



Rest in Peace

John Kristoffersen

November 4, 1961 — August 25, 2012

First Grade Detective John Kristoffersen, the DEA Delegate from the Brooklyn North Homicide Task Force, passed away while still on active duty on August 25, 2012 from illnesses he contracted as a result of his work during the rescue and recovery efforts of 9/11. In the aftermath of the Twin Towers falling, in addition to his regularly assigned duties, Kristoffersen had volunteered to go to Ground Zero and related sites on his own time and worked long hours sifting through the debris.

His wife of 28 years, Bernadette, says, "John never wanted to be involved in any of the lawsuits or other claims that some responders have filed. He felt that it was his duty as a Law Enforcement Officer to take the good with the bad, and he didn't want to take anything away from anyone else."

That generous spirit and caring nature is what made Kristoffersen a wonderfully devoted husband to Bernadette and father to his children John and Jessica, as well as a superb union Delegate and Investigator.

Born and raised in Lindenhurst, Long Island with his two sisters Lisa and Diana, Lisa reminisces, "John was always full of fun and full of life, a real practical joker." She recalls that her brother would disguise his voice and trick her with prank telephone calls. "He got me every time," she says, but besides the daily hijinks, she adds, "he had such a big heart, he would literally do anything for you."

Kristoffersen went to college at Farmingdale State University and served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT with the West Islip Fire Department before turning his attention to the NYPD. He was appointed to the force in early January 1984.

"John and I met when I was working as a waitress at my brother's restaurant," Bernadette explains. "At the time, it was on Henry Street in Brooklyn and the U.S.S. Iowa came to town. John came in for a meal." Apparently the Officer's eye caught more than the menu, as John and Bernadette were married in 1985. Bernadette had a brother on the force, too: now retired Lt. Gary Wexler.

Kristoffersen's entire career was spent in Brooklyn North. He started with the 79 Precinct patrol in January of 1985, and moved to the 77 Precinct patrol in December of 1986. He was transferred to the Organized Crime Control Bureau in January 1988, where he was promoted to Detective in January 1991. He was transferred to the 77 Squad in July 1993, and finally to Brooklyn North Homicide in October 2000. He earned second grade in February 2003 and first grade in June 2007. He was elected Delegate by the members of the Squad in March 2006.

Det. Matt Hutchison, John's last partner who worked with him in Homicide for a decade, says, "It's agreed upon by everyone who knew him that Johnny was just a great guy. He always had a smile on his face. Regardless of what was going on, the work always



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John Kristoffersen

First Grade Detective

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got done, and even at the end," Hutchison adds, "John always managed to come up with some one-liners. He always made you laugh."

On his off hours, Kristoffersen, a Jets fan, enjoyed watching football games with his kids, and before he took ill, played softball and golf, and enjoyed playing cards or just informally hanging out with friends.

"He didn't want to bring the stresses of the job home with him, so he didn't talk a lot about work at home," says Bernadette. "He had a great sense of humor and everyone loved him. He was a caring, loving father and the children's rock. He adored them and they adored him."

Although there was no history of cancer in his family, Kristoffersen was first diagnosed in early September 2011 with esophageal cancer. He was treated with chemotherapy and radiation, and by the following February doctors performed surgery. By the end of March 2012, says Lisa, "He was doing fabulously, and we believed he was making a full recovery."

He received, says his wife, "a clean bill of health," but within two months of that assessment, the esophageal cancer returned and travelled to three-quarters of his liver, and he was given only three to six months to live. By May, Kristoffersen was in the hospital. The doctors tried different types of chemo and transfusions and eventually they stopped recommending treatment. But the Kristoffersens travelled to Mexico in July to explore all their medical options.

"He was so strong and so positive all the time," says Lisa. "He'd say he was feeling tired, but he'd be home soon, better than before. He fought so hard, and we all really believed he'd pull through and be spared." She adds, "When we would get maudlin, he would say 'lighten up!' So you had to do it for him. We all believed if anyone's attitude and strength could have gotten past the illness, it was John's."

But finally the prognosis left him with only two more weeks to live. Kristoffersen had witnessed his own Brooklyn North Homicide Task Force partner, Tim Duffy, get killed in an off-duty car crash back in September 2009, and he knew the strain that losing a loved one puts on surviving family members. So



John and his beloved daughter Jessica

even during his most trying final weeks, he paid special attention to the needs of his family.

"I know people who lost spouses and they don't know if they can keep the roofs over their heads," Bernadette relates, "but Johnny really took care of his family. His goal was to be here for us, and since he couldn't do that, he went over and beyond to ensure that everything was in order, and that we would be okay when he was gone."

"Another thing about John," Lisa adds, "was that he never complained. Never. My mom and sister and I were almost unprepared for the end, because we believed by watching him that everything would be okay. So it was only two or three days before he died that we finally realized he'd be gone. And he was so dedicated to the force," she adds, "that I always said he had two sisters, but he had so, so many brothers, and they were amazing to us during our most trying time." John's colleagues in Brooklyn North honored him as their "Man of the Year" at their annual Detectives' Club dinner dance, January 31, 2013.

In addition to Bernadette, his daughter Jessica, 23, and son John, 21, Kristoffersen is survived by his mother Ann, his two sisters Lisa Jaworowski and Diana Harty, and many friends and colleagues.

Bernadette simply, but eloquently, summed up the life partner who even fellow Detectives called "Papa Bear."

"He was an amazing man," she said.

At the time of his death, John Kristoffersen was nine weeks shy of his 51st birthday.