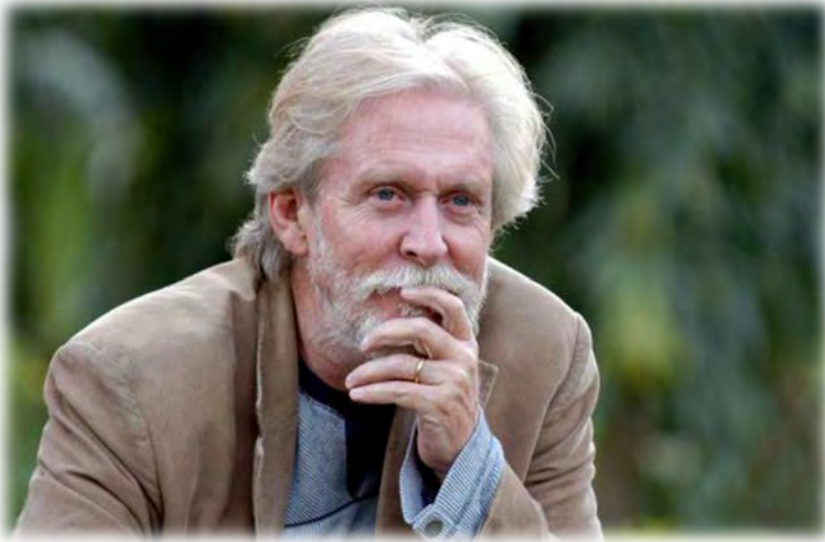


Tom Alter, Class of 1968 June 1950 – September 2017



It is with a heavy heart that we share the news that Tom Alter, Distinguished Alumnus of Woodstock School and Padma Shri actor, passed away on Friday 29 September. A dear friend to Woodstock and many of our community, Tom lost a battle with skin cancer at home in Mumbai, surrounded and supported by his family. Tom was loved not just by those who met him through Woodstock, but by millions across India who knew him through his prolific film and television acting career. Our thoughts and prayers are with Tom's family at this time.

Thomas Beach Alter was born on June 22, 1950 in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand to James and Barbara Alter, who were long-term American missionaries to India. The Alter family's rich relationship with India began in 1916, when Tom's paternal grandparents, Emmett and Martha Alter, arrived from Ohio, USA as Presbyterian missionaries. Tom was the third generation of Alters to live in India and the second generation to be born in the subcontinent, as his father James was also born in Sialkot, Punjab (now Pakistan). Tom's deep love for his homeland led him to relinquish his US citizenship at an early age and become an Indian citizen.

Tom spent the majority of his childhood in Mussoorie, where he attended Woodstock School, and in the nearby town of Rajpur, where his parents founded and managed a Christian ashram. Tom had an adventurous childhood with his older siblings, brother John and sister Marty, who also attended Woodstock. He often recalled the many hours spent outside with his brother John, at times playing an invented game (an amalgam of multiple sports) they called "hock-soc-crick-foot." Tom's lifelong interest in sports was nurtured at Woodstock, where he was an avid basketball player and cross-country runner. He also acted in numerous plays and was student council president.

After graduating from Woodstock, Tom spent one and a half years at Yale University (USA) before returning to India, where he worked at St. Thomas School in Jagadhari, Haryana. He then returned to Woodstock as a staff member, where he reconnected with a certain former classmate named Carol Evans. After a long and romantic courtship, they were married at St. Paul's Church in Mussoorie in 1978. In 1981, their son Jamie was born in Nadiad, Gujarat, followed by their daughter Afshaan, born in Mussoorie in 1986.

Tom graduated with a gold medal from the Film and Television Institute of India in 1974 and went on to act in over 300 films and numerous TV serials and plays. His enduring love of sports, and especially of cricket, led him to become a regular sports writer and lively commentator for many years. Fluent in Hindustani and Urdu from childhood, he developed a deep appreciation for and mastery of Urdu poetry and performed many plays in the language. In 2008, the Indian government honoured Tom with the Padma Shri for his immense contribution to Indian cinema and theatre.

In his other roles – as father, husband, brother, son, and uncle – Tom was similarly full of *josh* and brought an air of adventure with him wherever he went. His children fondly remember his penchant for playfulness – their family wrestling matches, hours spent swimming at Breach Candy Swimming Club, family hikes around Mussoorie, invented games like "spider-latch," and countless rounds of "sardines,"

Tom was a man of many layers. He could be in turns the life of the party or a simple, private man who deeply enjoyed solitude and a cup of chai. He was both vocally opinionated and quietly introspective. Above all, he was a faithful friend, mentor, and brother to many. He will be dearly missed.