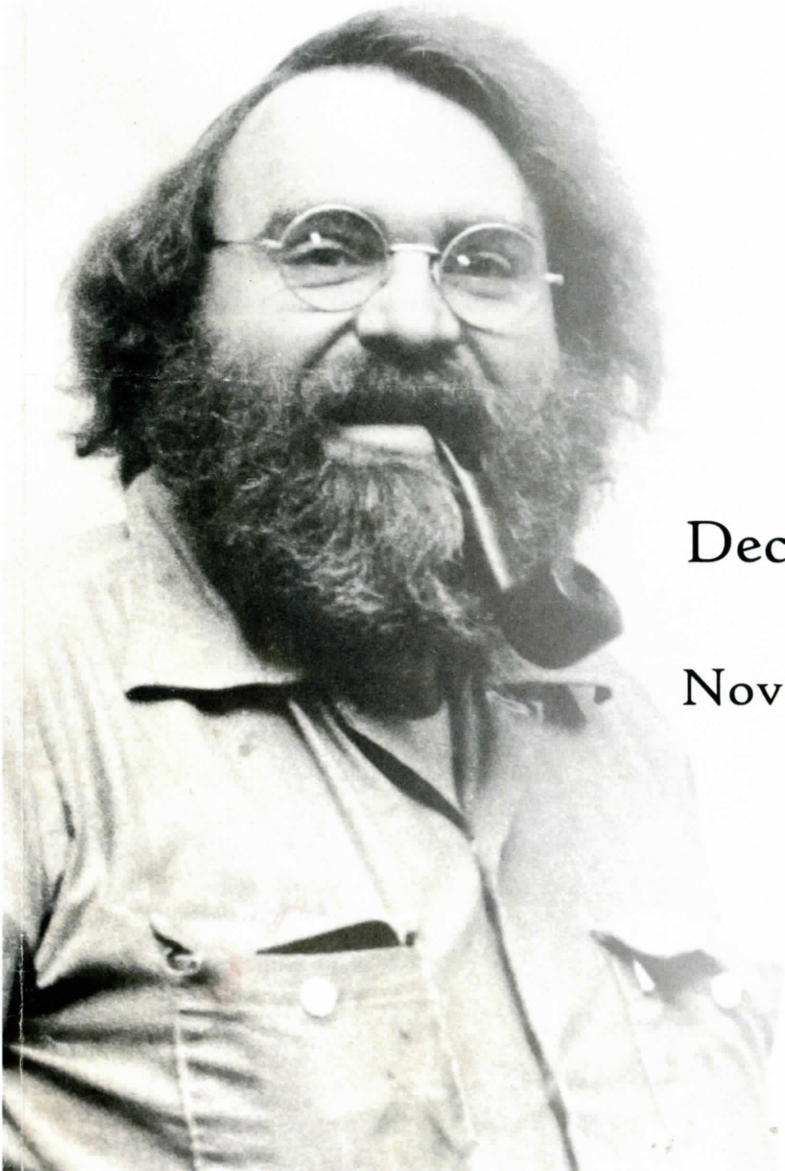


Celebrating the Life
of
Thomas Peyton Chaney

July 2nd, 2023 ~ Thomas House ~ Horse Cave, KY



December 1,
1937 -
November 26,
2022

Thomas Peyton Chaney, 85, died Saturday, November 26, 2022 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was born December 1st, 1937 to the late BT “Boots” and Corinth Catherine Taylor Chaney of Horse Cave. He graduated from Caverna High School in 1956 and from Georgetown College in 1958, where he was student manager for the athletic teams. Tom attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary for two years before enrolling at Baylor University’s MA program in speech.

He taught literature, theater, and speech at Lee’s Junior College, Jackson, KY; Caverna High School, Horse Cave, KY; Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, Arkansas; and Simpson College, Indianola, Iowa. He left Simpson College to become a reporter for the *Kentucky Post* in Covington.



Tom with sister Ann, around 1943



Tom, 1938

In the mid-1970s, Tom took up farming with his Aunt Daisy Carter, of Legrande, Kentucky. The story of the end of his farming days was documented in the *New Yorker* magazine’s “Telling a Kentucky Story,” by Calvin Trillin (December 17, 1984 edition, later collected in *American Stories*, Ticknor & Fields, 1991).

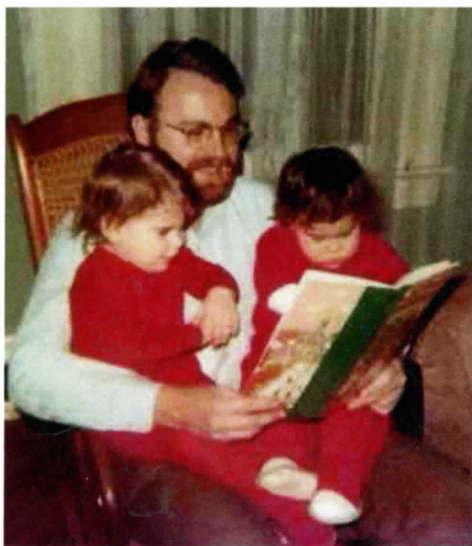
Tom worked with his friends Bill Austin and Warren Hammack to establish Horse Cave Theater, which opened on June 10, 1977. It was a dream of Tom’s from his youth, when there was no theater available to the children of Horse Cave. The theater survived for 30+ years, and it was Tom’s singular delight that it served more than 10,000 students each year.

After five years in Philadelphia as a construction manager and a hawker of trinkets to “flatland tourists,” he returned to Horse Cave to open The

Bookstore and The Bookstore Cafe with his sister and brother-in-law Ann and Jerry Matera. He sold books to people from every continent and continued his decades-long service as a marriage officiant. Among the hundreds of weddings he conducted were the first same-sex marriages in Hart County, Kentucky.

The Bookstore Cafe was a fixture on Water Street for ten years, with Tom as head cook. His specialty was Tuesday fried chicken in honor of the old Midway Cafe. He fried chicken in France, furnished a country ham and his mother's recipe to Julia Child, and cooked for a choir of Tibetan monks.

At the Bookstore, he hosted the daily Philosophical Society, the weekly Jammin' on the Porch, and readings by many authors. He retired and moved with his sister and brother-in-law to Minneapolis in September 2021.



Tom with his nieces, Corinth and Elizabeth, around 1969

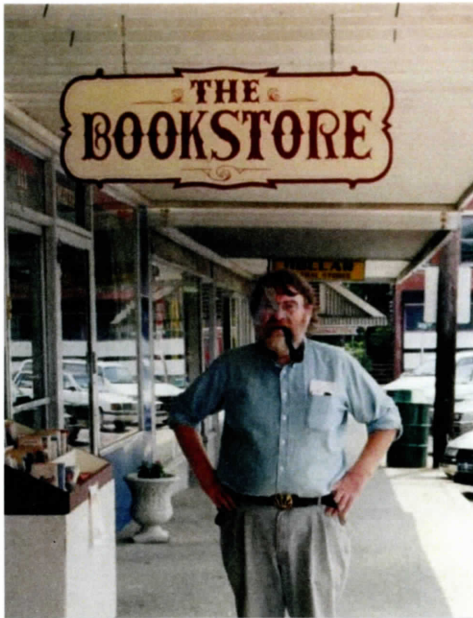
He is survived by his sister and brother-in-law, Ann and Jerry Matera; his niece Corinth Matera and her spouse Mary Manor of Minneapolis, Minnesota; his niece Dr. Elizabeth Matera of Morehead, Kentucky; and his faithful friend, Keith Martin of Calvert City, Kentucky.

He was the patriarch of both the Taylor and Chaney families and is survived by first cousins Barbara Appleton Paulson of Washington, D.C.; Susan Appleton Howell of Roanoke, VA ; Bill Chaney of Hilton Head, SC; Sue Gilmore of Nashville, TN; Laura Stonestreet of Richmond, VA; Ellen Stott of Virginia Beach, VA; and Francis Parker of Frankfort, KY.

He is also survived by extended family and hosts of friends from Alaska to Istanbul.



Tom with his father, Boots



Tom, outside The Bookstore, late 1990s

Speaker has left us
But the stories he told us
remain in our minds

- Robert Stone, 2022

Tom's sister, Ann Matera, felt that this haiku, written by one of Tom's friends, reflected many people's feelings about her brother's reputation as a storyteller.

*Donations may be made in Tom's honor to:
American Cave Conservation Association,
P.O. Box 409, Horse Cave, KY 42749*

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

-Wendell Berry, 2012

Tom loved this poem by his friend Wendell Berry and had a framed copy of the poem, signed by the poet, hanging in his home.

