

Lt. John “Jack Gremse ’68 – Stanner Hall of Fame – March 23, 2019

Posthumous Induction

John Kevin Gremse, known to many as Jack, was beloved in many circles. He was a family man – the oldest son of Jack and Eileen, husband to Kathy, brother of eight, and brother-in-law and Godfather to many. At Molloy, Jack formed many lifelong friendships. In his adult years, he organized many reunions at his Long Beach home to keep his Stanner family connected. Jack was also a respected member of the FDNY, where he dedicated many years of his life to selflessly serving the people of New York City.

After attending Nassau Community College and SUNY Brockport, Jack took the exam to join the ranks of the FDNY. While waiting and hoping to be called, he held down a handful of jobs including driving for UPS. Then, in 1978, Jack was finally called to the ranks of New York’s bravest.

Early in his career he was known as a motivated young firefighter who was eager to learn from the senior members of the department. He worked throughout the city, including in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, but eventually established a home at Ladder 126 in South Jamaica. He remained there for over 10 years. During his tenure with Ladder 126, Jack earned several citations for bravery and heroism. Never boastful, he would read articles detailing the fires and rescues he lived through, many of them dangerous and tragic, and he would only ever say, “I was just doing my job.”

After 20 years with the FDNY, Jack took the lieutenant’s test. While waiting for the results, the events of September 11th, 2001 would unfold. Jack joined many other first responders that day, working tirelessly into the night and in the days and weeks that followed. Jack was promoted to lieutenant during a ceremony on September 16th – just five days after the attacks. While attending funerals and memorials

for the many firefighters who were lost, Lt. Gremse vowed to himself to honor them by serving his city with pride and courage.

After his promotion, Lt. Gremse was eager to guide fellow firefighters with his own knowledge and experience, much like senior members once did for him. He worked in many firehouses as a covering officer, but eventually settled in with Engine 302, Ladder 155 in Jamaica. His time there was memorable, but short-lived. In 2008, Lt. Gremse was diagnosed with 9-11 related illness, which forced him into early retirement. After receiving treatment, he eventually decided to volunteer with the Long Island Progressive Coalition, a community-based organization dedicated to revitalizing local communities, and achieving economic, social and racial justice. He received the organization's first ever Volunteer of the Year award.

Sadly, Lt. Gremse lost his battle with cancer on September 16, 2014. His legacy is honored with a plaque at Engine 302. and his name resides on a Memorial Wall at FDNY headquarters dedicated to those who served

in the rescue and recovery efforts at the World Trade Center. He is honored on the wall at the I.A.F.F. Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Colorado Springs, and was part of the Scroll of Honor at the 15th anniversary memorial service at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The "John 'Jack' Gremse Volunteer of the Year Award" is now presented annually by the Long Island Progressive Coalition. Lt. Gremse's Molloy classmates also started a successful movement to rename the Freshman Boys 55M Dash at Stanner Games in his honor.

Archbishop Molloy High is proud to add to Lt. Gremse's honors as we induct him tonight into the Stanner Hall of Fame. I now invite Jack's wife, Kathy, to come up to accept his plaque.