



Thomas Kelly

July 1, 1959 - May 4, 2026

Thomas Kelly, a beloved and decorated member of the New Haven Fire Department (Retired) passed away peacefully surrounded by his family and firefighters on May 4, 2026 at Saint Raphael Hospital.

He was born in New Haven on July 1, 1959 and was the cherished son of the late Thomas C. Kelly (NHFD retired) and Lois (Lynch) Kelly, adored brother of Ann Kelly Nordhausen, Nancy Kelly (Todd) Blakely and Christopher (Tracey) Kelly. He also was the cherished uncle of Mark, Julia and Caroline Nordhausen; Kelly, Christopher and Ethan Blakely and John, Daniel and Maura Kelly. He leaves behind a large clan of cousins, a network of many dear friends and a fraternity of New Haven firefighters. Tommy grew up in the Fair Haven section of New Haven and always had a bigger than life personality. Possessing size and strength Tommy was a gentle giant who focused on living life to the fullest and spending time with his large family and countless number of friends. Once you met Tommy, you never could forget him and somehow, he never forgot you. He was a proud graduate of St. Francis Grammar School and Eli Whitney High School in 1977 where he learned valuable life lessons and technical skills that he carried with him everywhere he went. Tommy was an avid golfer, basketball player, a big New York Mets fan, a licensed plumber and a member of the renowned Bender Softball team. He also loved spending time with his lifelong friends at his family's cottage at Lanphier Cove in Branford. Once he joined the NHFD he developed a passion for cooking and an incredible capacity to eat more than

anyone else at the dinner table. He was appointed to the New Haven Fire Department October 10th, 1979, following in the footsteps of his father Thomas Kelly and Uncle Patrick Kelly. He loved being a fireman and it did not take long for Tommy to be recognized for his extraordinary abilities to save lives and respond quickly during times of stress. During his years of service, he was recognized with five Unit Citations (given in recognition of exceptional performance in protection of life or property) a Medal of Merit awarded on June 28, 1984 for a dramatic rescue at a fire at 551 Whalley Ave and a Commendation by the New Haven Board of Alders on June 21, 1989. Tommy was highly regarded across the Fire Department. He rose through the ranks to become the Tillerman for Engine 5, Company 4, Emergency 3 at the Dixwell Station, the busiest in New Haven. His career and life changed one cold, rainy night on February 26th 1992. Firefighter Tommy Kelly responded to the reported fire at 1142 Chapel Street. As the Tillerman of Truck Company 4, he was tasked with vertical ventilation. While operating under intense heat and heavy smoke on the roof, Firefighter Kelly fell 30 feet down an uncovered light shaft. In a search and rescue mission for the ages, his fellow fire fighters miraculously were able to get to him and pull him from the pit at the bottom of blaze. They risked their lives to save Tommy, just as he would have done for them. He was taken to St. Raphael's hospital and his prognosis was grim. The doctors were not sure he would survive his life-threatening injuries. Never one to be underestimated, Tommy somehow found the strength to beat the odds. While the doctors correctly diagnosed his injuries, they were not able to assess his grit, determination and toughness. His recovery was aided by constant visits from firemen, around the clock care from doctors and nurses and constant vigil from his parents, siblings, family and friends. The magnitude of the injuries Tommy sustained from his fall did not allow him to return to the job he loved. Although the next phase of his life took a path away from firefighting, his new journey was by no means less inspirational to his family, friends and those around him. He enjoyed visits and time spent with his NHFD brethren. They maintained their commitment to Tommy and found ways

to keep him involved with their lives and activities. From St. Patrick's Day Parades to numerous awards and tributes, Tommy knew they were always pulling for him. Spending time with his devoted mother Lois and watching his nieces and nephews grow gave him something to keep fighting for. The last 34 years also presented Tommy with multiple injuries, ailments and setbacks. Through it all he found a way to take on the good times and challenging periods the only way he knew how: with the same courage, strength and resolve he used to fight fires and usually with a smile on his face and a sparkle in his eye. The Kelly Family would like to thank the many individuals and facilities that provided care, support, prayers and safe keeping of Tommy over the past 34 years. There are too many to mention but they know who they are and there will always be a special place for them in the hearts of Tommy and his family. A very special thank you goes to James, who has been Tommy's primary caregiver for the last 20 years. He was one of the few constants in Tommy's journey and for that, he has the eternal thanks of Tommy's family.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be Celebrated Saturday at 11 a.m. in Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Hamden. Friends are asked to go directly to church. Burial in All Saints Cemetery. In lieu of flowers contributions to Camp Rising Sun, P.O. Box 472, Branford, CT. 06405. Sisk Brothers Funeral Home 3105 Whitney Ave. Hamden in care of arrangements. To leave an online condolence please visit www.siskbrothers.com

Cemetery Details

All Saints Cemetery

700 Middletown Ave.
North Haven, CT

Upcoming Events

Funeral Mass

MAY 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church
2819 Whitney Ave.
Hamden, CT

Tribute Wall

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“ *Katy, Ed, Pat, Chris and Liz purchased the Beautiful in Blue for the family of Thomas Kelly.*



Katy, Ed, Pat, Chris and Liz - 11 minutes ago