

Fall 2019

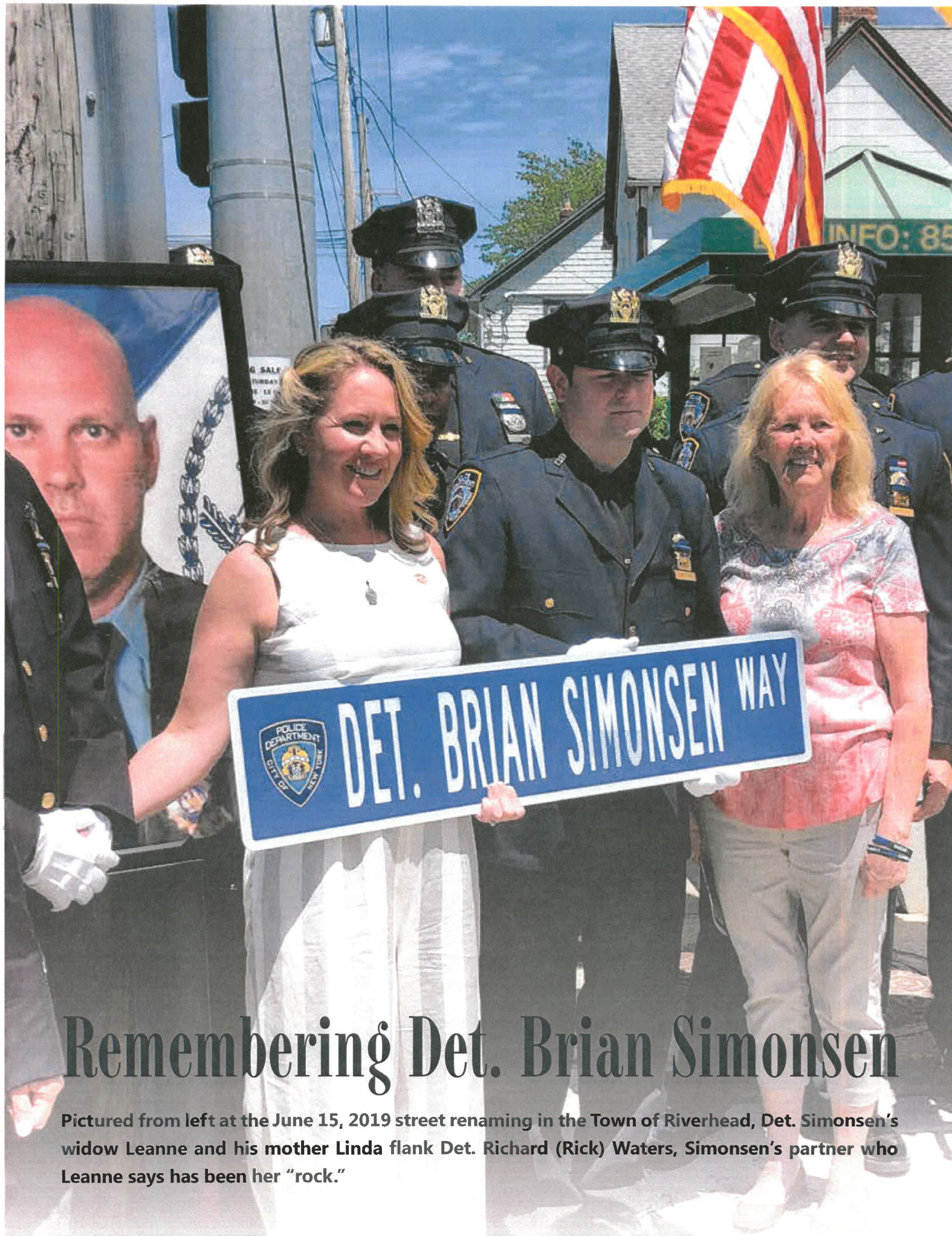
# The Gold Shield

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



## Remembering Det. Brian Simonsen





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Pictured from left at the June 15, 2019 street renaming in the Town of Riverhead, Det. Simonsen's widow Leanne and his mother Linda flank Det. Richard (Rick) Waters, Simonsen's partner who Leanne says has been her "rock."



# Fidelis ad Mortem

Detective

# Brian Simonsen



On February 20, 2019, in Hampton Bays and Jamesport, New York, the family of Det. Brian Simonsen, his colleagues, his friends, the New York Police Department, and law enforcement Officers from across the country, paid tribute and respects to a dedicated Detective and a

superb gentleman. Simonsen was granted a hero's funeral and laid to his final rest after being shot and killed at the age of 42 during an attempted robbery of a T-Mobile store in Queens the previous week, on Tuesday, February 12th.

Ironically, Simonsen, the union Delegate from the 102 Squad, didn't have to report for duty on the evening he was killed. He had Mayor's Executive Order #75 release status to attend the DEA Delegates' meeting at Russo's on the Bay in Howard Beach earlier in the day. But after the meeting adjourned, the stalwart Detective felt compelled to visit his caseload back at his office. With 34-year-old Sgt. Matthew Gorman, Simonsen went out in the field on a robbery investigation. At approximately 6:00 p.m., a call came over the radio for a different robbery in progress at Atlantic Avenue and 120th Street in the Richmond Hill section of the borough. Simonsen and Gorman responded, and when they approached the cell phone store, one masked perpetrator emerged from the backroom of the business, and pointed a gun at the entering uniformed Officers. As the Officers retreated to the street, additional uniformed patrol arrived at the scene. The perpetrator exited the store with gun in hand, and bullets started flying. In the hubbub and confusion, 42 shots were unloaded in a matter of 11 seconds. When the shooting stopped, the perpetrator was wounded, but a bullet had entered Simonsen in the chest, and another was lodged in Gorman's leg. Both Officers were transported to Jamaica Hospital where doctors were able to save Gorman, but not Simonsen, who had been pierced squarely in the chest. Because he had no expectations of any altercation earlier in the day, Simonsen was, unfortunately, not wearing a protective vest. He was pronounced dead at Jamaica Hospital.



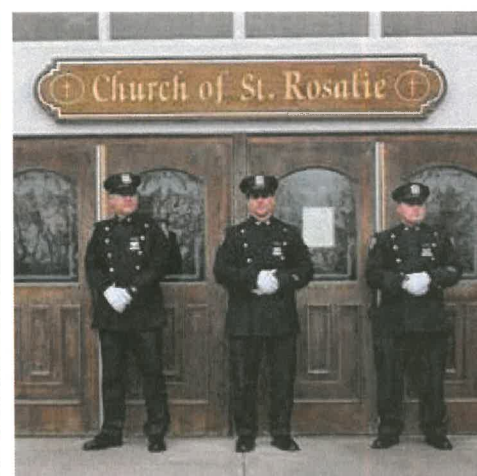


Simonsen, whose nickname was "Smiles," was appointed to the force on March 1, 2000, and spent his entire career in the confines of the 102 Precinct. He was promoted to third grade on May 30 of 2008. He became the union Delegate for the 102 Squad on March 14, 2018, and had only one more year before he was eligible to retire, although he had no such plans and was clearly dedicated to his work. He is survived by his wife Leanne, and other members of his family, including his mother Linda, and his mother-in-law Barbara.

Amidst their tragedy, Simonsen's family graciously chose to donate his surviving organs with the hope of saving others' lives. At his funeral, Simonsen was promoted to first grade Detective by Police Commissioner James P. O'Neill.

Said his cousin, Suffolk County P.O. Shawn Petersen, "From a young age, Brian lived his life to the fullest. It was a life of adventures and laughs. His personality made you want to be around him. My cousin was always smiling ... always trying to include everyone in his life."

That description of Simonsen's welcoming and generous personality was echoed by the Detective's wife. Brian and Leanne met on vacation in Las Vegas in September of 2011, when they were both coincidentally floating around the pool of the Mirage Hotel and Casino.



Photos courtesy of the NYPD Photo Unit.

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# Fidelis ad Mortem

Said Leanne, "When we left Las Vegas, and we were each flying back to our respective home cities, he said he'd call me, and, of course, I didn't think he would. But Brian called me in Chicago the very next day, and we spent the next few months getting to know each other by phone." She told her friends she had met her soul-mate and the man she was going to marry. "I really did," she says, "I knew he was my perfect fit." The couple met up again in person the following December. "From that point on," Leanne says, "I always told Brian he won the jackpot in Vegas!"

The couple was married in August 2013, and settled into their suburban home, which Leanne said, was always filled with company, because Brian welcomed everyone, including those who needed to be housed temporarily.

"After we got married," Leanne relates, "one of Brian's partners was having marital difficulties and Brian invited him to move in with us. After that ended, Brian's mother and grandfather moved into our home for a while. When that episode ended, Brian told me that yet another old friend of his was also having marital issues and needed a place to stay. I said, '*Are you kidding me?!*' But that's the way Brian was."

The memory of the never-ending stream of houseguests makes Leanne laugh. "It was non-stop company, but he opened our doors to everybody. We didn't have children, so all the neighbors' kids were like our own, as were our pets. We have a dog and a cat, too.

"Brian liked to party," she adds, "And he was always the friend everyone could rely on, the friend that would do anything for anybody. He was generous to a fault."

Leanne's own father was a Chicago cop for 36 years, so she knew the demands of the job. But Brian's laid back demeanor may have masked the dangers. "When he was killed," she says, "I was lost. Brian did everything for me. He handled everything. He would always call me his princess."

One of the traits that Leanne most respected and loved in her husband was the way he dealt with his own tragedy during his lifetime. "Brian could have easily grown up to be an angry young man," she says, noting that Simonsen lost his only sister to a car accident when she was just 13. He also lost his father, a dentist, six months later

when Brian was only 15. But instead of this manifesting itself in anger, Simonsen grew up to have an extremely genial temperament and a stellar life in public service. "Whenever I got stressed out, Brian used to comfort me by saying, 'Don't worry about it, babe, we'll be okay. We'll be okay.' And we always were.

"My family fell in love with him," she adds. "Everybody loved him. He really always did have a smile on his face. He was an amazing human being."

A week prior to his death, Leanne adds, "Brian saw a neighbor, and when he asked her how she was, she sarcastically retorted she was 'livin' the dream.' Well, Brian told her, and in the most sincere way, 'I *am* living the dream.' And he really meant it.

"The day before he was killed, my mom was in town and we were dropping her off at the train to meet with a friend in Manhattan. She was hurrying and she forgot her phone, so we had to drive all the way back to the house, and all the way back to the train station again. I was starting to 'lose it,' and Brian said to me, 'Just stay in the car, babe.' He said he would get her on the train. I just sat there and watched him do everything. That's the way he was. It was as if God gave me that last moment to watch him take care of everyone. And I remember saying to myself, 'God, I love this guy.' I miss him terribly."

Det. Brian Simonsen is interred at Jamesport Cemetery in Jamesport, New York. On June 15, 2019, the Town of Riverhead, New York, renamed South Jamesport Avenue in his honor.

