



Thomas Anthony Pacello Jr.

October 31, 1977 - November 16, 2020

Thomas Anthony Pacello Jr. was born on October 31, 1977, in Memphis, Tennessee. He died on November 16, as a result of complications from pancreatic cancer. Despite the challenges of an aggressive six-month illness, Tommy remained his optimistic and positive self, focused on sharing his journey, building memories for his young family and continuing his work as an instrument of change in Memphis, a city he loved deeply and knew well. His ambition and momentum never waned despite a rigorous treatment plan.

Tommy grew up in Germantown, TN, and spent his high school years at Evangelical Christian School where he made many lifelong friends. He attended the University of Georgia, graduating with a bachelor's degree in business administration in 2000. When people found out he was a UGA alum, Tommy was always quick to characterize his experiences in Athens, recounting the music scene and noting that he attended but one football game. He spent his time building many deep friendships that would carry on well beyond his years in Athens.

Following graduation, Tommy spent a summer in Washington, D.C., working for the Secretary of the U.S. Senate and then later moved to Nashville for several years, where he worked for the Nashville Scene alternative weekly newspaper. In Nashville Tommy again assembled a large cast of characters, adding a new branch to his fast-growing network.

Tommy returned home for law school at the University of Memphis, and true to form, quickly found some kindred spirits in the classrooms and on campus. Among these new friends was his first connection with Olivia Wilmot. After graduating from law school in 2006, he moved immediately to his next degree program. Law school was but one stop toward his real interest – urban planning. He enrolled in the University of Memphis graduate school urban planning program and soon after began working for the City of Memphis Attorney's Office while he earned his master's degree in city and regional planning. In the City Attorney's office, Tommy was instrumental in writing and launching the Memphis Unified Development Code (UDC) which represented a monumental

overhaul and refresh in the city's approach to zoning and development.

After several years with the City Attorney's office and immersion into what would be many years of engagement and friendships made through the Congress for the New Urbanism, Tommy moved to Austin, Texas, for a position with Code Studio where he managed numerous national planning and development code projects. Ahead of his move to Austin, he told several friends that he planned to be gone for a few years and then settle back in Memphis.

True to his word and master plan, Tommy returned to Memphis 27 months later as a director on the newly launched Memphis Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team, a project funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies to address some of Memphis' most critical issues such as small business growth and reducing handgun violence.

In 2015 Tommy married his longtime love Olivia Wilmot and embarked on a new career path, staying in Memphis but joining Philadelphia-based U3 Advisors in the months leading up to the creation and launch of the Memphis Medical District Collaborative, where he served as President from its inception in 2016 until his death.

As Smart City Memphis author Tom Jones wrote in 2018 – “There has not been a project in recent history that has produced more momentum in a shorter period of time than the Memphis Medical District Collaborative ... it is the fruition of everything that Tommy Pacello, its president, has been moving toward in the past decade since the time he was assistant city attorney and planning adviser in the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development.”

Tommy's professional involvement included roles as chairman of the Memphis Chapter of the Urban Land Institute, board of commissioners for the Memphis Area Transit Authority and many years of active involvement with the Congress for the New Urbanism. He was named a top 40 under the age of 40 real estate professional by the Urban Land Institute in 2014.

For years he told friends that he wanted a personal proof point representative of his life's professional work. The realization of this idea now sits in the Uptown neighborhood on North Third Street where Tommy bought and redeveloped a 100-year old, horse-drawn fire carriage station, converting it into a residence where he and his wife Olivia started their family. Not satisfied with just the renovated fire station, Tommy saw more potential on the block. He and his father Tom purchased the lot across the street and developed three residential units and a commercial/residential building that formed a small but well-connected community. Despite the scale of larger projects and his many professional

successes, this corner of Memphis was among his proudest accomplishments.

Tommy's exploits and interests extended far beyond his work. He was a legendary convener and host of parties, ranging from years of rooftop 4th of July celebrations at Central Station Apartments in South Main to backyard charity events and art shows at his renovated fire station. For several 4th of July rooftop gatherings, Tommy called a few musicians from Nashville and Athens who promptly showed up in Memphis for all night concerts with multiple bands taking the stage throughout the evening. His door and floor were always open to traveling musicians. His encyclopedic knowledge of music, obscure artists and records, and hours of the best music you'd never heard before were always the backdrop to any Tommy Pacello gathering.

Over the years, Tommy assembled a sizeable vinyl collection, and his dedication to the analog format predated the more recent popularity of records. As was most often the case with Tommy, he was cool far ahead of the curve. When living in Central Station, he set up a recurring DJ spot at Earnestine & Hazel's and would cart down dozens of records each week. His unmatched taste and record collection were shared widely, and widely known, at one point earning him a gig spinning records at an event for Aretha Franklin. When bringing friends together for music, food or any other occasion, as he frequently did, he always made it seem effortless and natural.

Tommy was a longtime lover of the outdoors, always eager for a backpacking trip or kayak adventure on the Mississippi or Buffalo River. He was an accomplished long-distance runner, completing multiple St. Jude Marathons in Memphis (2012 and 2019), and finishing the Sylamore 25K trail race for three straight years (2018-2020) with times that were always the envy of his friends. Tommy easily recruited hesitant friends to join him on multiple trips to run the 200-plus mile Bourbon Chase relay in Kentucky every few years.

He shared with his wife Olivia a love of travel, both regionally and internationally. He was a matchless travel companion with endless enthusiasm to explore and immerse himself wherever he was, from the backstreets of Mexico City to backcountry trails in the American West. In one instance this meant repeated stops (twice in one day) at his favored oyster bar in New Orleans. In travel, as in life, he moved with a purpose and pace that were at once invigorating and at times exhausting for those who tried to keep up, but his curiosity and confidence made him easy to follow.

In 2014 Tommy and Olivia found a spiritual home at Calvary Episcopal Church, where they were both baptized, as were their girls. Tommy enjoyed exploring life's bigger questions here with Rev. Scott Walters. After receiving his cancer diagnosis, Tommy and

Scott walked regularly in Overton Park, discussing at length the writings and teachings of Franciscan monk Richard Rohr. Tommy encouraged everyone he could to read “Falling Upward” by Rohr. In scripture, he found meaning and understanding that resonated in both his life and work. “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” - Jeremiah 29:7.

Tommy built easy consensus among his friends and colleagues. He charged forward, not stopping to ask for permission, and he succeeded in delivering meaningful improvement in all that he attempted, both personal and professional: as an attorney, an urban planner, as a loyal friend, a loving husband to Olivia and father to Colette and Cecile.

A friendship with Tommy represented not just his attention and interest in you, but an unmatched opportunity and expectation to meet the hundreds of people he had befriended over a lifetime. Connecting people was one of his great joys, and he continued that practice while holding court with the many friends who crossed paths at his home late into his illness. They were part of his life’s work. The sphere of friends expanded day by day. His magnetic personality, unyielding curiosity, optimism and humor were infectious and immeasurably influential to those fortunate enough to have shared time with him.

Tommy leaves behind his wife Olivia Wilmot, daughters Colette and Cecile, parents Tom and Elaine Pacello, sisters Kelli de Witt (Greg) and Kerri Pacello (Jon), nieces Alix de Witt Harte (Ryan) and Olivia de Witt.

The family requests in lieu of flowers that friends support Tommy’s dearest causes and work or make a non-tax-deductible gift to the Pacello Family Educational Trust for the benefit of Colette and Cecile’s future educational pursuits.

Make checks payable to: Pacello Family Educational Trust

1900 Union Avenue Memphis, TN 38104 Or, please consider supporting RegionSmart, Urban Land Institute Memphis, or Overton Park.

A limited capacity service for family and close friends will be held at Calvary Episcopal Church in Memphis on Saturday, November 21 at 10:00 am CST. Please join us via livestream at calvarymemphis.org/livestream.

A gathering for friends and family will follow at the Fire Station. Please register for the gathering here (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-socially-distantced-celebration-of-tommy-pacello-tickets-129687568007>).

For friends of Tommy's wishing to share stories and photos for his girls, please visit tommypacello.com.

Links to charitable causes – RegionSmart: <https://roundtable.livegivemidsouth.org/organizations/s3Zkk59STWmJFa5Gs>

ULI: https://netforum.uli.org/eWeb/dynamicPage.aspx?webcode=ULIAnnualFundDonation&action=add&gift_src_key=0048c849-2c5e-4585-883a-ae4b855db1f5&Site=ULI2015&donotsave=ye

Events

NOV **Memorial Service** 10:00AM

21

Calvary Episcopal Church

102 North Second Street, Memphis, TN, US, 38103