom was a good man and will always be remembered.*

Love, Steven Suk

Steven Suk - January 13 at 06:43 PM

KK

“ I was truly saddened to hear of Tom's passing- I last met Tom in a lunch in 2023 to celebrate the Iso Alky project, and was very happy to chat with Diane and Tom after a gap.

I was fortunate to know Tom from our interactions at Chevron Tech Center in the Catalysis group. He was very kind, knowledgeable and helpful and we worked together in our quest to characterize zeolites and understand how our catalysts actually worked.

Tom was also an outdoor enthusiast, who I/ our hiking group hiked with regularly over a period from 1998 to 2017. Diane also joined several times, and we enjoyed outings and good conversations. Tom loved to take photos of wildflowers and shared many high quality pictures with our group. I believe that Tom and I also shared the same birthday!!



Kamala R Krishna - January 10 at 08:40 PM

RR

“ I have been fortunate to have been able to spend time with Tom and Diane over the years.

I will remember the hiking, holiday visits, the projects Tom and I helped each other with, and our conversations about engineering and physics.

Tom also had a lot of knowledge about French wines and birding, two topics that I learned a lot about from him.

He will be missed.

Ross

Ross Reinhardt - January 06 at 02:00 AM

SZ

“ I first met Tom in 1986 when he was suddenly moved (like Mo Habib and a number of folks from the research Center in Pittsburg, PA out to California . What an adjustment for them .) I was in a research group focused on catalyst invention and development and Tom was placed in that group . His research took on a study of zeolite materials which was a new discipline for him . He threw himself into it and we were research colleagues in that area . In the coming years Tom was to produce some key results which were published and were novel concepts in the world of zeolite materials (which are important for a very large number of refining petrochemical processes as catalysts) . These made an important impact on the research community , the first in using computer modeling to understand some key influences in synthesizing zeolites , and the second a few years later in using catalytic test data to better understand some unusual zeolite structures and their behavior . He was vey much respected in that research community though he was his quiet humble self and did not spend time promoting himself . As time went on he began to work in other disciplines while I remained behind in the zeolite research . But we always had great respect and appreciation for each other and knew that we had had a special research time together . Stacey Zones

stacey zones - January 05 at 03:34 PM

KL

“ So many memories of sharing Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Easter, 4th of July and birthdays with Tom and Diane over 20 years. We will miss Tom's thoughtfulness, intelligence, techno-help, humor and resourcefulness. Kris Ludwigsen and Tom O'Hearn



Kris Ludwigsen - January 04 at 03:27 PM

MA

“ I worked with Tom for several years while working at Chevron. He was not only smart and a genius in his field but was a freind and a sought after company.May he rest in peace.Moin Ahmed, Austin Texas

Moinuddin Ahmed - January 04 at 10:38 AM

RS

“ Dear Diane, Our Love and Sincere Condolences on the passing of your Loving Husband. We will always cherish the memories of our Dear Nephew, Tom, and the wonderful times through the years that we all spent together.
God Bless Tom in Heaven. His Memory, and knowledgeable and caring Research Findings will live on forever.

Uncle Dick and Aunt Roe

Richard and Rosemary Suk - January 04 at 01:02 AM

CR

“ I first met my brother-in-law, Tom, during my twin sister Diane's and my freshman year (1972-1973) at Lafayette College when he came to visit my future husband Chris, his friend from Springfield High School in Virginia. Diane and Tom eventually began dating seriously while in graduate school- he at Cornell and she at SUNY Binghamton and married in 1982.

Over the years our get-togethers were infrequent due to living on opposite coasts, but I always enjoyed their visits to Niawe Island (our little bit of paradise in the Thousand Islands in Canada). He was a wonderful help to my sons Ross and Mike on his last visit there 10 years ago when they undertook re-staining the cottage from its redwood color to a grayish tint to cover the first coat which they deemed "too blue". Tom was always the one high up on the ladder meticulously scraping to ensure that the new stain job would endure and spraying the highest peaks of the cottage. To date the cottage still looks great. He was always a great guest- hopping up to help with dishes after dinner.

During that visit Tom generously allowed Diane and I to have "sister time" and was never resentful when Diane came to visit me in Rochester in recent years for our theatre excursions and trips to NJ to visit family. He was not jealous of our "twin bond".

A connoisseur of French and California wines, Tom conceded when visiting Rochester in 2017 that the Finger Lakes region has some decent wines. He also enjoyed hiking along the Erie Canal and the many parks in the Rochester area.

He will be greatly missed. Rest in peace, dear brother-in-law.

Carol

Carol Reinhardt - January 03 at 06:20 PM

SG

“ I remember Tom well. He was a special person. Very kind, empathetic and loving. Diane, you had a very special husband and were blessed with a long and happy marriage. May he rest in peace.

Susan Grossman - January 03 at 05:31 PM

DO

“ I enjoyed working with Tom. He made the world a safer place with his work to replace dangerous acids with benign zeolite powders.

Dennis O'Rear - January 03 at 04:19 PM

RQ

“ Ron and Ellen Quintero purchased the Sympathy Gourmet Charcuterie Gift Basket for the family of Thomas "Tom" V. Harris.



Ron and Ellen Quintero - January 03 at 12:59 PM

TA

“ Diane, so sorry for your loss. Tom taken away too soon . he will be missed by all that knew him. Remember all the good time, the hikes, the trips and more.

Terry and Jill

Terry Van Arsdale - January 03 at 10:42 AM

DC

Diane, so sorry for your loss. I was fortunate to be Tom's technician for his last 13 years. When he returned, I was fortunate to be his tech again. A great person and mentor. Will be sorely missed.

David Carter - January 03 at 10:38 PM

JC

Diane, memories from France on behalf of several people Tome worked with during several years. He helped us so much in eliminating a very toxic chemical from our plant and replace it with zeolites he developed. A great colleague, nice, smart, and so talented.

Sincere condolences.

Jacques Cazin

Jacques Cazin - January 06 at 09:06 AM

DL

We will miss Tom greatly. Thank you for sharing him with us, Diane.

Tom & I met ~1990 volunteering for the Benicia, CA Christmas Bird Count. This local annual citizen science event is part of a national effort to document the ebb & flow of US bird populations. We partnered with a retired FBI Agent, Vic Snider, & saw the only Snowy Plover ever recorded in the (then) ~75 year history of the Benicia CBC. We actually were a group of 6 birders with responsibility for both sides of i-680 from Benicia to Cordelia. We had fortuitously arranged to meet for lunch to coordinate afternoon coverage, which gave us 6 witnesses for the plover after lunch. Tom's dad was also a birder, & IIRC, they saw a Snowy Plover while birding at Crab Cove in Alameda as a tune-up/calibration for the CBC.

Over the next ~35 years, Tom & I didn't just bird our area in Winter. We monitored it all year long. We saw the Benicia CBC's only Cassin's Vireo, first Mute Swans, & first Eurasian Collared Doves. One year we saw an all-white woodpecker, which was surprisingly difficult to identify sans color markings. We decided it was a Northern Flicker, based on its size.

In the early-mid '90s, Benicia Sky Valley developers proposed adding ~5500 homes & 15,000 people to Benicia's ~24,000 population. Tom & I joined other Benicians in organizing opposition to Sky Valley. We used our limited resources to address potential violations of the Antiquities Act, Bald Eagle Protection Act, & the Endangered Species Act. In the end, we lost all the battles, but won the war.

Benicia's Planning Commission & City Council voted against the Golden Eagles protected by the Bald Eagle Protection Act. They voted against the the Callippe Silverspot Butterfly, which was a candidate for endangered species status. The developers proposed a mitigation for butterfly habitat their project would destroy. Their proposal involved moving ~2500 acre-feet of butterfly habitat from one hillside to another, with not a speck of evidence that it could work. Tom & I were scientists, & ridiculed the mitigation proposal mercilessly. The developers were not going to hire an army of workers with trowels to dig up 5000 acres (7.8 sq. mi.) of soil 6" deep containing yellow pansy rhizomes & overwintering caterpillars, carefully carry it to another hillside, & do what God & 100 million years of evolution couldn't do. They had no evidence of efficacy. They were going to bulldoze nearly 10 square miles of rare butterfly habitat into a rotting pile of compost. We lost those development votes. But the Rose Drive/Briato landfill toxic waste problem exposed Sky Valley's vulnerability. It borders only ¼ mile from a Superfund toxic waste dump, & Benicians didn't want that.

In the next general election, Benicians elected a new mayor & a new

majority of city council members, who had a goal of putting a new General Plan in place. Tom Harris was one of several strong, silent, selfless, fundamental forces behind that change.

In Spring 2017, Tom & I monitored 3 pairs of Blue-winged Teal (small ducks) courting in the pond south of Pierce Lane, east of I-680. Ten weeks later, we had photographic proof of only the second breeding record for that species in Solano County.

*Darrell Lee
past president
Napa-Solano Audubon Society*

Darrell Lee - January 14 at 02:52 PM

SB

I had the privelege of working with Tom in the Catalyst Group for many years. He was such a kind, quiet, modest person, he never aggressively advertised his awesome abilities and interests in so many areas. After getting to know him a bit better I learned that he was not only an extraordinarily talented researcher, he knew wine, French, Irish music, and was quite a naturalist. I recall on a business trip, he and Bill Schinski explained to me in great detail how to do taxidermy.

The world needed more like him and is poorer for his passing.

Sue Bezman

Sue Bezman - February 05 at 12:02 PM