



Mr. Thomas Henley Hilton

October 5, 1948 - March 12, 2026

MARCY — Thomas Henley Hilton, age 77, passed away on March 12, 2026, after living a full and adventurous life.

Tom was born on October 5, 1948, in Gouverneur, New York, to Richard H. Hilton and Margaret Sweet Hilton, both of whom predeceased him when he was young. He grew up in Utica and graduated from Utica Free Academy.

Tom's first time on an airplane was at the age of eighteen, when he traveled to Vietnam while serving in the United States Marine Corps. He served his tour of duty bravely before receiving an honorable discharge. After returning home, he spent several years traveling and gaining life experience, including time living in Europe, Colorado, New York City, and Florida before eventually settling back in Central New York.

Tom encouraged his children to travel, have fun, and experience life fully, just as he had—though he often joked that he hoped they would do so in a slightly more responsible manner.

Humor was important to Tom, and he had an impressive repertoire of jokes he used to entertain family and friends. The knowledge that laughter is the best medicine and that life is meant to be enjoyed will continue to carry his family through this challenging time. Tom was a master storyteller, and many remark

that this is an element of him they will remember fondly.

By trade, Tom was a skilled mason and carpenter who took particular pride in his stonework. Over the years, he built many beautiful fireplaces, steps, and stone features for homes and businesses throughout the area. A true believer in the value of hard work, he demonstrated that ethic both in his profession and in the way he raised his children.

Outside of work, Tom loved staying active. In high school, he was a top-ranked state gymnast, and later in life he enjoyed golfing with friends—especially with his brother Richard, who passed unexpectedly four years ago. He found ways to remain active every day, even continuing his daily workouts throughout much of his year-long battle with pancreatic cancer. An avid chess player, he studied the game, played in tournaments, and met lifelong friends. He was also a fan of literature and world history. Passionate and unapologetic in his beliefs, he was a lifelong progressive who cared deeply about the causes he supported and always encouraged open-minded dialogue.

On June 9, 1994, Tom married his beloved wife, Ellen Ertel Hilton. He was endlessly proud of Ellen, her work as a veterinarian, and the devoted wife and mother she has been to their family. In his final days, Tom often expressed profound gratitude for his life, his family, and especially for Ellen.

Tom is survived by his wife, Ellen Ertel Hilton; his children, Charles Wolanin, Samantha (Steates) Braun, Margaret (Hilton) Naughton, and Mia Hilton; and his cherished grandchildren, Maxwell and Lucille. He is also survived by his siblings, Catherine Beeman and Gary Hilton, and by many beloved nieces and nephews. He was especially grateful for his nephew Rick, who offered unwavering support and companionship throughout the challenges of the past year.

Tom will be remembered for his warmth, wit, storytelling, strong convictions, and deep love for family and friends.

A Memorial Service and Celebration of Tom's life will be held in early summer, with details to be determined.

It would be Tom's wish that memorial contributions in his honor be made to the Rescue Mission of Utica online at [www. uticamission.org/donate](http://www.uticamission.org/donate) or by mail to 293 Genesee St., Utica, NY 13501.

This obituary was lovingly composed by Tom's family.

Tribute Wall

EZ

“ I knew Tom from our high school days and we played some golf and chess and had some great discussions at Barnes & Noble’s in years past. Tom’s obituary perfectly describes him. He was a great man.

eli zogby - March 24 at 08:29 AM

DM

“ Don Marino lit a candle in memory of Mr. Thomas Henley Hilton



Don Marino - March 17 at 02:16 PM

DM

I first met Tom as a freshman on the gymnastic team. I was very envious because he was a phenomenal gymnast... my sincere condolences to his friends and family 🙏

Don Marino - March 17 at 02:16 PM

BJ

“ Tom was a Master Mason. He built a beautiful front porch and stairs on our raised ranch home in N. Utica. Over the years, we received many compliments.

Was so sorry to read of his passing. My deepest sympathy to his family!

Mrs. Barb Jakubowski

Barb Jakubowski - March 16 at 11:01 PM

BT

“ I met Tom in the haze of the mid-seventies. We worked, lived, and played together and became close friends. His constant companions at that time were his silver flute and harmonica. Tom was a philosopher and could be counted on to recite one of many poems by William Blake. We lost touch over the years, occasionally bumping into each other at a bookstore or cafe. We only recently reconnected in the last six months. I admired Tom for his honesty, humor, kindness, and work ethic, and am grateful for having had him as my friend.

Brian T Truax - March 16 at 09:27 AM

LC

I remember Tom from high school. What a great guy, so friendly and kind. He was on the gymnastics team...he broke his arm doing what he loved. Everyone always enjoyed being with him. He will be remembered. So sorry for your loss. Linda

Linda Colangelo - March 19 at 06:13 PM

RL

“ Tom was a good friend since high school. We played a lot of golf together over the past few years. I admired him for his progressive political views that were somewhat evolved from his Vier Nam experiences. I feel so badly he was afflicted with cancer. May he rest in peace 🙏.

Ralph Lupia - March 16 at 08:52 AM

AM

“ I am grateful for my visit with Tom and Ellen last Memorial Day weekend (can't believe it was so long ago). At that time, Tom was strong, washing windows, mowing, hopeful about his chances of recovery. We had a really good 1:1 conversation, in which, among other things, he said he was not afraid of death. Every time I pass by the Barnes & Noble and Panera at the malls in Hadley, I think of him. He was always easy to talk with, both interesting to listen to and interested in what I had to say. A lifelong learner, very knowledgeable, with a curious mind. Not having seen him when he became seriously ill, he will always be very full of life in my memory.

Amita - March 15 at 10:43 PM