

The Gold Shield

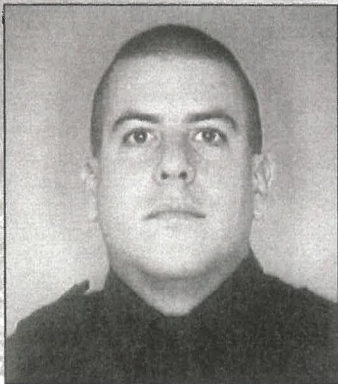
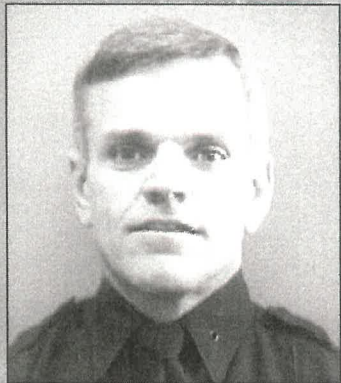
... with *pride* we serve

Official Publication of the Detectives' Endowment Association, Inc. of the Police Department of the City of New York

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The Police Union Representing the Greatest Detectives in the World



Det. Claude Richards of the Bomb Squad (inset top) and Det. Joseph Vigiano of Emergency Services Unit, Truck 2, Manhattan (inset bottom) made the ultimate sacrifice on September 11, 2001.



A member of the National Association of Police Organizations (NAPO) • Thomas J. Scotto, President

"Now He's Protecting Heaven"

Det. Joseph Vigiano

Emergency Services Unit, Truck 2, Manhattan

"Everyone calls my dad a hero," says eight-year old Joseph Vigiano, Jr. "But I always new that."

His 34-year old father, a 14-year veteran of the force and a member Emergency Services Unit, Truck 2, Manhattan, rushed into the World Trade Center complex to do what he had done many times before — selflessly put himself in the midst of unthinkable conditions to protect and preserve life.

His wife, Kathy Vigiano, a Police Officer with the 75th Precinct, told *The New York Post*, "Joe wouldn't have left until the last person was out" of the buildings.

She was right.

He did not leave.

And on October 30th, over 1,000 mourners ventured to Patchogue, Long Island to pay their respects to Det. Joseph Vigiano, along with his firefighter brother, John, of FDNY Ladder Co. 132. Both were killed when the two 110-story Twin Towers collapsed on September 11, 2001.

Det. Vigiano, it seems, had more lives than a cat. He had survived multiple shootings and legendary rescue attempts, which earned him the attention and respect of his peers and bosses, including the Police Commissioner, who promoted Vigiano last April 12th to the rank of detective second grade.

Commissioner Bernard Kerik said he first met Vigiano at a support group for officers wounded in the line of duty. He recalled that Vigiano told him, "I was shot five times, but I love this job." At his grade promotion, Vigiano invited the Commissioner to take part in a training exercise walking the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge. The Commissioner, who accepted the offer, used to keep a photo on his office desk of he and Vigiano climbing those cables. At the funeral, he inscribed the photograph and gave it to Joe Vigiano, Jr. and his little brothers, Jimmy, age six, and John, who was born just a few months ago.

Many others have been awed by Vigiano's heroics and bravery. Altruism, it seems, was in the detective's blood. His father, retired fire Captain John Vigiano, is one of the most decorated firemen in New York City's history. After the towers fell, Captain Vigiano feverishly joined in the rescue efforts at Ground Zero with the desperate hope of recovering his lost sons. It was not to be. He recalled his son Joseph as, "a helluva cop, who never lost his sense of humor."

Vigiano was born in 1967 and 20 years later on April 28, 1987 he was appointed to the force.

Continued on page 14

"First and Foremost Army"

Det. Claude Richards

Bomb Squad

Everything about 46-year old Det. Claude Daniel Richards — his bearing, his demeanor, his reserve, and his professionalism — reflected his training and his former service as a member of the elite U. S. Army Airborne Ranger corps. He served in the military from 1977 through 1980 and was a member of the Presidential Honor Guard.

So, on September 11, 2001, when he rushed into the World Trade Center to investigate yet another major attack on the lower Manhattan landmark, Claude Richards died a hero twice: as a New York City police officer, and as a military veteran caught in an unprecedented act of warfare on the country he loved to serve.

"Claude was never reckless, but he was fearless and he loved a challenge," says his colleague of 13 years and fellow Bomb Squad Detective Joe Putkowski. "No matter what situation presented itself, Claude was always the first one out the door and on the job."

On October 12th, more than 1,000 friends, family and colleagues turned out for his memorial mass at St. Raphael's Church in East Meadow, Long Island.

"Danny was the unit's problem solver," says Det. Daniel McNally, one of the 35 NYPD officers who worked with Richards on the Squad. McNally said he last saw Richards trying to rescue people from the number 6 World Trade Center building.

Inspector Dennis McCarthy saw Richards as the Squad's "ambassador."

"The Squad was his home and its members were his family," he says. That even included the Bomb Squad's dogs, who turned out for his memorial service with American flags wrapped patriotically around their necks.

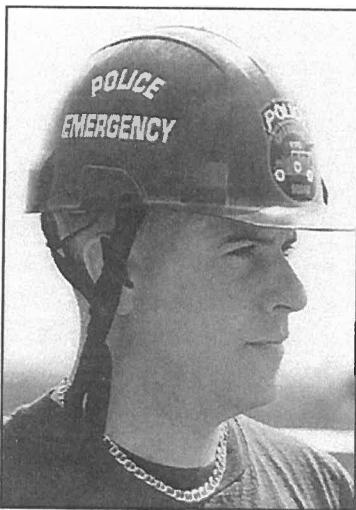
First Deputy Police Commissioner Joseph Dunne echoed the sentiments of the Squad's members when he said that wherever Richards was that day, he would have found his way down to the Twin Towers. Richards lived in Greenwich Village and was only on his second day back on the job from taking a short leave to bury his brother Bill, who died a few weeks earlier from the complications of being a double amputee Vietnam War veteran.

The Richards brothers were highly active and fiercely independent. Det. Richards loved to travel and would fly out of town on a moment's notice, jetting off to Paris or elsewhere for a weekend. He was private and reserved, but generous in spirit and so even tempered that he never held a grudge, even if he just got finished arguing with you.

Continued on page 15

Vigiano continued

In 1990, he was awarded the American Legion Police Post No. 460 Medal for Valor for an incident that occurred the previous year. As a Police Officer in the 75th Precinct, Vigiano and a partner were on patrol in the early morning hours of July 3rd, 1989, when they responded to a call of shots fired. When they arrived at the scene, they approached a group of men for questioning. Two fled, but one ran into a nearby building. While the officers gave chase, one perp turned and opened fire with a 9mm pistol. Both Vigiano and his partner were struck, but Vigiano squeezed off shots that wounded, and later killed, the assailant.



Vigiano received his gold shield in January of 1992, and as a detective was involved in another gun battle in the 75th Precinct. Shortly after midnight on August 3, 1994, Vigiano and two police officers headed to a housing development in search of a suspect wanted for numerous robberies and attempted murder. When they found him and approached, the suspect and another male suddenly whipped out weapons and began to run while opening fire. Vigiano chased the perps into a building and up a stairwell, but their gunfire hit him directly in the chest. Fortunately, he was wearing a protective vest. Although wounded, he continued the chase. Another bullet struck Vigiano in the forearm and he lost the perp on the building's roof. The perp was later arrested and the detective eventually received an NYPD Combat Cross for the battle.

In 1995, Vigiano received more Department accolades for his search and recovery efforts during the TWA Flight 800 disaster.

A daring rescue involving a scaffolding collapse on West 108th Street

in Manhattan in August of 1999 earned him another award from the Mayor. He also won recognition from the Centurion Foundation and the New York Shields.

In 2001, the Columbia Association awarded Det. Vigiano its Lt. Mario Biaggi Award of Valor for an April 27, 2000 water rescue in the Central Park Reservoir off of West 89th Street. Vigiano, in his Scuba-Dry suit, climbed down the embankment and swam out to save a drowning 67-year old man. The recovery was a success, and Vigiano was named the 2001 Medal of Valor winner from the New York Lifesaving Benevolent Association.

In one of the many gestures performed in Det. Vigiano's memory, NYPD Lt. Frank Dwyer presented a replica of Vigiano's detective shield to Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain for the United Kingdom's allied support in the international war against terrorism.

And to keep his remembrance ever vibrant, Vigiano's widow Kathleen created a stunning website to pay tribute to the personal side of her husband at www.vigiano.com.

"Everyone knows Joe was a great cop," she says, "but not everyone knows he was even a better father." At her husband's funeral, the story was related how Joe Vigiano once cut the patches off of an old ESU uniform and sewed them onto one of Joe Junior's Cub Scout shirts to make the boy feel important. The senior Vigiano had planned to become a Scout Master for his son's troop.

But Joe Junior recognizes his father has been called to a higher assignment.

"God has made my dad one of his policemen," he says. "Now he's protecting heaven."

November 4, 2001

Dear Sirs:

The Firefighters of the Medford Fire Department want to personally thank all the members of the Detectives' Endowment Association for the union's contribution to the funeral services and family/friend's gathering for Detective Joe Vigiano.

Joe Vigiano has been heralded as a hero, not only for his life saving efforts at the Twin Towers disaster, but also for many other heroic and selfless deeds as a New York City Police Emergency Services Detective. As you know, Joe was also a volunteer Firefighter with the Medford Fire Department. It is there that we all came to know Joe as not only a hero, but also as a loving and devoted father, son, and friend.

Some of the things Joe would do seemed to be so out of character for the wisecracking practical joker he was. Joe devoted many extra hours training many of Medford's Firefighters in rescue techniques that he excelled in as an ESU E-man. Heroes should not only be measured by single acts, but also by the way they conduct themselves and interact with others. Joe Vigiano is a true hero.

Vig will surely be missed.

As of now, Joe's brother John and many other members of the NYPD, FDNY, and PAPD remain missing. The members and family of the Medford Fire Department pray for their return home.

Thank you again and God Bless America.

Donald Marsh
President
Medford Fire Department
Medford, New York

This holiday season remember

Project Blue Light

Decorate your home or office with blue lights in remembrance of police officers throughout the United States who have lost their lives in the line of duty. Let the world see that our law enforcement heroes will not be forgotten! ♥

Richards continued

“If I said, ‘Hey Danny, lend me three hundred dollars,’ he would do it gladly, even if we just had a disagreement,” says colleague Det. Jeffrey Oberdier, who worked with Richards on the Squad since 1995. “That’s how forgiving he was. He was always willing to lend a helping hand. I think most people would love to have been like him.

“He was a great and unique individual, well rounded and well grounded,” adds Oberdier.

“Danny was straightforward and truthful, but always fair,” says Putkowski. “If he saw someone goofing around, he would tell him to knock it off, because he felt that slacking off on the job was a reflection on the entire unit.”

And Claude Richards loved the unit. He was appointed to the NYPD on January 3rd, 1983. In 1986, he was assigned to the old Arson & Explosion Division (members were later merged into the Bomb Squad) under the Special Investigations Division. Richards quickly distinguished himself as an expert bomb technician and was granted his gold shield in July of 1989.

“He was involved in every aspect of the unit,” says Putkowski, who notes that Richards worked on major cases such as the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993, the TWA Flight 800 disaster, the case of the retail store fire-bomber in Queens, and the case of a madman named Leary who exploded an incendiary device in a New York City subway train.

“Claude wasn’t one for putting in for awards or accolades,” Putkowski adds, because, “everything he did he took seriously and handled with a great sense of pride.

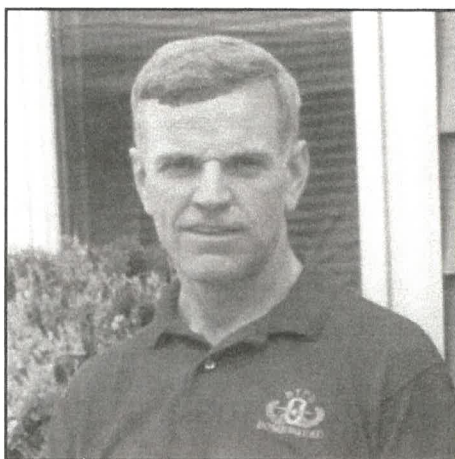
“If someone was a little timid or afraid about ‘going in on a package,’ Claude would handle it for him. There was nothing he wouldn’t do for a colleague.”

There was nothing he wouldn’t do for his country, either. He took a leave

of absence from September 1996 to October 1997 to serve as a member of the United Nations International Police Task Force in Bosnia, and this experience contributed greatly to his role as the Bomb Squad’s Intelligence Coordinator, a position which required him to work hand-in-hand with many other government agencies, such as the Secret Service, the ATF and the State Department. He earned the respect of many throughout the law enforcement community, and on December 20, 2000 he was promoted to the rank of second grade detective.

In a eulogy written jointly by his Bomb Squad colleagues, he’s remembered for his expertise, his leadership and as, “a keystone member of the unit and a role model for other detectives.” Even after Richards’ death, Squad members often recall him in the present tense, proof that their colleague is still very much alive in their hearts.

Richards’ “spirit, honor, and fairness,” they wrote in their memorial, “is cherished by the members of the Bomb Squad and is fortifying us now in our resolve during these trying times.” *Amen.*



**Police Reserve Association
City of New York, Inc.**
announces its annual
College Scholarship Examination
*for the sons and daughters of active
or retired members of the NYPD*
Wednesday, March 13, 2002, 6-9 pm
*For more information and application
call (212) 564-0010*

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

**for a United States commemorative
issue postage stamp to honor
the Purple Heart military medal**

The Detectives’ Endowment Association, Inc., representing over 15,000 active and retired New York Police Department detectives, supports the proposal for a United States postage stamp to honor the Purple Heart.

Other than the American flag, the Purple Heart medal is, perhaps, the most graphic and recognizable symbol of American military achievement and signifies the honor and patriotism of those called to defend our nation in times of both war and peace.

The Purple Heart is our nation’s oldest military decoration and was established by General George Washington during the Revolutionary War. Its bold, elegant, and beautiful design well-deserve to be honored by the Postal Service so that future generations of Americans will be reminded of the sacrifices made by American military veterans while securing America’s independence and maintaining our continued freedom.

Many of the members of the Detectives’ Endowment Association are military veterans who would like to see more recognition for the contributions that veterans have made — and continue to make — for this country.

Therefore, the Detectives’ Endowment Association, Inc. strongly urges the United States Postal Service to honor its military protectors by issuing a Purple Heart commemorative postage stamp.

Thomas J. Scotto
President

The DEA sent the above memo of support to Congress at the request of State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer.

