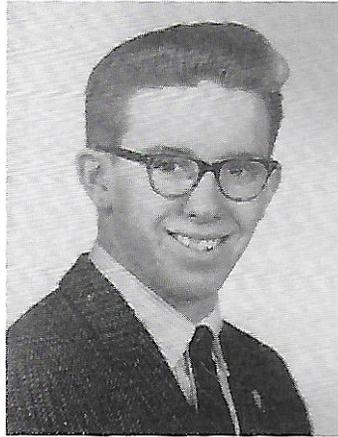


# THOMAS HARRISON WATKINS

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WATKINS

Attended Overseas School of Rome, Rome, Italy, for Junior Year; Cross Country 1, 2, 4; Glee Club 2; Honor Roll 2, 4; Intramurals 4; Latin Club 4; Honor Society 4; Senior Class 4; Track 1, 2, 4.



Thomas Harrison Watkins of Blacksburg, Va., 75, passed away Thursday morning, November 15, 2018 after a four-year long struggle against lymphoma. He is survived by his wife, Sharon Brown Watkins of Blacksburg; and their daughter Elizabeth (Beth) Page Watkins of Champaign, Ill. He was preceded in death by his mother, Page Baird Watkins, and his father, Thomas Cobb Watkins, both of Warsaw, Va. Tom's life work became clear to him when he spent his junior year of high school in Rome, Italy, while his father served as a consultant for the United Nations Food and Agriculture office there. Upon return to his hometown of Ithaca, N.Y., he completed high school there and then earned a Bachelor's degree in history at Cornell University (1965). He began graduate work at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he met his future wife, Sharon E. Brown, a native of Roanoke and graduate of Roanoke College. They were married in Chapel Hill (1969) and both earned a Ph. D. in history there. Together they moved to the prairies of Macomb, Ill., near the Mississippi River. Tom became the professor of ancient history at Western Illinois University and embarked upon his 31-year career of sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm about ancient history. He taught undergraduate and masters level graduate students there. He published scholarly articles, concentrating on the military expansion of the Roman Empire and the extension of Roman citizenship and culture which took place among non-Italian peoples. He served

as an officer of the Illinois Classical Association, led college students in travel and study abroad programs, and published the first edition of his book on a key advisor of Julius and Augustus Caesar. In 1974 his personal life was enriched by the birth of his daughter Beth and as the years passed, he shared many of his interests with her, history and museums, the joy of music and playing the piano, gardening and yard work, travel and the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team. The Watkins family enjoyed a variety of canine companions, most chosen from an unwanted litter of tiny puppies. Sharon joined Tom in the WIU Department of History and specialized in French and modern European history. Retiring in 2003, Tom and Sharon moved to Blacksburg, where both could again experience the forested hills and valleys of the Appalachians as they had in their childhoods. They enjoyed living closer to Sharon's extended family, including her five siblings and their spouses. For several years Tom taught select courses in Roman history as an adjunct at Virginia Tech. There he joined a vibrant group of faculty and students pursuing the study of classical ancient languages, literature, history, and arts. As a member of Blacksburg Presbyterian Church, he taught popular Sunday School classes for adults; subjects included the historical world of Jesus, the spread of Christianity across the ancient world, and the travels and work of St. Paul. He organized and led two tours to Turkey, visiting many early Christian sites and those of other civilizations such as Troy and Istanbul. After he re-retired from university teaching, Tom worked on the second edition of his earlier book. This was published in June 2018 by Rutledge Publishing under the title *L. Munatius Plancus: Serving and Surviving in the Roman Revolution*, second edition. All are invited to a funeral service for Tom Watkins, to be held at 2 pm on Monday, November 26, 2018 at Blacksburg Presbyterian Church (located at 701 Church St., SE, in Blacksburg). An informal reception will follow in the church parlor. Cremation rites have been accorded. In the spring a memorial service and celebration of Tom's life will occur, to include tree-planting, special music, photos, and sharing by his daughter Beth and friends of all ages whose lives were touched by Tom. Tharp Funeral Home & Crematory, Roanoke, is assisting the family. To send condolences online please visit [tharpfuneralhome.com](http://tharpfuneralhome.com).