



Thomas Joseph Purcell

December 15, 1936 - March 22, 2025

Coming Home: From Ireland to Hamden

Thomas “Tom” J. Purcell, who made the journey from Ireland to America mid-century, after traversing the terrains of England and Canada, finally landed in Hamden, Connecticut, the place he called home for almost 60 years, died Saturday, March 22nd, at Benchmark Senior Living in Hamden.

Little more than a suitcase in hand, Tom’s life in America quickly bore him fruit. Marrying his first wife, Bridie Mulvey Purcell, their family blossomed into what is now six children, 15 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Solicited into the printing trade by his cousins “the McGuires,” he manned a printing press for many years before succumbing to the entrepreneurial bug. With the help of his second wife, Ann O’Neill Purcell, they launched Purcell’s Construction & Remodeling and gave credence to the adage “no job is too small.” With many helpers in tow including his youngest son Brian and later his right-hand man and neighbor “Frankie,” Tom’s business soon progressed from fledgling to a consistent steady flow.

A working man and entrepreneur, his preoccupations shifted when he retired at 75. Always a ferocious newshound, world events would soon carry a singular focus for him. He soon became interested in culinary creations, directing the dinnertime meal along with longtime home caregiver Nickie Massaro. He was responsible for weekly grocery shops, shuttling his sister-in-law “Big E” and her cohort to Stop & Shop. He had more time for his backyard and watching his garden grow. Always planting vegetables, he found a way to

get them into the ground even when his physical disabilities compromised full participation.

Loathe to boast of his accomplishments for fear of appearing prideful, he deserves a round of applause for the steadfastness he has shown over the last two years in his most recent home at Benchmark. Entering wheelchair-bound, he didn't let this interfere with his full participation and enjoyment of life. He was an avid practitioner of physical therapy (he knew that mobility was key) and he was fierce about maintaining his independence despite the challenges. He soon navigated wheelchair life with ease, transferring from chair to car (he wasn't going to miss an outing) and insisted on wheeling himself whenever possible. His Benchmark family made it possible for him to maintain dignity and quality of life.

Tom was most happy surrounded by family. One-on-one---he was always available to listen---if you needed an ear, he was there. Problem solver extraordinaire, he could certainly solve the world's problems if given sufficient time. He carefully examined his surroundings, and he internally solved many conundrums even before anyone realized a conundrum was brewing. The weekly outings with his son Tommy to the Wood-n-Tap where he enjoyed a convivial time supported by the waitress Nickie---she knew their table and his order by heart. The thrice daily phone calls with his daughter Eileen were essential components to his days. Was she his confidante or vice versa? The reassuring presence of his daughter Bridget who navigated the quagmire that constituted his medical life. The outings and celebratory occasions with his daughter Susan and her family and her decorating and organizational skills. The Sunday pickup by his son Brian—who arranged for a winning duo: breakfast fit for a king at Hamden Town House followed by an opportunity to ponder spiritual questions at Mass. And the daily commands he endured from his daughter Noreen as she managed the quotidian details from shopping for greeting cards, ensuring his razor blades were the correct brand, reading mail when his vision lapsed, setting haircut appointments and the million and one details that no longer concerned an octogenarian.

Many things about Tom were not front row and center, but were evidence of his zest and respect for life: he was a great dancer; he possessed athletic abilities up to the end---he even mastered balloon volleyball at Benchmark and enjoyed throwing hoops in the PT room; he was a keen observer---he quickly identified the idiosyncrasies of fellow residents and learned to navigate them; he had a mind for organization and process---if you proposed a solution he could easily offer an alternative and his was usually superior; he never hesitated to say he was sorry and abided by family harmony above all; he enjoyed Westerns; he liked name brands (no generics for this guy); he enjoyed simple food, preferably "Plain Irish Food"; he loved to sit and "shoot the bull"---he could turn taciturn but with coaxing, would quickly return to enjoying the quotidian details of daily life. When happy, his face would light up across the room; he always welcomed your company; he always had time; and when he could relax in the presence of those he loved and who loved him, he would breathe easily and softly whistle a tune.

Tom is survived by six children from his first marriage to Bridie Mulvey Purcell, Noreen Purcell Dillman, Susan Purcell, Thomas P. Purcell, Bridget Prescod, Eileen Purcell, and Brian Purcell: 15 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren. His wife, Ann O'Neill Purcell, died in 2022.

Family and friends are invited to gather on Monday, March 31, 2025, from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at Sisk Brothers Funeral Home 3105 Whitney Ave. Hamden. A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 11 a.m. at Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church, Hamden. Burial will follow at St. Lawrence Cemetery, West Haven. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to a charity of your choice.

Cemetery Details

St. Lawrence

280 Derby Ave.
West Haven, CT

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 31. 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

Sisk Brothers Funeral Home
3105 Whitney Ave.
Hamden, CT 06518
(203) 288-7114
siskfuneral@sbcglobal.net

Funeral Mass

MAR 31. 11:00 AM (ET)

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

Tribute Wall



“ Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Joseph Purcell.



March 30, 2025 at 09:25 AM



“ Butterworth Family purchased the Full Of Love Bouquet for the family of Thomas Joseph Purcell.



Butterworth Family - March 27, 2025 at 04:04 PM



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

March 27, 2025 at 01:41 PM



“ Sweet Tranquility Basket was purchased for the family of Thomas Joseph Purcell.



March 27, 2025 at 01:41 PM

“ Tom's OBIT from the New Haven Register.

Thomas Joseph Purcell (“Tom”) passed away on Saturday, March 22, 2025. He was a resident of Hamden for over 60 years at Dante Place then Benchmark Senior Living.

Born on the emerald isle of Ireland, Piltown, County Kilkenny on December 15, 1936. He was the 6th of 17 children. His parents and siblings lovingly referred to him as Joey, and he became known to many as Pops and Poppa Tom. As a young lad, he dabbled in Irish hurling, and remained passionate about his favorite team, the Kilkenny Cats, over the years.

Tom emigrated to Canada and then the United States. He met Bridie Mulvey, married, and had six wonderful children in the span of 10 years. Bridie passed at an early age and his two sisters-in-law, Eileen and Lil Mulvey, were there to lend a helping hand. He then married Ann O’Neill, who was his loving partner for over 40 years and essential to the Purcell family.

Tom worked as an offset printer. He later started his own business, Purcell’s Construction and Remodeling. No job too small was his company motto. He was a member of the Church of the Blessed Sacrament of Hamden for many years. Tom volunteered delivering bread to the soup kitchen at St. Ann’s Church in New Haven. He was also a member of the New Haven Gaelic Football and Hurling Club.

Tom was famous for his Irish brown bread and Sunday morning fry ups. He also liked to tend his large vegetable garden, and keep abreast of current events. Always a competitor, he became an avid balloon volleyball player at Benchmark. Tom was a great listener to all his family, and known for his story telling. He always kept an open door to anyone in need of a hammer, a place to stay or a listening ear.

Tom is survived by his six children, Noreen Purcell Dillman, Susan,

Thomas, Bridget, Eileen, and Brian and their spouses; 15 grandchildren and two great grandchildren; six siblings, Sr. Philomena, Geraldine, Peter, Bridget, Patsy, and Dick; and many nieces and nephews. He is predeceased by his parents Thomas and Josephine, 10 siblings, and his beloved wives, Bridie and Ann.

susan purcell - March 27, 2025 at 10:40 AM

“ Tom's OBIT from New Haven Register. 3.28.25

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Susan Purcell - March 27, 2025 at 10:36 AM