

A Tribute to Tommy



December 24, 1960 – January 14, 2006

In our family, there's an Uncle Tommy, a Thomas, 2 David Thomas', a Patrick Thomas, a Sean Thomas, a Scott Thomas, a Gregory Thomas, a Thomas James and a Thomas Otis - but there was only one Cousin Tommy.

Thomas Patrick Ferris was Mr. Clean. Cindy used to kid him about how neat he was, noting how he had to keep his car keys in perfect order, with the notches all facing in the same direction. In his wallet, you could be sure that all of the bills faced one way, in order of denomination, and maybe even by date too. Everything in his room was in order - perfectly aligned and centered. That eye for perfection carried into his grooming and wardrobe. Tommy was well known for his carefully selected and impeccable attire. He taught all of us a thing or two about fashion, and was always the best dressed. His passion for precision was part learned, part hereditary - born from the accuracy required and natural talent possessed by him, that earned him a reputation as being the best in his work.

Like his father Jim, he entered the world of craftsmanship. He was grateful to his Dad for showing him the path and paving the way, making it possible to happily proclaim "I'm in!" when the Steamfitters called him into service. Tommy understood what it took to be the best, and he could measure and align by sight as good as any man-made device. His extraordinary eye for detail and exactness made him a valuable member of Steamfitters Local 638, like his father and brother Jimmy. Tommy was proud to be part of that brotherhood.

Surf, sun and fishing were Tommy's ultimate joy. Anthony helped him fulfill a dream by buying a condo together in St. Maarten - a place he said was like Heaven to him. He got along well with the people and the food of the island (especially the hamburgers at "Peg Leg") and put on 10 pounds despite his illness. He loved it so much he stayed an extra week when he was there in early December. Tommy had found his paradise on earth, and was eternally grateful that he had the chance to experience it.

Tommy loved his Corvettes. He owned five of them, and he kept each one spotless. Two red ones, a purple, and his latest: a silver convertible - the ultimate tanning machine. But it all started with his first - a white one with the license plate "Dream 21", one of his favorite lucky numbers. It was also his jersey number for softball. Anthony was the power hitter, Tommy the "unbelievable glove" in the infield and 3rd base. From a young age, it was clear that Tommy was a sports nut in the making. Whether playing baseball or ice hockey, others knew him to be a worthy opponent. He could always be counted on to get into a game, or commentate with the best of them with one playing on TV.

Even in his final days at the Hospice Inn in Melville that took such good care of him and his family, he showed his athletic prowess. He rolled up a piece of paper he was throwing out, and with a quick snap of the wrist, launched a perfect free-throw directly into the center of the basket from across the room, wearing that grin we all loved.

Anyone who knew Tommy knew he was a solid Rangers fan. He followed them faithfully. Mark Messier was his hero, and he lived to see them retire his number 11. Legend has it that that number served him well at OTB. Tommy was known as one of the best handicappers in the neighborhood. His support of long shots won him acclaim and respect – especially when so many of them came in to win.

Tommy was loyal to his many friends, and all of them said that there was nothing he wouldn't do for you. It was clear that the feeling was mutual. Tommy knew he could rely on his countless friends to be there for him when he needed them – and they were. Caring friends from his childhood, his neighborhood, his school, his job, OTB, The Finish Line and many more were steadfast in their support of Tommy, and came in waves to be with him in both good times and sad.

Throughout his life, he could count on the unwavering love, caring and support of his family. His mother Margie took extra care in ensuring that no barriers stood in the way of his happiness or comfort, and his father Jim quietly worked behind the scenes to help make things happen. His sister Eileen and he shared a special bond, especially in his final days when he needed her most, and she would not leave his side. His brother Jimmy and he shared many adventures and special times as only 2 brothers can. Together with Michael, they created memorable moments and endless opportunities for laughter and fun. Anyone from Deer Park could tell you that Tommy was Peggy's protector. One look from him from and any prospective suitor, if they weren't already, became a gentleman that treated her like a special lady. Tommy was finally free from worry when Peggy met and married Jeff – someone who could care for her and protect her as Tommy always did. His niece and nephew Brooke and TJ were the light of his life. He loved to horse around with them, and their presence brought him great joy and comfort. They will never forget their Uncle Tommy, who God called home to Heaven as their Special Angel to help protect and guide them.

As his illness grew worse and it became apparent that a cure was not to be, Tommy said "at least I'll be with Michael", his beloved brother who had gone before him. Tommy was inconsolable when we lost Michael, and he said recently that one comfort was that soon he would be reunited with his dear brother.

On the morning and at the hour we lost Tommy, the skies opened up with a rare January downpour of rain, as Heaven opened up to welcome him. The heavy rain that fell shall never match the flood of tears his family and friends will shed, until we meet him and Michael once again in Heaven.

