

Dennis James Reilly

May 11, 1952 - February 14, 2021

Dennis James Reilly, 68, retired F.D.N.Y. firefighter, Dennis James “Ace” Reilly, 68, of Cary, NC, beloved husband, brother and friend, passed away February 14, 2021 at his home following his battle with cancer. Dennis was born on May 11, 1952 in Staten Island, New York to John and Margaret (Chorman) Reilly. He was the third of six brothers.

From an early age, Dennis showed tenacity and a gift for athletics. He obtained two degrees in the physical sciences and excelled in football at Missouri Valley College where he was voted MVP in 1974, and was later inducted into the Athletic Hall of Fame in October of 2012. Dennis enjoyed his new career as a history teacher and football coach, and then in 1976 was fortunate to sign a contract with the NY Giants, but was released during pre-season to later become a professional heavyweight boxer, professional actor, stand-up comedian, and international fitness instructor & presenter at the world’s most elite health spas. Dennis committed his life to helping people and became a New York City firefighter in May of 1983. During his tenure at the fire department he was the nozzle man who was never afraid to run into a blazing inferno. He was a fireman’s fireman. Dennis worked through the early morning hours on the day the Twin Towers fell on 9/11/2001, and returned to Ground Zero search & rescue operations for many days thereafter. He lost many friends and colleagues on that fateful day and participated in numerous fundraisers to help the spouses and families of those lost, which included 2

charity NY Police vs. NY Fire heavyweight boxing matches where his contenders were 20 years his junior. Dennis had heart and soul. Shortly after 9/11 Dennis proposed to the love of his life Cindy, who at the time was a flight attendant for Continental Airlines. They were later married in March of 2003. Dennis retired from the New York City Fire Department in May of 2003 and enjoyed his retirement years with his wife and their two Himalayan cats and little Pekingese, Suki, in Florida, and later relocated to Cary, NC in 2009, where he pursued his writing passion and published his first book, "Jobs, Heroes, Zeroes and Thieves!" and was currently working on a second publication.

Anyone who knew Dennis would say that he lived his life big and he lived it with gusto, compassion and grit. Dennis was known for his bravery, strength, athletic ability, humor, compassion, and empathy. He was loved by everyone who came in contact with him and went out of his way to help any person in need. He made a huge impact on the lives of so many. He rooted for the underdog and believed that persistence and hard work defined the character of an individual whether rich or poor. Dennis' brother Ray quoted, "He was the best brother you could ever ask for, he always had your back and could always make you laugh." Dennis loved all of his furry kids, Ziggy, Misty, Sweet Tart and Suki with an intense compassion, and was a devoted and loving husband. To Cindy, Dennis was her "gentle giant" and the love of her life. Dennis will be tremendously missed by so many whose lives he inspired and hearts he touched.

Dennis is survived by his wife Cynthia Reilly of Cary, NC, and beloved cat, Misty, five brothers, John Reilly of Surprise, AZ, James Reilly and wife Karen of Mamaroneck, NY, Daniel Reilly and wife Frances of Roulette, PA, Raymond Reilly of Manalapan, NJ, and Patrick Reilly of Surprise, AZ. Also, nephew Michael Reilly and wife Lisa of Tucson, AZ and great nieces Shea and Skylar Reilly, niece Bridget Reilly of Mechanicville, NY, and second cousin Stephen

Chorman and wife Susan of Apex, NC. Also, mother-in-law Elizabeth Preuc, and 3 brother-in-laws Randall Preuc, Kenneth Preuc and daughter Chelsi, and Robert Preuc and wife Fay.

He was preceded in death by John Reilly (father) and Margaret Reilly (mother).

The family extends a special thank you to the Cary Fire Department and the New York City Fire Department. They provided incredible support during this difficult time.

Memorial mass is planned at St. Michael The Archangel Church on Thursday, April 15, 2021 at 11:00 am.

Memorial contributions may be made to Tunnel to Towers Foundation: <https://tunnel2towers.org>;

or

North Carolina Fallen Firefighters Foundation: <https://ncfff.org/donate/>

or

UFA Widows' & Children's Fund: <https://ufanyc.org/philanthropy/#funds>

or

Wounded Warrior Project: https://support.woundedwarriorproject.org/Default.aspx?tsid=11585&ovr_acv_id=15457&campaignSource=ONLINE&source=BB21001ALPSAAA&dclid=CLblureSte8CFTz84wcdigAEcA

See more memories of Dennis in the Staten Island Advance:

<https://obits.silive.com/obituaries/siadvance/obituary.aspx?n=dennis-james-reilly&pid=197900199&fhid=31636>

Previous Events

Funeral Mass

APR **15**. 11:00 AM (ET)

St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church

804 High House Rd.

Cary, NC 27513

<http://www.stmichaelcary.org/>

Tribute Wall

CR

“ Not a day goes by that my heart doesn't miss you Dennis❤️. This was our last picture together. You were and will always be the love of my life. Today is 9/11/22 ... We will Never Forget!🇺🇸💔



Cindy R. - September 11, 2022 at 03:46 PM

MS

Cindy. I know your pain. It just made 9 yrs for Dad. I have a never seen before picture my Dad took on 9/11 of Dennis. I would like to make a copy and send it to you. Dennis was a great man
I love and miss you both
Melanie Smith

Melanie Elena Smith - April 06 at 09:54 PM

CI

“ 1 file added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - April 18, 2021 at 03:11 PM

SA

“ Peace be with you Cindy. I feel so honored to have met both of you. Dennis always had an upbeat attitude during his treatment and wonderful sense of humor. I'm grateful that he shared his book with me and sweet stories of his love for you. Your family is in my prayers. ~Sandra and all your friends at SK

Sandra - April 15, 2021 at 01:23 AM

CI

“ 1 file added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - April 14, 2021 at 10:21 PM

BF

“ Dennis was always there for friends & family!! He was a big part of my life. Gonna miss reminiscing all the funny experiences we had over the years! From Kent's East, the YMCA , NY Health & Racket Club, double dating & stories I can't divulge!! Well maybe just one! We went to pickup our dates and as we were invited in & standing in the living room, at about 9:30 pm, that's the time we use to go out, lol we heard from the near bedroom, assuming one of our dates parents, pass gas with the loudest farts u ever heard!! Needless to say Dennis' date was mortified!! Haha. We laughed about that for years!! Rest well my friend I'll see ya soon! 🙏🙏

Bill Francis - March 20, 2021 at 01:55 PM



“ Dennis was a true gentleman!! Cindy is in my prayers, along with the rest of the family. I remember when I met Cindy at Continental airlines, I thought of introducing her to Dennis right away. Bill Francis and I were dating and they were cousins by marriage. Anyhow, our first official date was at Joseph's pub at the Swan hotel. Sounds funny; but many flight attendants had crash pads there. I knew immediately Dennis liked Cindy, and vice versa. We shared some fun memories since then! I liked to say we played Cupid! I remember their wedding fondly. I can even tell you what the dessert was! Coffee ice cream was on the menu! That was such a fun wedding and what a beautiful couple Dennis and Cindy made. He will be missed terribly. I love you Cindy!

Renae Kinsey - March 20, 2021 at 01:40 PM



“ 1 file added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - March 16, 2021 at 12:22 AM



“ Condolence Snacks was purchased for the family of Dennis James Reilly.



March 14, 2021 at 03:09 PM

DT

“ *Our heartfelt condolences to the Reilly family.*

Love, Bruce and Doreen

Doreen Tatge - March 13, 2021 at 04:30 PM



“ *Beautiful Heart Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dennis James Reilly.*



March 13, 2021 at 04:26 PM

LS

“ *<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHB14AG0qN4>*

With much love to the Reilly family

Laura Seal - March 11, 2021 at 01:09 PM

CI

“ *1 file added to the album Memories of Dennis*



Cindy - March 10, 2021 at 01:30 AM



“ *Beautiful in Blue was purchased for the family of Dennis James Reilly.*



March 03, 2021 at 06:09 PM



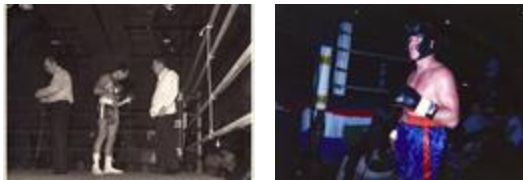
“ *Cindy, this is Anne's friend, Lynn. We met in Marco Island at Anne's 1st wedding. Anne sent this to me today and I wanted to send you a message. I am so truly sorry for your loss of Dennis. Although I didn't meet Dennis until the wedding I felt like I had known him for years beforehand as Anne would often tell me about him, and you. I remember when she put together a huge fruit basket and took it up to Dennis' firehouse during 911.*

Cindy, I am adding you to my prayers. Grief is the hardest challenge that we are forced to deal with in life. Yet within every human being is the strength to do so. I know that you will find your way and do so in a way that is true to you. In the meantime, be gentle and kind to yourself and your grieving heart. -Lynn Hertel

Lynn Hertel - March 01, 2021 at 03:31 PM



“ *2 files added to the album Memories of Dennis*



Cindy - March 01, 2021 at 02:43 PM

CI

“ 9 files added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - March 01, 2021 at 12:01 PM

CI

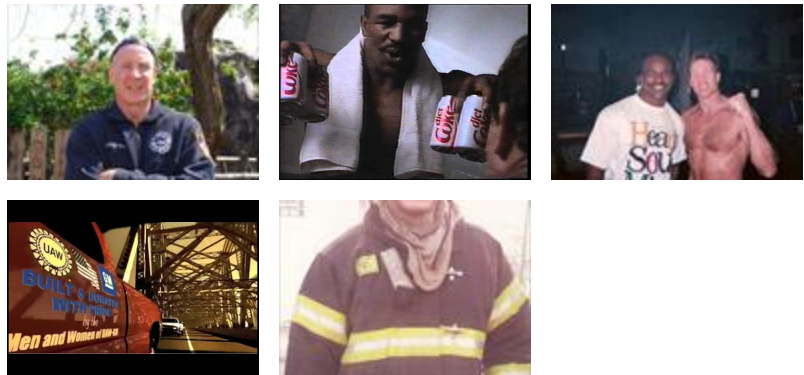
“ 3 files added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - March 01, 2021 at 12:09 AM

CI

“ 12 files added to the album Memories of Dennis



Cindy - February 27, 2021 at 11:20 PM



“ *Full Of Love Bouquet was purchased for the family of Dennis James Reilly.*



February 24, 2021 at 09:26 PM



“ *Dennis was a great friend and teammate. One of the best people I've ever known*

mike Felci - February 24, 2021 at 03:19 PM



Dennis you was a great friend would help me out a lot got me job at by palace gone but not forgotten love you forever

ray - February 24, 2021 at 08:06 PM



*Dennis is in God's loving arms. One day we will all have the peace he has now. No more pain, no more tears.
We loved Dennis and love you Cindy. Stephen and Susan Chorman 'because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.'
Romans 10:9*

Stephen and Susan Chorman - March 18, 2021 at 08:08 PM