



Anthony "Tony" Friel

November 3, 1939 - January 17, 2024

Anthony (Tony) Friel

Age 84, of Philadelphia, PA passed away January 17th, 2024. Anthony (Tony) was born in Coleraine, County Derry, Northern Ireland in 1939. He is preceded in death by his parents, James and Bridget; Sisters, Sheila, Mary and Eileen; Brothers, Jim, Patrick and George. Survived by his beloved wife, Mary Friel; 3 loving children, Julie Friel (Rod Glose), Barbara Friel, and Anthony Friel (Jan); 2 Sisters, Bernadette McAfee and Ann Langfield (Clive) 5 grandchildren, Olivia Henley (Jack), Emi Grasso, Charlotte Kaplan, Jordan Friel, and Colin Friel; and many nieces, nephews and cousins. Tony never met a stranger. His smile and wit endeared him to all and he always had a joke waiting in the wings. He lived a life of adventure before settling down and starting a family. In his teens in Coleraine, he was a very successful amateur Lightweight boxer for the Coleraine Sea Cadets where he won several titles including the 1960 National Boxing Championships in Birmingham, England. Upon his arrival in New York City in 1961 he quickly found himself in the US Army and was a proud Veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division where he had over 25 jumps with a few "Hollywood" jumps sprinkled in, which, if you knew him, was a very Tony Friel thing to do. After the Army he went on to a career as a Union Carpenter in New York City with Local 608/157. He eventually settled in Bogota, NJ where he lived for 30 years and raised his family with his loving wife Mary. In his retirement he found he had a lot of time to spend with his grandchildren

and the name “Poppy” was born. Tony loved being a grandfather and being around for their recitals and sporting events. A few years into retirement Tony and Mary moved to Philadelphia, PA where he opened another chapter of his life. This meant daily long walks all over the city looking at the architecture and his weekly visits to the Philadelphia Library because he was a voracious reader of anything in the non-fiction section. He was a man that was devoted to his family both near and far. He would do anything for anyone but none more so than his own family. He will be sorely missed by those who knew and loved him. To the man who couldn't wait until tomorrow because he got better looking every day, we can't wait to see how good looking you are when we see you again.

Family and friends are invited to his Funeral Mass 10 A.M. Friday January 26th at the Cathedral Basilica at SS.Peter and Paul (Main Church), 18th and Ben Franklin Parkway. The family will receive friends in church 9-10A.M. Interment Private. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the Jane & Leonard Korman Respiratory Institute at <https://giving.jefferson.edu/giving-guide/centers-institutes/korman-respiratory-institute/give.html>

There will be a Celebration of Dad with food, drink, stories and The Craic to follow back at the Penn Center House at 1900 JFK Boulevard in the 2nd Floor Lounge. Parking for the funeral and repast is available at Penn Center House at 1900 Commerce St (GPS address right behind building) for a fee.

Funeral Mass Livestream: <https://vimeo.com/event/4029904>

Tribute Wall

“ Anthony was my uncle. As a child in Coleraine, I clearly remember him walking up from Killowen to our house in Churchlands Road in his American Airborne uniform. All Smart and proud like. We played snooker on our small table, all the while I admired his almost knee length boots and the Airborne cap perched on the side of his head. He gave me an airborne badge. He probably had a pocketful to dish out to his nephews and nieces on a trip home to the "Oul country". Next time I saw him was about 20 years ago when I moved to Mayo after living 30 odd years in England. He was on one of his frequent trips "home".

Sitting in a chair in my parents living room. I walked in with my wife Ros and he stood up. He walked over and shook my hand and gave me a hug. He greeted me with his aquired NY brogue. I said to him "Tony, have you just come off the set of a Martin Scorsese movie...?" The handshake, the hug and the accent....I loved it. He laughed loudly, grinning madly. My Uncle, a real New Yorker..... We met up several more times on trips over "Home"and he came down to our house in Mayo with Eileen once.

He had a great sense of humour, of that there is no doubt. Always had a one liner, for any situation. A great ability not many possess. He regaled me of once in his time in the Airborne and how they would do training exercise with the "Rangers". The Rangers would parachute in, and Tony's mob somehow knew where the landing zone was, and they would lie in wait to ambush them before they had a chance to "Fight" back.

Another tale. When I was with him and Micky O'Kane about 8 years ago.How the two of them would run and jump onto a large sledge and travel from the top of Castlerock Road beside the Convent, all the way down the road to Waterside and over the Bann Bridge without stopping. The two of them sitting there,chatting like it was yesterday.

A man who never forgot his Killowen roots, proud of his family and his heritage.

I can see him now, re united with his large family and his lifelong Killowen Friends. Genching away and cracking jokes.

R.I.P Tony.

Kieron McGowan - January 24, 2024 at 11:20 AM

CB

“ *Sorry to hear about Anthony. I knew him best from Coleraine and his visit to Kirkham.*

Charlie Boylan.

Charlie Boylan - January 23, 2024 at 04:13 PM



“ *1 file added to the album Tony Friel*



Julie Friel - January 23, 2024 at 03:39 PM

CB

Sorry to hear that Anthony has gone I knew him most from Coleraine and his visit to Kirkham.

Charlie Boylan - January 23, 2024 at 04:06 PM

KB

“ *Mary and family,*

So sorry to hear the sad news of Uncle Tony's death. I always looked forward to his visits to the UK of which there were quite a few, one with Anthony junior I recall. I remember how kind you all were to us when myself, Brian and Damian visited in 2004. Tony introduced us to the Cozy Tavern and the delights of Atlantic City. Suzanne and I were so pleased you could both celebrate our wedding with us in 2005. He was a great guy who loved life and family was a big priority for him. We will remember you all in our prayers. I will arrange for a Mass to be said in our parish here. Sincere condolences.

Kevin and Suzanne

Kevin Boylan - January 23, 2024 at 03:24 PM

GF

“ *I used to meet my cousin Tony when I went to New York for St. Patrick's day when he lived in New Jersey, he always came into New York to meet up we would walk up 5Ave for a few blocks with the Co.Derry Acc then go for a few beers together, I miss him when he left NJ .*

I can't remember the last time I met him if it was Coleraine or New York but Tony was a great guy to have for a friend or cousin.

RIP Tony

George Friel - January 23, 2024 at 07:57 AM

SF

“ The first time I met Tony was when my friend Paddy and I went to America in August 1987. After spending 6 days in New York we headed off with a 2 week Amtrack rail pass to visit Washington D.C. New Orleans, Memphis, Chicago and Boston. Arriving back at Penn Station about 11.00pm after our trip we thought where are we going to stay at this time of night.

My father Stephen (Tony's first cousin) had given me Tony's phone number before we left Ireland, telling me if you get stuck or need any help give him a call. I deliberated for a while, but then started to get a bit nervous as we were to young guys in Manhattan late at night I decided to give him a call. Tony told us to go and wait for him on the steps of James A. Farley Post Office behind Madison Square Garden. Shortly after this a small man pulled up in his car with a beaming smile and a welcome that made me realize this was definitely a member of my family. Tony drove us to his home in Bogota N.J. we were met with the same welcome and warmth from Mary. Entering their home I felt an atmosphere that was like visiting close relatives at home. Paddy and I stayed about 5 days with Tony and Mary and enjoyed meeting Julie, Barbara and Anthony.

In July 2005 I took my 2 teenage sons on a trip to the states, We visited Tony and Mary's home and my 2 boys described feeling the same warm atmosphere as I had felt all those years ago.

Tony visited Coleraine many times after he retired and we had many great days and nights together especially with a few Guinness and Jameson's on board.

Little did I know that as a young man visiting the states in 1987 that this guy who welcomed us into his home, would become a life long friend.

Love from Stephen, Mary, Stephen and Paul

God Bless

Stephen Friel - January 23, 2024 at 04:15 AM

SM

“ There you are with that lovely smile. You were always happy and it was a pleasure to visit you and all no matter what the weather was like. you were so welcoming and always ready with a joke or some happy news. I remember when we all would go up to the Catskill mountains for our summer vacation. We had some fun times. We would laugh, and dance and just sing songs; i will never forget all those happy times. We miss you Tony but you will not be forgotten. You are forever in memory. Sarah Mayville

Sarah Mayville - January 22, 2024 at 08:35 PM

DD

“ About 55 years ago, I met my first real life superhero. His name was Tony. I was about 9 years old and Tony was visiting his aunt (Mary Friel) and uncle (Harry Douthart) in Wiarton Ontario at our family cottage. I was awestruck that he was a paratrooper! To me, Tony embodied someone who was not altogether sane and was living life on the edge. I was in complete awe. Although not a tall man, Tony was built like a British bull dog, had a strong robust Irish accent and the biggest smile and infectious laugh. Talk about a super hero ... I met mine that summer.

A few years later Tony visited us again at that same family cottage. He wanted to go fishing, probably to release some pent up energy, and he wanted to row around the bay. He rowed tirelessly for about 2 miles and we finally arrived at a location that I had always wanted to fish at... but of course, it was too far for anyone else to row to. For Tony “ no problem, lets go”. We fished for a good hour in that spot until I hooked a good size rainbow trout. I got it to the boat, and just as I went to lift it into the boat, it came off the lure, it hit the side of the boat and was gone. In my 10 year old frustration, and lets face it, embarrassment in front of my superhero, I blurted out “FU*K”. I had never swore in front of an adult before that day. Tony looked at me barely containing his huge grin. I begged him not to tell my father and he just laughed. I remember, he actually grinned the entire way back promising to keep our secret. It was our little secret!

That same summer Tony gave me one of his AA (American Airborne) shirts with the Friel name tag on the right chest. It was like my super hero gave me his cape. I proudly wore that shirt until my mother could no longer sew it and keep it held together.

Not many kids get to meet their real life hero and I am so grateful that I did.

Through Tony, and up until the last time I saw him in 1997, I was able to experience a wee piece of my own Irish roots and for that I am truly grateful. and feel incredibly blessed.

May the road rise to meet you.

May the wind always be at your back.

May the sun shine warm upon your face.

*The rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may
God hold you in the palm of his hand.*

*May happy memories like mine console and support the entire
family at this difficult time.*

Love Danny, Kathy, Christopher, Ryan and Patrick Douthart

Danny Douthart - January 22, 2024 at 05:49 PM