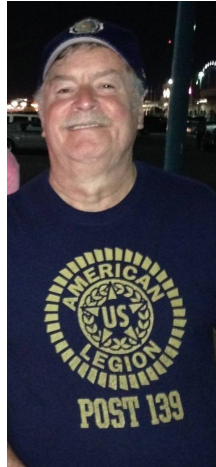


Tom Witt

By: Sara M. Malkowski

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<https://www.lyndhurstamericanlegion.com/sara-s-spotlight>



First and foremost, I want to thank you all for your patience for the January spotlight article. Unfortunately, we all know life happens and how time can just fly by so fast. Well it's time to catch up on some of that lost time! So without further ado, let me introduce our January spotlight, Mr. Tom Witt.

Thomas Witt, who prefers to go by Tom, was born on January 5th, 1949; which makes him a Capricorn and a perfect pick for this month's spotlight! I mean who doesn't love having the spotlight on them during their birthday month?! Born and raised in Jersey City, NJ, Tom did not become a resident of Lyndhurst until 1988 but he's become a staple of the community ever since! Tom is not only a staple in our local community, he is a very active member within the American Legion and other veteran organizations. As part of the Lyndhurst American Legion family, Tom serves as a dual member. He is a Legionnaire as well as an SAL, Sons of the Legion, member.

During Tom's interview, there was so much new information I learned about him and cannot wait to share it with all of you. But where to start? The only place we can.....at the beginning!

As a young man, who recently graduated high school, Tom decided not to go the typical college route but decided to skip on ahead down a career path. At 20 years old, Tom would find himself working in banking at JP Morgan. In April of 1971, Tom was drafted into the US Army during the Vietnam War. After completing basic training at Fort Dix, NJ, he would go on to Fort Gordon in Georgia to receive training in radio and teletype communications. Tom became part of the 3rd Air Cavalry Division where he would be stationed at Fort Lewis in Washington state and then later at Fort Bliss in Texas. Tom returned home in April of 1973.

Upon his return home, Tom continued his employment with JP Morgan, who had held his position while he was away serving. Tom explained that back then most employers held jobs for those individuals who served during wartime. And while back then it wasn't legally required to have a job position for our returning veterans, it is now under USERRA, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994. Tom continued working in banking for the next 27 years with JP Morgan until his retirement.

Tom explained that he felt he was doubly lucky when coming back home because not only did he still have a job at JP Morgan but JP Morgan is where he met his "beautiful wife Karen;" they've been married for 34 years! Tom went on to say that he considers marrying Karen one of his biggest accomplishments in life. He said, "not only did I get myself a trophy wife but I got a wonderful woman who has been one of my biggest

supporters and my daughter, Norilynne.” I think that’s the sweetest thing I’ve ever heard! They don’t make them like this anymore! Tom definitely has a beautiful family!

Tom is also a part of another large family, the Lyndhurst American Legion family. As I mentioned before, Tom is a dual member of the American Legion as part of the Legionnaires and the SAL. Tom’s SAL membership comes from his father, who served during World War II with the US Navy and was at the Battle of Okinawa.

As a Legionnaire, Tom has been heavily involved over the years and still continues to be involved today. Tom has served as Commander of the American Legion Barringer-Walker-Lopinto Post 139 from 2000 to 2002. Currently, he heads the Americanism committee and is a member of the Colorguard; he’s been a member of the Colorguard since 1996! Tom is also the current Commander of the Veterans Alliance, which is made up of members from the American Legion, Amvets, VFW and the VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America).

It has been interesting hearing all about the positions and committees Tom has been a part of over the years but I found it fascinating that Tom doesn’t have a driver’s license! I’m sure there’s an interesting story there and maybe we’ll find out one day! However, I did find out something that is by far more interesting (I think anyway). Tom is a 2 time cancer survivor. We all knew Tom’s a fighter but we just didn’t know how hard he’s fought to survive. We’re so happy to hear you’ve won the battle with cancer not once but twice; now that’s a true gladiator in my eyes. After hearing about his fight with cancer, finding out who his idol is makes so much more sense.

If you haven’t figured it out by now, I always ask this question. If you could have lunch with anyone in the world, dead or alive, who would it be and why? Tom answered

quickly, “Mickey Mantle.” I’m not surprised it’s a baseball player. We all know how much Tom loves baseball. Tom went on to explain that “as a child, he was my first idol. I absolutely loved baseball. And as I got older, he was still my idol! But as I learned about everything he would go through just to play, all while being ill. I developed an admiration and respect for him that was not just based on his legendary skills as a player but for his love of the game & the commitment he had to playing all while no one knew he was ill.” Tom went on to say that “it is this and my own life experiences that I encourage people to be considerate of others as often as possible because you don’t know what people may be going through. The best advice I can impart is Don’t judge a book by it’s cover.”

That is certainly some sage advice. I want to thank Tom for taking the time to meet with me and sharing some of his story with us. I also want to say Thank You for your service and for all that you do for your fellow veterans.

