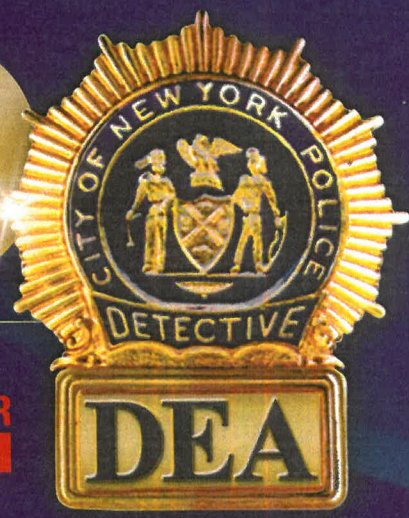


# THE GOLD SHIELD

WINTER 2021



The Union Representing the Greatest Detectives *in the World*



## DEA *Remembers*



Det. Raymond Abear



Det. Robert Cardona



Det. Cedric Dixon



Det. Christopher B. McDonnell



Det. Jack Polimeni

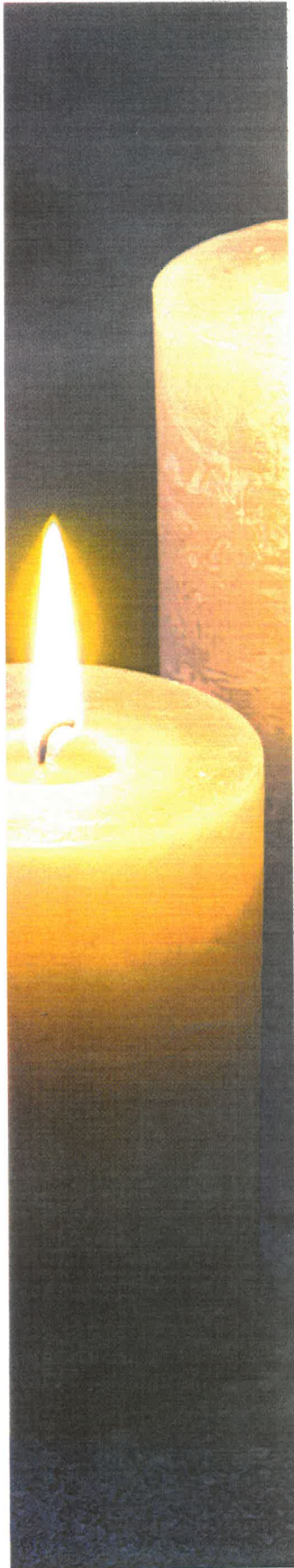


Det. Jeffrey A. Scalf

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# The DEA Remembers





Through the tremendous efforts of our union, and our work with City and State legislators, on May 29, 2020, the COVID-19 Line-of-Duty Death Benefit bills (S. 8427 and A.10528) passed both the New York State Senate and the New York State Assembly; and on May 30, the Governor signed the bills into law. This provides line-of-duty death benefits to our active members who died because of the coronavirus. This devastating pandemic, which has wreaked havoc on the entire world, struck in full force in February 2020, and, by mid-March, both New York City and State were in lockdown with businesses shuttered and shelter-in-place orders mandated throughout the State.

But the work of our members never slows down; and, in fact, it increased exponentially as the City also erupted into a frenzy of social protests, including rioting and looting. Amidst this chaos and disorder, the DEA lost six active Detectives to COVID-19, while many others became seriously ill. The May passage of the Death Benefit law ensured that our LOD families will remain financially stable and be provided the health benefits they richly deserve as they deal with the devastating loss of their loved ones in this frightening, unpredictable, and unprecedented era.

On July 20, 2020, NAPO notified us that Congress, which originally contemplated two different versions of a coronavirus bill, worked together to pass S. 3607, the Safeguarding America's First Responders Act, which establishes a presumption under the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program that an Officer's death or disability due to contracting COVID-19 is deemed in the line of duty. On August 14, 2020, the President signed the bill into law.

This is a big victory for NAPO. More than 125 active Law Enforcement Officers in the United States have died from COVID-19, and now their families will get death benefits. To qualify for the presumption, an Officer must have engaged in a line-of-duty action or activity between January 1, 2020, and December 31, 2021, and received a diagnosis of COVID-19 (or evidence indicates that the Officer had COVID-19) during the 45-day period beginning on the last day of duty for the Officer. For death benefits, evidence must indicate that the Officer had COVID-19 or complications from COVID-19 at the time of death.



# Det. Jeffrey A. Scalf



Det. Jeffrey A. Scalf was born January 11, 1974, and grew up in Johnson City, Tennessee, a small locale known for its majestic scenery and population of under 67,000 — a far cry from the more than eight million inhabiting his adopted New York City.

In 1992, alongside his best friend from high school, Scalf entered the United States Marine Corps. A year later while in boot camp, Scalf became friends with a fellow Marine who was from New York and who started dating a New York gal. The couple introduced Scalf to another New Yorker two years younger than he: a 16-year-old named Taina, who was born in The Bronx, but grew up in Westchester. Like Jeffrey, Taina has an effervescent, bubbly, and joyous personality and it's easy to see why she and Scalf hit it off right away.

A month after they met, Scalf bought a car and would drive to New York from Camp Lejeune every weekend he could in order to see Taina, bringing his Southern charm and gentlemanly demeanor. Their courtship was only temporarily interrupted during Scalf's deployment to Haiti during Operation Uphold Democracy, designed to help oust the military coup that had taken over the island nation. In between military trips to other locations, like California and Japan, the couple fell in love; and during a whirlwind weekend, after the Marine Corps Ball at 2:00 a.m. on Veterans Day, November 11, 1995, they were married in North Carolina.

Eight months after the birth of their first child Alex in 1996, Scalf ended his stint in the military and went to work back in Tennessee at the warehouse of a pharmaceutical

company, but people who met him, says his wife, always assumed he was a Police Officer.

The couple lived down South for three and a half years, where Taina also supervised an office. "The location was beautiful," she says, "but there wasn't a lot of economic opportunity. So, in 1999, we moved north," to where Taina's family still resides.

Scalf took another factory job. "He was always a union man, so he made a good living," she says, "but he really wanted to be a cop. It's how people saw him. He was reluctant to leave his position, because at that time the starting pay for the NYPD had plummeted, but I told him not to worry. Jeffrey was the type who couldn't be out of work for even a few hours. He had to be employed. But I told him we would work it out. And we did."



Scalf was appointed to the NYPD on January 31, 2006. He was partnered with his graduating class colleague, Javier ("Javi") Fernandez, and the two remained partners in the 44th Precinct for the first few years of their careers.

"We started our careers working foot posts together," says Fernandez, "and from there one of the bosses started an impact conditions team where we both wound up together; and then we were partnered in a patrol sector." While Scalf eventually went off to the Bronx Gang Unit, and Fernandez to an Anti-Crime Unit, then the 44 Squad, and is now a Detective assigned to the Police Commissioner's Office, he and Scalf remained very close, life-long friends.

"Anyone who ever worked with Jeff noted how friendly he was; he just had that bright, happy personality, which I noticed right away in the Academy. But he was also a Marine, very dedicated to his family, and very disciplined. He took pride in his work and he never cut corners. His perfectionism stood out. He was a hard worker and extremely honest guy, and you just don't find someone like him too often."

DEA 44 Squad Delegate Det. Brian Hennessy echoes those sentiments. He also knew Scalf from the time the Tennessean was a rookie cop in the 44th Precinct. Hennessy describes his colleague as a "meticulous worker, extremely careful with his paperwork," so it was an easy transition when Scalf eventually "put in" to be transferred to the Bronx Gang Unit, and six months later, on March 2, 2015, Scalf earned his gold shield.

In the Gang Unit, Hennessy got to work more cases with Scalf, including the 2015 takedown of the "6s Wild Gang," a violent, narcotics trafficking operation. Three, intertwining cases resulted in 26 subjects being arrested and included a massive 97-count indictment that included Murder, Manslaughter, Gang Assault, Drug Trafficking, Witness Tampering, and Conspiracy. The case involved not only Bronx Gang and the 44 Squad, but Bronx Narcotics, Bronx Homicide, and Document Frauds and was presented the June 2016 Detectives of the Month Award from the DEA. When the presentation was being made, Scalf had forgotten to mention it to his wife.

"We were at the June DEA Picnic with the kids. Suddenly," Taina remembers, "they were calling his name, and I asked him what was going on? I hadn't even known it was

going to happen. He was so humble. But that's the way he was."

"Jeffrey was on point with all his investigations," says Hennessy, "but his personality was jovial. He just lit up a room." Hennessy calls Scalf, "A jolly guy who always made people smile and made people happy."

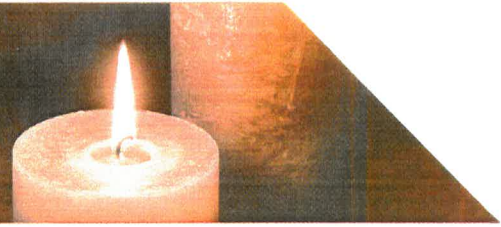
"It was the way his parents raised him," says Taina. "He was charming. He was kind. He always took care of everything." And, he retained his strong, Southern accent and his country "twang" until the end, despite all his years of living in New York.



"This year would have been our 25th wedding anniversary. We had so many plans," says Taina, "including possibly having the party we never had when we were young, when we tied the knot down South. We talked about renewing our vows and talked about having a ceremony that we never really had. The going has been rough, to say the least."

The couple's eldest child, Alex, turned 25 this year. He served in the U.S. Navy. Now a Paramedic, he plans to become a Physician's Assistant. Daughter Maria is 21 and a part-time student hoping to work with children. "Charli

## Det. Jeffrey A. Scalf



create a home big enough for our kids and grandkids.”

And then the pandemic happened.

“I can’t believe he is gone,” says Fernandez. “For selfish reasons, I’m so sad that I’m not going to see him again,” a sentiment that is echoed by everyone who worked with Scalf. But no one misses him more than his family.

“It was all so sudden. He had colleagues who were sick, but he was doing fine, and then one Thursday night he didn’t feel well. He suddenly got fever and chills. Friday morning, he went for testing. Then he had a ‘tele doc’ appointment, because we were in the thick of the outbreak. Jeffrey fell asleep at home and I couldn’t rouse him. But I just thought he was sleepy. When the ambulance arrived, he said he couldn’t breathe, so they gave him oxygen. He made it to the hospital, and I can’t say enough about New York Presbyterian at Hudson Valley where they put him on a ventilator.

was our surprise,” Taina says of their youngest daughter, now seven years old.

“A few years ago, I wanted to change professions,” Taina says, after years of working in the health care industry. Jeffrey asked me what I wanted to do, and I said I always wanted to be in real estate, but it was a risk, because I would be starting over, and because it’s sales based. But Jeffrey told me, ‘don’t worry about not earning an income right away: *relax!* We will make it work.’ He gave me the opportunity to do what I really wanted to do, and he gave me the encouragement and support.

“Jeffrey was set to retire in three years,” she continues. “He wanted to move back to Tennessee. We took a beautiful trip there not too long ago. We finally got to Nashville, which, believe it or not, we had never been to. We looked at new homes in Johnson City. Jeff started with very humble beginnings, and he was so excited about going back to

“They worked on him for eight days. I wasn’t allowed near him, because of the highly contagious nature of the virus. But I knew people at the hospital, so they checked in on him, and I was so thankful. I would stay in the parking lot and stare into his room. For a while, he was stable and we thought he would get better. But eventually his fever shot to 105. When it rose to 110, I saw the panicked look on the nurses faces. I looked up at his room and saw them performing CPR. They tried to save him. But he didn’t make it. It was just horrible.”

Scalf passed away on April 13, 2020. He was 46 years old.

Taina is comforted, she says, by Scalf’s comrades in blue. “We have a great family and great friends, but I cannot say enough about our NYPD family. I have received support from the DEA, calls from Paul DiGiacomo, and the support from my husband’s colleagues in the 44, Bronx Gang, and his partners and friends, and it has all been amazing.

"You don't realize it until it happens. You don't realize how amazing everyone is," she says. "It's so humbling, it's almost embarrassing." She also notes that with the difficulty of Jeffrey's job, it's "unreal" for her that a virus is what ended his life. "A few years ago," she notes, "he got dragged by a perp in a car. It's absolutely crazy that a virus is what did this."

"Jeffrey and I were best friends; we saw each other through a lot. We spent our whole adult lives together: 27 years, since we were 16 and 18 years old. I don't remember life without him. We had a lot of plans. Every day I think about him. I am doing things and I can't tell

him about it. I try to stay optimistic and busy. I sink myself into my job. I've been working in real estate now for a year and I love it. But we had so many plans together. People always say it gets easier, but it doesn't. Every day, it's getting harder."

