



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 6, 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

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

MAY 9. 11:00 AM (ET)

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

Tribute Wall

DN

“ Dear Ann and family,
I was so sad to hear of Tommy’s passing through a friend. I have such fond memories of you, dear Tommy, and have thought about you over these years...memories of your sweet friendship always brought a smile to my face.
May you rest now and be at peace.
With fond memories and condolences,
Donna (Fraser) Nolan

Donna Fraser Nolan - May 15 at 11:27 PM

JR

“ Dear Lois and family I sent you my deepest sympathies. Sincerely.
Joan Robinson

Joan Robinson - May 09 at 05:32 PM

DF

“ It was an honor to have worked with you. Rest in peace brother.

Dino Ferraro - May 09 at 12:12 PM



“ I remember Tommy as a young, sweet, smiling boy playing and swimming at Lanphier's Cove.. a most excellent place to grow up with many kids to hang with and caring adults who watched out for everyone's child. I also enjoyed seeing him after his injury when I visited in the 90s and was touched he still remembered me.
Condolences to you Lois and all his family and friends
Sincerely, Daryle Brockett McSherry

Daryle Brockett - May 09 at 08:58 AM

JC

“ I had the pleasure of working with Tommy at the Dixwell Avenue station. True to his fun-loving nature, when he did some side work for me and I offered to pay him.....he said...."have your mom make me some pasta!"

I'd like to convey my deepest sympathy to the Kelly family especially Chris and Tracey. RIP brother. John Carrano, NHFD (ret.) -Florida

John Carrano - May 08 at 04:02 PM

PS

“ Positive people are popular and remembered fondly , Tommy was both . I worked opposite division (shift) than Tom , he and I would often trade work days with each other. If I worked a Tuesday night for him and asked him to work for me on a sunny spring Saturday , Tom would drop whatever plans he had for such a coveted day, and agree to cover my Saturday request . Doing so displayed the type of character Tom had . Rest In Peace Tom with deserved honor . My condolence to the Kelly family , know that I , and my fellow firefighters who knew Tom never forgot him , and the sacrifice he made.

Paul A Sandella - May 08 at 10:58 AM

AC

“ Father God please cover the entire Kelly Family with your grace and bless them with your mercies! Grant my brother Tommy with your eternal peace and rest forever 🙏

Anthony B Calloway - May 07 at 05:45 PM

GH

“ *Sincerest Condolences to Lois, Nancy, Ann, Chris and the entire Kelly family. I am thankful that I was able to meet Tommy and get to know him back in the day when he would visit Florida. Gail Hawthorne*

Gail Hawthorne - May 07 at 05:21 PM

JD

“ *To the family of Thomas Kelly,
We offer our deepest condolences.
My dad Louis Delbuono was a New Haven Fireman and knew Tom, his dad and uncle well.
My dad spoke of how he was someone who was kind and strong and that is a beautiful legacy.
I met Tom many years ago when he did plumbing work for me. He was so kind hearted.
We had a wonderful conversation that day.
He will be truly missed.
Louis, Marianne, Jennifer Delbuono*

Jennifer Delbuono - May 07 at 04:20 PM

RM

“ *Roberta M. purchased the Emerald Garden Basket for the family of Thomas Kelly.*



Roberta M. - May 07 at 01:53 PM

NF

“ *New Haven Firebirds purchased the Sentiments of Serenity Spray for the family of Thomas Kelly.*



New Haven Firebirds - May 07 at 08:24 AM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Thomas Kelly.

May 06 at 10:11 PM

HJ

“ *RIP Brother see you on the top floor H D Sabel Jr Danbury FD retired*

HD Sabel Jr - May 06 at 08:43 PM

JZ

“ *My thoughts and prayers are with Tom's family. Tom was a great guy whose smile would light up the room. He will be missed.*

Joanne Zito - May 06 at 08:39 PM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Thomas Kelly.*



May 06 at 08:25 PM

BS

“ Wonderful guy with a terrific sense of humor. A young life cut much too short.

Barbara Salzano - May 06 at 07:51 PM



“ Tender Tribute was purchased for the family of Thomas Kelly.



May 06 at 07:34 PM



“ A [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) was planted in honor of Thomas Kelly.

May 06 at 07:34 PM

MR

“ To the Family of Thomas Kelly,
I have fond and humorous memories of Tom.
Myself, a firefighter from the Allingtown Fire District in West Haven had the privilege of meeting Tom while attending the New Haven Fire training Academy during the fall of 1979.
From the minute we met I knew he was going to be a blast to be around. Tom was one of a kind and a delight to be around. I was saddened to hear of his death. May he rest in peace. Monte Rolli - RET Allingtown Fire District West Haven / AMR of Ct.

Monte Rolli - May 06 at 04:11 PM

KL

“ To Mrs. Kelly, Ann, Nancy, Chris, and the Kelly family,
I want to offer my sincere and heartfelt condolences to you on the passing of my childhood friend, “Tommy.” I remember the day we met, I am a couple of years older than him, and we grew up across the street from each other on Atwater St. Tommy was on his bicycle, across the street and I was playing “catch” with another friend, in front of my house, while he was watching us. We crossed the street, and immediately became friends. We were probably,.. about 7 and 5 years old. We ended up in his backyard, playing baseball for the rest of the day. I also remember getting in trouble for crossing the street, and not telling anyone my whereabouts, that day! It was well worth it, because Tommy turned out to be the nicest, kindest, genuine friend, who would do anything for anyone, anytime. His pain and suffering is over and now he is with his dad, in heaven. May God, and the angels and saints watch over him and he Rest in Eternal Peace forever. Goodbye, TK, my friend.

Kevin Lynch

Kevin Lynch - May 06 at 03:23 PM

KB

“ My condolences to Tommy’s family and friends. I didn’t know Tommy but my dad did. He always spoke fondly of him and his love for the job and his family. Rest in peace Tommy ❤️

Kimberly Boucher - May 06 at 03:08 PM

JM

“ Tommy and I met when I was moving into my 3rd floor apartment on Atwater street. Teddy Spaulding introduced us and he got out of his truck and started carrying furniture up for me. We became fast friends. All of the great memories I have of him came flooding back this week. He is one of the best people I have ever known and I'm proud to call him my friend. My condolences to the entire Kelly family. I will never forget him. Jimmy McHugh

James McHugh - May 06 at 02:54 PM

KL

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



Katy, Ed, Pat, Chris and Liz - May 06 at 12:50 PM