

THE LEGACY OF TOM TESTA

Often our neighbors are seen only from a distance as they go about their lives quietly focused on what sparks enthusiasm and brings joy and satisfaction to their lives. Sometimes their efforts spill over to enrich everyone's lives. So it has been with the life of Thomas Vincent Testa (May 31, 1952- June 25, 2025). whose curiosity and passion - especially for mazonia fossils - became his legacy. With devoted tenacity he patiently and meticulously searched, studied, inventoried and protected his collection and then offered the best of that collection to the Field Museum, thereby becoming a rockstar, so to speak. Today five of his curated specimens now bear his name. There likely will be more. Tom is recognized as a valued prolific contributor whose collection is studied by students and scientists around the world. His work is documented both by museums and by ESCONI. It brings us a smile of respect to know his worth. Tom was born to Wilbur and Helen Testa, third and youngest of this gentle family's siblings. Pam, Dan and Tom learned to be (or were born to be) observers of the world around them. Wild mushrooms, pet squirrels, rhubarb patches, grape arbors, snapping turtles, rocks and fossils, all made their family's backyard a natural classroom. Beyond Catholic school and parish rituals, it was day trips to Starved Rock, Chicago museums, or time spent trekking into our coal mine pits turned area clubs which were routine. Time spent with TV, comic books, hardbound classics, science fiction, interesting artwork, plus dozens of brochures, with records on grandmother's Victrola, extended their world beyond Carbon Hill. Tales from Grandma Rose Testa and Grandma Gisella Maher who experienced their own extraordinary lives added magic, just like Wilbur's tales of the CCC and WWII and Helen's scrapbooks nudged Tom to, in his own way, pass on his gifts to all of us. We are grateful.

We at Carbon Hill Museum will be displaying Tom's life in fossils and his life growing up in Carbon Hill with digital slides and stories and an exhibit of his fossils. Saturday afternoon June 27 at 1 pm will be the first date of display for visitors to see and add your own stories of Tom in our memory book. Join us when you can. Text or phone for more information on this project : 815-347-0810