

## Chief Thomas Lawless

By: Billy McDermott

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It is with sadness I note the death of Tom Lawless, Chief of Police for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). He passed away on September 28, 2005. He was 62. [Assistant Chief James Tuller](#), Commanding Officer of NYPD's Patrol Borough Queens North was kind enough to call me. Chief Lawless retired as Borough Commander for NYPD Queens South only a few years back to take his new assignment. He finally fulfilled his dream of being a Chief of the Department.

I met Chief Lawless in January, 2002. He and I were guests at a weekly luncheon for the Jamaica Rotary. At the time I was Public Affairs Director for a large Mental Health Agency in Queens, NY. I was the [keynote speaker](#) that day. What he said was profound and showed why crime was dropping like a lead balloon in the City of New York. "The fact that I don't know your 27 year-old agency serving the mentally ill, tells me how good you are!" Chief Lawless then asked if our staffs could get together for lunch, "to learn what you are doing right."

From that day on, Chief Lawless and I became friends. He was there every step of the way. He introduced me to Chief Tuller. He too became a great friend. We had several ceremonies. If Chief Lawless could not attend, he sent his Deputy, Chief Dewey Fong. When Chief Fong retired, both Chief Tuller and Lawless would send several of their commanding officers in the various precincts under their command. The two were inseparable and enjoyed each other's company. Together, they led all of New York City with their crime statistics.

Chief Lawless attended our first walk with Chief Tuller. Then NY Mets Manager Bobby Valentine was our Chairman. Both Chiefs served as Chairman of our second walk. Both walks were held in Flushing Meadow Corona Park, home the 1964 World's Fair and current home to the NY Mets Baseball Team and Tennis' US Open.

Transitional Services for New York honored both Chief Tuller and Chief Lawless in November 2002. The following day, they both attended a luncheon where the Queens Chamber of Commerce honored me as "[Business Person of the Year](#)."

Chief Lawless was one of the nicest men I have ever known. Kind and compassionate were his trademarks. I remember him telling an audience of community leaders that his biggest enemy was "ignorance." He recognized that Queens, with over 100 spoken dialects and languages, had many citizens where the Police were the enemy in their homeland.

I had the honor of meeting his wife Yvonne once and attended his retirement dinner with several of my friends.

Tom, I have so much respect for you that I want all to know that I am leaning on you now for my prayers. Thank you Chief and God bless you!