



Albert Petrocelli

February 21, 1947 - April 1, 2020

Albert (Al) Petrocelli, a retired FDNY battalion chief from Huguenot who lost his son, Mark, on 9/11, and a man loved deeply by many, succumbed to the coronavirus early Wednesday. He was 73.

His wife, Ginger, said he visited his doctor on March 17 after feeling fatigued and was diagnosed with the illness on March 24.

She said he was extremely weak and was sleeping around the clock. She had to wake him up to make sure he ate his meals. Ginger cared for him at home. But after her husband had trouble breathing on Sunday, he was taken to the hospital.

Extremely religious with an infinite love of God and his Roman Catholic faith, particularly the Blessed Mother, Petrocelli attended Mass every morning in the chapel of St. Joseph by-the-Sea High School - and said the Rosary each day.

"Grief is the price we pay for love," his wife said. "And today I grieve because I loved so deeply."

THEIR LIVES TOGETHER

In a story about the couple's 50th anniversary we noted Ginger and Al met in 1963, when it was common for teens to gather in neighborhood ice cream parlors. Their favorites were Herman's and The Sweet Shop in Brooklyn. They began dating in early 1964 when Al was 17, a high school senior, and Ginger, 16, a junior. They became engaged when the Vietnam War was escalating. In October 1966 Al was drafted. Basic training, leadership school and advanced infantry training followed in Fort Jackson, S.C.

Al came home for Christmas in 1966 but didn't know when he'd be home again. In mid-March, the doorbell rang and Ginger knew something was up. Al was going to Vietnam and wanted to marry within two weeks. They traveled to the Brooklyn Chancery and received special dispensation since the time frame was so brief, and then to Our Lady of Perpetual Help to talk to a priest there, who wouldn't hear of it. He said they were too young and the marriage wouldn't last under the hurried circumstances. Ginger began to cry just as the pastor walked by. They explained the situation and he gave them his

blessing.

The wedding was set for March 18 -- the day between St. Patrick's and St. Joseph's Day - - and the day before Palm Sunday - when more than six inches of snow covered the ground.

Ginger had to climb 30 steps to the church and open its massive doors amid horrific wind gusts. With one foot on the door, her train over her shoulder and adrenaline flowing, she made her way into the church.

A week later, on Easter Sunday 1967, Al left for Vietnam and Ginger to Wall Street as an over-the-counter order clerk.

AL RETURNS HOME

On the last day of March 1968, Al returned home. He was discharged in October and resumed civilian life. The same year, he was tapped by the Police Department but turned it down.

Two years later, Al Jr. was born and two years later Mark was born.

In January 1973, Al was called by the FDNY and turned it down as well -- and two months later, he turned it down again. In May 1973, a captain from the FDNY called. He said: "Son, If you turn it down you're off the list." Al took the job and found his calling.

He attended college through the GI Bill, worked full time while Ginger was a full time mom. Al studied for promotional exams and eventually graduated from John Jay College of Criminal Justice and rose to the rank of FDNY Battalion Chief.

PETROCELLIS RELOCATE

In 1974, the Petrocellis moved to Richmond and in 1976 to Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Huguenot, where they resided to this day.

Al Jr. followed in his dad's footsteps as a battalion chief. Mark was a commodities broker. The boys, now married, bought homes five blocks from one other in Great Kills. And life was good.

TRAGEDY STRIKES

Sept. 11, 2001, was Primary Day and Ginger and Al voted that morning.

Al Jr., a firefighter in Ladder Company 105, was off duty at the VFW Post, Rosebank, for a study class for promotion to Fire Department lieutenant.

Before Mark went to work he told his wife, Nicole, he had his first broker's meeting "upstairs." He was promoted to commodities broker on Sept. 5. But Nicole didn't know "upstairs" meant the corporate offices of Carr Futures on the 92nd floor of WTC 1. She thought it was the Mercantile Exchange where Mark worked, four blocks away. The meeting was at 8 a.m. so brokers could return to the Mercantile Exchange at 9:30 a.m. --

and was still going on when the first plane hit. No one escaped from the 92nd floor or above. Mark was two days shy of his 29th birthday. For the Petrocellis, life changed forever.

Al and Ginger both served as Eucharistic Ministers at Our Lady Star of the Sea, where Al was a lector and was a lay trustee appointed by then-Cardinal Edward Egan, and Ginger on the bowling team.

Al especially loved spending time in his vegetable garden that he started each March. They took turns driving granddaughters Emily and Lily to and from school and other activities.

Pope Francis' NYC visit to New York in 2015

Al and Ginger received a call from Michael Coppotelli, a 2001 St. Joseph by-the-Sea High School alum, and associate superintendent of schools for the Archdiocese of New York. Sadly, Sea lost at least seven alums in the attacks on the World Trade Center, including Mark.

Coppotelli asked if the Petrocellis would attend ceremonies upon Pope Francis' arrival at the WTC Memorial Museum, where a multi-religious gathering would take place in the Foundation Hall of the Memorial Museum.

In a dream Al said he was told to bring Rosary beads and prayer cards of his son, Mark, and Pope Francis would bless them.

"I didn't know or comprehend how that was going to happen," Al recalled in his anniversary story. "I kept tossing and turning thinking that, OK, if I could get the items to Cardinal Dolan, who might remember Ginger and me from when he consecrated the main altar at Our Lady Star of the Sea C, which we memorialized in Mark's name, possibly he would give them to the Holy Father to bless," said Al.

The couple had the third and fourth seats off the aisle at the ceremony. "My heart started jumping out of my chest! Yes. This is going to happen I thought to myself," Al said.

"Through the whole service I had the four sets of rosaries, the prayer cards and the two pictures in my hands. "

On his way out, "Pope Francis looked at me and I said, 'Holy Father, please bless these Rosaries and prayer cards in memory of our son Mark.' And with that he blessed them, making the sign of the cross and then touched them."

The Petrocellis returned home at 10:30 p.m. after a long day, though a rewarding one.

Miracles do happen, Al said. "Sometimes we just have to be open to them."

In addition to his wife, Ginger, Al is survived by his son, Albert Jr. his daughter-in-law, Andrea and his grandchildren and beloved grandfather to Emily and Lily. Dearest brother to Nunzio, Gerard, Peter, Anastasia, and Robert.

Funeral arrangements are being handled by Scalia Home for Funerals in Eltingville.

Cemetery

Resurrection Cemetery

361 Sharrot Avenue

Staten Island, NY, 10309

Comments



“ Dear Ginger,
My deepest sympathies to you and your family on your loss. Al was a wonderful man, as I knew you both in our 9/11 Fire Department Support Group. He will be sorely missed.

Fondly, Jill Mahala

Jill Mahala - April 10, 2020 at 10:48 AM



“ My deepest sympathies to the Petrocelli family. So sad to hear this. I was a childhood friend of Mark. I will never forget him. Rest In Peace - Janet English-Evers

Jason Evers - April 09, 2020 at 08:38 PM



“ I read about this wonderful man in the newspaper, and was deeply moved and saddened by his passing. I too come from an Italian-American background in NJ, and lost my Italian father in 2012. When I read his obituary, I heard his wife Ginger say he was a good man, which is exactly what my mom said about my father. The echoes of pain resound within me for your losses over the years, but the world has been a better place with Albert in it. Please accept my condolences from a long physical and short emotional distance. Best Jody Puglisi

Joseph Puglisi - April 08, 2020 at 01:16 AM



“ I did not know Albert (Albie) Petrocelli well, but I was nonetheless deeply shaken by his untimely, unjust loss. I knew Albie and his beloved wife Ginger through mutual friends Jackie and Dom Angelone, who knew the Petrocellis for decades. To have met Albie even once, much less the several times I was fortunate enough to do so, was to meet someone of immense good will, friendliness, warmth, loyalty, sincerity and above all integrity. He connected in such a way, as did Ginger that you felt you knew them longer than you did. Albie was candid, talking poignantly though without self pity about the tragic loss of his son Mark, and spoke with pride but not with ego about his career as a Battalion Chief. One can easily imagine the vast number of people he helped in that capacity and the respect he instilled in all those in his charge, leading no doubt by example.

To Ginger, to her son, daughter- in- laws and granddaughters and to Jackie and Dom, I humbly offer heartfelt condolences on a loss of a New York hero – Albert (Albie) Petrocelli who will forever raise the bar for us all.

With Love,
Arthur Freeman

Arthur Freeman - April 06, 2020 at 01:16 PM



“ Hello Mrs. Petrocelli,

I remember you and your husband from OLSS church.

I also live on Presley St and I remember your family.

There are no words for me now as I was so sad to read you now lost your husband.

Two tragedy's in one lifetime and you have my deepest sympathy at this time.

Your husband was a man of God and a great American to have served his country in Vietnam when so many other men were running away from it.

Hold onto the faith you always had in the Lord Jesus.

He will re-unite you with your husband and Mark too.

You will see both of them again.

The dream your husband had about the rosary beads and Mark's prayer cards is so heart-warming and filled with hope.

Stay in the Lord forever and once again I am so sorry for your loss.

Doreen Belloni - April 06, 2020 at 01:00 PM



“ Al you've gone to your well deserved reward way too soon. 4:00 Sat mass will never be the same without you. It was a privilege to serve with you and most importantly, to know you. Pray for us now and until we meet again.

Joe Coscia - April 05, 2020 at 02:49 PM



“ Al was a Gentleman,we will all miss this "Great man at the 4pm Mass every Saturday.
God Bless you Al, God had a big smile waiting for you. To your family he will be missed by all.
Sincerely,
Carmela & John Sheehan

john - April 04, 2020 at 12:11 PM



“ The gift of a true storyteller. The twinkle in his eyes-- his garden... His love of Ginger, family and god. Half of the couple (Ginger) that gave me so much love and peace. He truly lived a life of Grace. I will miss you greatly.
Cousin Eileen

eileen santoro - April 04, 2020 at 11:20 AM



“ Thank you for your service as a soldier, firefighter and Battalion Chief. We are deeply saddened by the news. Our thoughts and prayers are with you and the family during this difficult time. Our deepest sympathies.

Capece Family from Florida

Capece Family - April 04, 2020 at 10:02 AM



“ He was a good man and a good person. Ginger and Al together were terrific . He will be missed by many.

I remember once when Donna and I were visiting and Al had to study for a final . He was so apologetic that he had to take some time from our visit. That was many years ago but it shows Al's nature. Rest in peace Al and say hello to Donna for me.

Don Ragozzine - April 03, 2020 at 05:14 PM



“ My heart is breaking today. May you rest in the sweetest peace Al. You took us under your wing the minute we moved in on the block. Looked after us like we were your own children. I will think of you all the time when I step out into my garden, or when I pick the figs off the trees you gave us. You taught me everything I know how to make a beautiful garden. I'm going to miss calling you over to see how everything bloomed. I wanted to make you so proud. I'm going to miss texting you for stupid things. My heart hurts so much. May you walk hand in hand with Mark and watch over your family from heaven. Tell Elvis I said hello. Remember our talks about him? Look for the gold lamè cloud. I loved to make you laugh at my crazy thoughts. Your faith and trust in God was a true inspiration to me. Heaven gained an angel. I'll think of you every time I'm out in my garden.

Christine Maresca - April 03, 2020 at 03:50 PM



“ So sorry for your loss Ginger. I am Nancy's sister, and Frank and I were at Katie's wedding. I hope your faith and the love and support of family and friends will get you through this very difficult time. The love you shared with Al was truly a gift.

Bernadette Dubuss - April 03, 2020 at 03:05 PM



“ al was my lieutenant for a while many years ago on the fdny always a gentelman very thoughtful and kind i would see him quiet often when i was running on hylan blvd he always had smile on his face rest in pease al

scott chappe - April 04, 2020 at 12:38 PM



“ My deepest condolence to your family, Al. Fellow parishioner and brother Knight of Columbus. John Christie and family

John Christie - April 05, 2020 at 01:15 AM



“ My deepest condolence to your family. A person who made everyone a friend . Comfortable and welcomed after 10 minute of meeting him. He will be missed. All my paryers. Carol Fprma

Carol Forma - April 05, 2020 at 09:04 AM



“Ginger, I am so sorry for your loss. Al was a wonderful man and you two were a beautiful couple. Only knew you both for a short time and feel blessed for that. Al gave me a strawberry plant that still grows he also brought in that special cheesecake you make. So so sorry for your loss my heart goes out to you. You and your family are in my prayers. Robin Anderson - OLSS-SPC”

Robin A Anderson - April 03, 2020 at 01:45 PM



“Daily Mass at St. Joseph St. Thomas won't ever be the same, nor will Mass at OLSS. Al seemed to greet everyone with such a warm smile and he was never too busy to talk with us. He made a little girl feel cared about just by chatting with her in the sacristy as they vested up to serve. He will be sorely missed. May the Lord bring peace and comfort to Ginger and all his loved ones. You are all in our prayers.

Our sincerest condolences,

Laura and Charlotte

Laura - April 02, 2020 at 09:34 PM



“I am so saddened to hear this news. I was so fortunate to meet Al and his beautiful wife, ginger for many years they were my dear sweet customers At Cafe Milano restaurant. Al was a beautiful kind person I'm sending my love and prayers to you Ginger and your beautiful family may god watch over you through this difficult time .
Janice Montana



janice montana - April 02, 2020 at 08:25 PM



“Al, was a true gentleman, a class act in every sense of the word. At every FD event I would always make my way over to speak to Al it was always a highlight of the event for me. Roseann and I will miss him. John Crowe

John Crowe - April 02, 2020 at 02:41 PM



“ Because of Al, I received the Walter Scott Medal in 1985. Al was working overtime in L20 and he asked me about the status of the report of the rescue. He was instrumental in resubmitting the paperwork to the Board of Merit. Because of his concern and support, I received the medal. He was a great boss and a gentleman.

Eugene Pugliese
Ret FDNY L20

Eugene Pugliese - April 02, 2020 at 01:30 PM



“ Al and I worked together for awhile back In the day.
A true gentleman.
Peace be with you and your family. RIP Brother.
Tom and Marie Boemi

Tom Boemi - April 02, 2020 at 09:48 AM



“ RIP Al, You were a great guy and helped me in my time of need while my Lieutenant at Ladder-3. That I will never forget. My condolences to your family. Reid Jantz

Reid Jantz - April 02, 2020 at 08:36 AM



“ I apologize for the mishap in your name Ginger and again my condolences

joyce masella - April 01, 2020 at 09:14 PM



“ I remember Al as a very mellow gentleman and a devout Catholic. I am honored to have known him and share our faith together. May he Rest In Peace and my deepest condolences to Ginny and family.

joyce masella - April 01, 2020 at 08:46 PM



“ I am in disbelief as I am writing this. Our sincere condolences to you Ginger and your family. Al was the neighbor who would always be there when you needed his help. We will keep you all in our prayers hope that god will give you the strength to get through this unbelievably difficult time. Jim and lorene peyton

jim peyton - April 01, 2020 at 11:06 PM



“ Albee was a wonderful, wonderful human being. We could never thank him enough for his help and kindness (and yours Ginger) when my family was going through so much. A person's kindness lives on even though they may not be with us - so for my family Albee's will always be here.

Jo Ann and Dottie - April 02, 2020 at 08:51 AM



“ RIP Chief .I worked with you in the 40 Battalion when you where a BC there . Your calm , collectedness and the way you ran a fire was an inspiration to all of us . You were a great leader and a great person . Your son carries on the tradition and you are now with your other son who was killed on 9-11 . My heartfelt condolences to Ginger , Al and all those family members that loved you .

Bryant Phillips
Retired L-83 formerly from L-109

Bryant Phillips - April 02, 2020 at 12:24 PM



“ My sincere condolences to you Ginger and your family. I will never forget all the times you helped me. Love you. God give you strength. Barbara Lombardo

Barbara Lombardo - April 02, 2020 at 06:09 PM



“ Dear Ginger and Family,

Please accept our deepest sympathy. You are in our thoughts and prayers. Albie was such a great person. I'm sure all who knew him will miss him especially seeing him at Church or the occasional visit to the bowling alley.

God Bless you and your Family, Ginger, and give you the strength to carry on once again.

Love and Prayers,

Members of O L S S Women's Bowling League

Cecelia Messina - April 02, 2020 at 08:28 PM



“ Our hearts are shattered, and we are in disbelief. Al was like a ray of sunshine on Stecher St. Whenever we turned the corner onto the block we looked forward to see Al outside, sometimes wearing his big straw hat, always waving & smiling at us. He took our Chrissy under his wing and always made her feel safe and loved. He inspired her with her gardening and taught her so much. We have many wonderful memories of Al. We spoke to him about how he said three rosaries a day and I asked him to include us on his prayer list. It seems like an understatement to say he was a good man. The only consolation we can find is knowing that he is reunited with Mark. I think God called Al for a purpose, he needed a warrior in Heaven to reach down from Heaven and touch everyone. Ginger, You and your family will always be in our prayers. May God give you the strength to get through this. Remember, Al will always be in your heart. We are all better to have known him. God bless you always,
Leroy and Carol

Carol - April 03, 2020 at 02:52 PM



“ Our deepest sympathy to Ginger and family on the passing of Albie! May your cherished happy memories bring a little joy at this difficult time....RIP. Susan and Tony Whalen

Susan Whalen - April 04, 2020 at 07:22 AM



“ I never met Al or Ginger, but they sound like wonderful people. I am sorry for your loss and will keep you in my prayers. My the Lord give you strength to carry on and know some day we will all be joined in Christ.

We need more Al's in this world!

Ken Aspis

kenneth aspis - April 08, 2020 at 12:45 PM