



Thomas Michael Self

November 22, 1950 - May 1, 2024

Thomas Michael Self passed away May 1 at home with his family, after fighting terminal cancer with courage and grace.

He was a native Floridian, born 11/22/1950 in Tampa, and graduated from the University of West Florida with his Bachelor's Degree in Biology in 1976.

He served first in the Air Force and then in the Coast Guard until November 1989, when he was honorably discharged with the rank of Lieutenant, having been stationed in San Diego, Puerto Rico, Connecticut, and Miami, active most notably in drug interdiction and search-and rescue missions. Qualified as a Naval Aviator, he first piloted C-131 transport planes and later flew the HU 25 Falcon jet on a variety of missions, including searching large areas of ocean for rescues with a success rate of over 90%.

In his civilian career, he continued in Homeland Security roles. He worked in the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Southeast District in Emergency Response, dealing with hazardous materials and unknown substances at major accidents, illegal dump sites, and crime scenes. He was also the District's Safety and Emergency Management coordinator, planning and preparing the District to continue operations and assist FEMA through hurricanes and other natural or man-made disasters. He put together the first Hurricane Expo events in southeast Florida, with a major trade show and response agencies' outreach to the public, including state and local government agencies, utilities, law enforcement, fire/rescue, the National Guard, and the Red Cross.

He later directed the emergency management programs at various Palm Beach County hospitals, most recently at the Veterans' Administration hospital in West Palm Beach until he retired in August 2017. He was Chair of the Healthcare Emergency Response Coalition, which was formed to coordinate disaster response training and equipment acquisition among the county hospitals and medical providers, so personnel and materials were largely interchangeable and could be shared during disaster response with a minimum of difficulty or delay. The Coalition has been used as a model nationwide for medical preparedness.

In his personal life, Michael was married for 23 years to his wife, Lisa, and was stepfather to sons Patrick and Ryan. Aside from his family, his favorite things were fishing, gardening, attending events like the annual Great Smoke and just hanging out with his cigar buddies, Halloween, and watching football and movies with a succession of devoted Standard Poodles.