



Thomas Stanley Telford

March 20, 1937 - February 28, 2026

Thomas Stanley Telford, 88, was born March 20th, 1937, to John Robert Telford and Pauline (Sager) Telford in Salem, Illinois. He passed into Heaven on February 28th, 2026.

Tom married Mikell Kathryn Charlton on July 27th, 1956. They were married for 61 years.

They were parents to four children: Amy (Archie) Garces, Joe (Lisa) Telford, William Telford, and Todd Telford. Honorary daughter: Shaina (Eric) Hocking. Tom leaves behind 7 grandchildren: Alison (Bryan) McKinney, Andrew Garces, Dr. Anne (Ryan) LaPorte, Jay (Erin) Telford, and Sam (Jessica) Telford. Honorary granddaughters: Satie Bre Stevenson and Karley Squibb and nine great-grandchildren: Kathryn, Thomas, Paul, Violet, Brice, Anna, Jolie, Jemma, and Jacey. Tom's grand and great grandchildren were his pride and joy.

Our dad was an unusual father. In our family, we don't tell people how we grew up because they don't believe us. People look doubtful when you talk about luring an escaped bear back to his cage with ice cream. They don't believe he'd haul us into the car in the middle of a storm to search for a tornado. They wonder when we tell them about driving through the McDonald's drive thru to get a bear cub an ice cream cone. So, we just smile and say our dad was a farmer. Dad was a farmer all his life, but his real love was hunting. It didn't matter where, it didn't matter what, he loved to hunt. He was the best friend a man could have. He loved spending time joking with his

buddies. He loved Illini Basketball. He loved his life. This is pretty close to God's recipe for Tom Telford: 1 part determination, 1 part strength, 1 part friendship, 8 parts Sheer Ornery-ness. We loved him. We will miss him. A funeral service will be held at 12:00pm Thursday March 5th, 2026, at Young's Chapel Christian Church in Salem, with Steve Bratton officiating. A time of visitation will be held from 10:00 am until the time of the service at the Church. A private family burial will be held at East Lawn Cemetery in Salem. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Young's Chapel Christian Church and will be accepted at the visitation or at Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home, PO Box 97, Salem, Illinois 62881. Online condolences may be left at www.sutherlandfuneralhome.com or Sutherland-Rankin Funeral Home Facebook page.

Previous Events

Visitation

MAR 5. 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CT)

Young's Chapel Christian Church
3225 Red Stripe Road
Salem, IL 62881

Funeral Service

MAR 5. 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM (CT)

Young's Chapel Christian Church
3225 Red Stripe Road
Salem, IL 62881

Tribute Wall



“ *Our condolences along with years of wonderful memories. From the Shelton Family.*

Russell Shelton - March 09 at 11:41 AM

SH

“ *Deepest condolences from the Dale Brandenburger family. We were always excited when he would bring the bears to Millstadt. Tom and Dad were great friends, and I am sure they have much to catch up on in heaven. Tom is at the center of many great memories.*



Sharon Holloway - March 06 at 02:45 PM

CJ

“ *May the family accept our deepest condolences for the passing of Tom from The Millstadt Coonhunters Association here in Millstadt IL. Our families have so many great memories every year of our kids feeding the bears he brought out to our club. So many more memories which I'm sure the guys are talking about right now up there. We're sure Dale was the first to greet him. May Tom rest in peace. He will be missed.*

*Sincerely,
The Millstadt Coonhunters Club*

Carl Brandenburger, Jr - March 05 at 11:09 PM

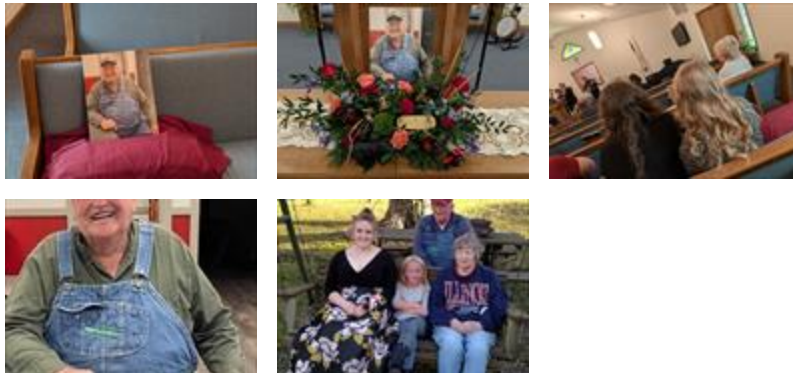
DA

“ Our sincerest condolences to the family. I have special memories as a child of your dad coming into my dad’s veterinary clinic. I would always look forward to when he would bring the bear cubs into the clinic. One of my fondest memories growing up in the clinic. I was so excited when my dad let me go on a house call with him! I can still remember that day. My dad and I are so sorry we were unable to attend the services. Praying for peace and strength in the days ahead.

Dr. A.J. Sprague & Amy(Sprague)Chiavario - March 05 at 06:59 PM

SH

“ Forever grateful for all they did for my girls and me. Tom's obit was no joke; he was a mighty Man, Father, Grandpa, "Old-Pa," Friend, and "Bearman." 🙏🏻✝️❤️🙏🏻



Shaina - March 05 at 05:34 PM

SM

“ Tom raised a fine man in Joe and for that I respect him. I only wish I could have seen one of his bears. Blessing to the family and now Tom is in paradise! Praise the Lord!

scott marcum - March 05 at 10:07 AM

EC

“ We are so very sorry, he was a great man.

Ed & Jenny (Raver) Carlson - March 05 at 09:05 AM

MC

“ Our sincere condolences for the family. Prayers for comfort at this time of your loss.

Mark & Sondra Caldwell - March 05 at 08:54 AM

MS

“ 1 file added to the album Friends



Merle "Smiley" Seltrecht - March 04 at 02:19 PM

MS

*I can remember the bear coming out to meet you like a dog when you pulled up to the house. Then it would walk you to the house. And when you got ready to leave, it would walk you back out to your truck. The last of the old bear hunters. We have a new bunch going in Wisconsin.
- Merle "Smiley" Seltrecht*

Merle "Smiley" Seltrecht - March 04 at 02:53 PM

KH

“ Joe and family, my family has fond memories of Tom! He was always so friendly and kind! Kind enough to move our first mobile home from the old family home place to Mills Cart Road. Susan and I often took our girls past your old home place on a walk, and at times, Tom would be out and always willing to show us the bears. (I believe one was named Susie?). Please know that you and your family are in our prayers at this time.
Ken Harwell

Ken Harwell - March 04 at 12:25 PM

CT

“ Spending time at the Telford house is still a highlight of my childhood. Smoky was the first bear that I ever met quite up close, I was fascinated. Early one morning about eight or ten of us girls had spent the night. Mikkal was making homemade donuts. Smoky LOVED homemade donuts. He slipped out of his cage and decided to head over to the porch for breakfast. Little girls scooting and hooting up the stairs. Mikkal shooing Smoke with a broom. We had a grand time!! I remember Tom laughing. Hearty laughter that would make him red in the face. I'm blessed to have had Tom Telford and his family cross my path and I am better for it. Many blessings to all.

Chris Nealy Thompson - March 03 at 08:40 PM

SP

“ The snow ski trips to "Little Switzerland" in Wisconsin with the Selmaville bunch back in the 70's will forever be cherished. It's scary to guess how many of us crammed in that old blue and white van and rode all the way up and back. Tom was one of a kind for sure. Us kids in the neighborhood were so proud of the fact that he had bears! He'll be missed.

Sam Phillips - March 03 at 07:57 PM



“ So sorry for your loss Joe and family. Sending prayers for peace and comfort. May the Lord wrap his arms around you and your family during this difficult time.

Chris Hoerchler-Fritts - March 03 at 06:33 PM

CB

“ Deepest sympathy to the Family. Tom was a kind soul. I will never forget the bear in the barn when we lived out by the golf course many many years ago.

Cindy Eddings Brown - March 03 at 04:10 PM

CB

Cindy Eddings Brown

Cindy Eddings Brown - March 03 at 04:11 PM

SK

“ i remember going to champaign to buy young dairy calves to bring home many year ago . shannon Kell

shannon kell - March 03 at 02:10 PM

LF

“ Larry Frost lit a candle in memory of Thomas Stanley Telford



Larry Frost - March 03 at 10:32 AM