



Thomas Francis Quinlan

May 23, 1950 - August 27, 2026

Rochester, New York

Thomas Francis Quinlan died in Rochester on August 27, 2026. He was seventy-six. Born there on May 23, 1950, he grew up knowing the plants as a clock and the lake as a weekday neighbor. He learned a clean room before he learned a necktie. A correct exposure, he said, is a kind of promise: it has to hold or the whole story is dark.

He spent twenty-nine years as a technician in a shop that made parts no one famous would ever name: housings, brackets, the metal that lets a better-known machine keep its reputation. He was the man who could hear a bad bearing before the gauge did, and the man who brought extra coffee for the night shift because he remembered being hungry at nineteen. He did not call himself an engineer. He called himself employed, which he treated as a moral category.

He married Ellen Quinlan in 1974. They bought a house in a neighborhood that later became expensive around them. They stayed. Two daughters went through public schools he trusted more than he trusted real-estate talk. After the shop closed he repaired lawnmowers in the garage and refused to charge a widow what the parts actually cost.

Neighbors remember a quiet man who swept his sidewalk and yours if the wind had been unfair, who kept a coffee can of screws labeled in two hands, and who could sit through a graduation without making it about himself. He liked the lake early, before the heat, when the hills still looked like a place a person could walk. He died in Rochester, the only city he had ever needed. The garage light is off. The work he left in other people's machines is still turning.

Services

A memorial in Rochester with tea and photographs afterward. In lieu of flowers, a gift to a trade program is welcome.

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