



Theodore J. Gourley Jr.

August 17, 1944 - March 3, 2021

Father, husband, son, brother, teacher, and friend—Dr. Theodore J. Gourley, Jr., Mt. Holly, NJ, was all this and more. Ted passed away on March 3, 2021, after a sustained illness. He was 76.

His was a life well-lived, devoted always to others, from the children in his special education classroom to any lost soul who needed solace. His heart was kind and his sense of humor sharp. He loved to ski, teaching his three children the sport. And he was just as smooth on the dance floor.

The oldest of seven children, Ted was born in Patterson, NJ., to Josephine and Lt. Col. Theodore J. Gourley. He was an air force “brat,” but embraced the adventure of family move across the country and internationally, as part of his father’s military career, living in Newfoundland, Canada; Massachusetts, Alabama, Hawaii, and the Azores.

The Boy Scouts provided Ted with a friendly and consistent sense of belonging no matter where he lived as a child. Scouting inspired his life-long love of nature and camping and especially a respect for Native American cultures. His study of various American indigenous tribes included the art of costuming. Ted made by hand headdresses, totems, and jewelry, paying close attention to authenticity. Additionally, he participated in customary rituals that included traditional fire hoop and snake dances. He attended many Eastern American Indian pow-wows. And yes, there were a few times when his breach cloth costume embarrassed his younger brothers and sisters—but they were entertained and impressed as well.

He graduated high school from Rancocas Valley Regional High School and then continued his education, earning a degree in history from Wilkes University (Wilkes-Barre, PA), a Master Degree in Education from Trenton State University, and his doctorate from Temple University.

His first teaching position was in special education in the New Egypt School District. He also held administration positions in the Mt. Laurel School District and Burlington County Vocational School. For many years, he worked as a Director of Gift and Talented Education for the New Jersey Department of Education.

Ted was an educational entrepreneur. He truly believed that all children have special talents and gifts, and if given the right opportunity, can excel. This conviction resulted in numerous innovative educational programs that he co-created and successfully administered: Olympics of the Mind, Convocations, Marsville, The Very Special Arts Festival, Mini-Model Congress, Model Congress, National Engineering Design Challenge, Planet X, ROGATE (Resources Offered for Gifted & Talented Children, and Young Astronauts. As an associate director at EIRC, he was the solo developed of the Institute for Creative Education (ICE) and Cognetics, which was recognized by the U.S. Patent Office as one of the US's top ten programs in teaching innovation skills.

His vast accomplishments in education were both nationally and internationally recognized. The Regan administration selected Ted's grant to create the Young Astronauts program as a tribute to the Challenger tragedy. This then brought him to his first visit in the White House. In celebration of the Challenger Center, Ted was again invited to the White House by Barbara Bush and his program Marsville was celebrated by the Bush administration. Ted's third, final, and favorite jaunt at the White House was during the Clinton administration when former President Clinton acknowledged Ted's program, Model Congress. This notoriety catapulted Ted's programs internationally, with adaptations in Russia, New Zealand, and Australia.

After retirement from EIRC, Dr. Gourley took a position at Rowan University in the educational leadership department. He also acted as a consultant for educational grant programs and the afterschool program ENCORE serving under represented youth in New Jersey. Ted won many awards and notoriety throughout his life in education including” Educational Policy Fellowship Program of the Institute for Educational Leadership (www.iel.org), President of the NJ Association for Gifted Children and the Who’s Who of American Men in Education Award. He appeared on the television series Creativity with Bill Moyers.

Theodore was also a prolific writer authoring educational curriculum to accompany his vast educational programs. In his years of retirement he authored Earth Park, a curriculum focusing on environmental issues and explorations. He also wrote a fictional young adult trilogy series: Journey to Gone, Square Root of Tomorrow, and Escape from Yesterday. An early onset of Alzheimer’s Disease ended his writing career. For one so devoted to education and creative thinking, this particular disease was difficult for him—and those who loved him—to accept.

Ted married his high school sweetheart, Tina Tomaino of Mount Holly. A tragic car accident took her life, leaving him a single father with a three-year daughter. He found new love with Marlene Fisher, an education associate who also worked for the New Jersey Department of Education. Life goes on. He and Marlene married and gave birth to twin boys and were married for 41 years.

His wife Marlene preceded Ted in death by one week, succumbing to a long illness. His children and his extended family are devastated by this double loss, especially during this dark winter of Covid when it was difficult for family members to be with them in their final hours.

Ted is survived by his three children, Katrina Colleen Gourley, Theodore Joseph Gourley, III, and Jonathan Samuel Gourley; granddaughter Isabel Grace Gourley; and siblings Janice Shaffer, Dennis Gourley, Susan Damon, Paula Taylor, John Gourley and Kevin Gourley. He was beloved "Uncle Ted" to his many nieces and nephews. He was dad too to Chauncey, the latest in a happy family of dogs that romped through his life.

A memorial will be held for Theodore J. Gourley, Jr and his wife, Marlene F. Gourley, at a future date when it is officially safe to gather. Both were cremated and will be buried under a newly planted tree where they will grow in life together again. Contributions can be made to the Alzheimer's Association (alz.org).

Tribute Wall



“ *Theodore J. Gourley Jr.*

October 29, 2022 at 11:57 AM



“ *Theodore J. Gourley Jr.*

October 29, 2022 at 09:53 AM



“ *We are deeply saddened by the losses of Marlene, Ted and Ted Junior. This is such a difficult time for your family and our thoughts and prayers are with you. May they Rest in Peace. Fondly, Pat and Chris O,Connor*

Chris O'Connor - September 04, 2021 at 07:23 PM

EM

“ I worked with Ted as Past President of NJ Association for Gifted Children as well as a teacher of the gifted, utilizing his many programs - Marsville, Cognetics, and SITE (Student Inventions Through Education). Ted was always interested in what I was doing and took the time to talk with me about his many ideas.

The last time I spent time with Ted was when he had taken his wife to the hair salon and was waiting for her - he shared about a book he was writing, with all the excitement and enthusiasm of a much younger person!

I am so saddened by your family's loss of both parents in such close proximity! Please keep me posted as to the memorial service when you plan it.

Sincerely,
Elaine Mendelow
njagcelaine@verizon.net

Elaine Mendelow - April 02, 2021 at 11:05 PM

BH

“ *What sad news! I had the privilege of working with Ted back in the mid 80's and through the 90's on several of his great projects; Olympics of the Mind, later, Cognetics, ROGATE, and Marsville. He was one of the most brilliant and nurturing educators I ever met! A role model for sure!*

I'll never forget the wonderful phone conversation we had when he decided to break from OM and start Cognetics. I felt like I was with him on that from the very beginning and had the great experience of writing 5 different Cognetics problems for COGNETICS over the years! He (and his energetic and brilliant partner, Judy Burr) encouraged me and guided me through the process.

My Gifted/Talented students (grades 4-8) LOVED Cognetics and the group, led by Ted, knew how to change and move with the times.

Ocean City Intermediate School year after year (fielding 5 Cognetics teams every year for over ten years!) brought home silver and gold awards and Ted was always thrilled with our accomplishments!

I had the greatest respect and admiration for him. He was a Master teacher, and I KNOW he made me a better one. I'll always be so grateful for the experience of having worked with him.

In the late 2000's (I had retired from public school teaching in 2006) he encouraged me to come back and work with him for an updated and changed Cognetics Group, but buy then I had moved on to teaching Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the Trocki Hebrew Academy, was a senior adjunct in history at ACCC (CM Campus), and was supervising student teachers through Rowan University. The plate was full.

I will always regret not going back to work with Ted. He was one of the best and brightest!

Kind, generous, and always thoughtful!

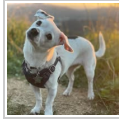
My sincerest condolences to everyone in his family!

Sincerely,

Bob Holden

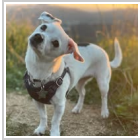
*Ret. OCIS
1975-2006*

Bob Holden - March 29, 2021 at 10:21 AM



Thank you for the kind words and reflections on my father and his work. He was truly a remarkable man. He would be so pleased to know how deeply he affected you and your students.

Katrina Gourley - June 25, 2021 at 05:38 PM



“ 5 files added to the album *Just Ted...*



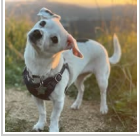
Katrina Gourley - March 25, 2021 at 03:55 AM



“ 3 files added to the album *Ted and Marlene*



Katrina Gourley - March 25, 2021 at 03:52 AM



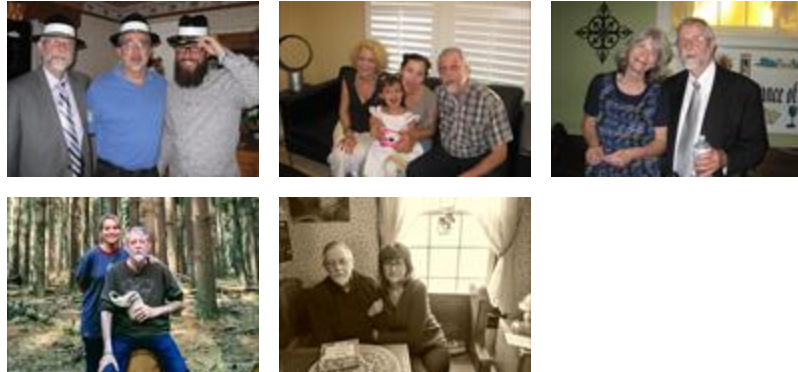
“ 3 files added to the album *Professional Life*



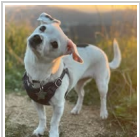
Katrina Gourley - March 25, 2021 at 03:48 AM



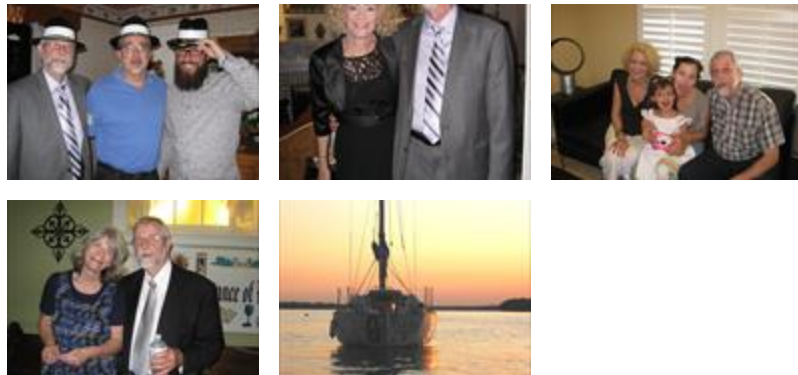
“ 14 files added to the album *Family*



Katrina Gourley - March 25, 2021 at 03:43 AM



“ 20 files added to the album *Life Highlights*



Katrina Gourley - March 25, 2021 at 02:12 AM

Wanda
Knox

“*“Life well lived” indeed! Thank you for sharing highlights in the obituary. It seems our paths crossed in other areas of life, but I only knew Ted through step classes. He was always so supportive, positive, and apparently humble. I wish I had known him outside of the gym. I've missed him over the last couple of years and I'm so sad that we will never do another class together.*

One particular memory I have is when I first started instructing aerobic classes 20 years ago. I was nervous about how I would do. After class Ted came to me with positive feedback, listing all of the things I did that made me a "good instructor". His comments made a lasting impact on my teaching style, and I will always appreciate his kind words.

My condolences to Ted's family & friends.

Wanda Knox

Wanda Knox - March 23, 2021 at 01:13 PM

RJ

“*He was also a regular at Optimal Fitness in Lisa Hulick's aerobic class.*

Richard Jones - March 23, 2021 at 12:25 PM

EP

“*I am beyond sorrowful to know of Ted's passing, especially so soon after Marlene's. Please know that I am thinking of the family and hoping for healing for you. Both Ted and Marlene were friend; Ted for over 50 years, from our high school days. I will miss them both.*

Eleanor Poplar - March 22, 2021 at 06:02 PM

NH

Ted Gourley kept in touch with his R.V.R.H.S. Classmates throughout his lifetime , often hosting gatherings in his Mount Holly home in honor of visiting former classmates. Marlene, always welcoming to us all, was a supreme hostess and superb cook. I regret losing touch in recent years. Nancy Worth Hassab

Nancy Worth Hassab - March 22, 2021 at 07:37 PM

DW

“ I have many fond memories of the Gourley Family during my years at Sacred Heart School. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you during this very difficult time. God bless.

*Sincerely & With Friendship,
Dolly Weeks*

Dolly Weeks - March 22, 2021 at 02:36 PM