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# NYPD Captain's Death is a Reminder That 9/11 is Still Claiming Lives

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### On the Inside

Murray Weiss is an award-winning investigative journalist, author, columnist and editor, and is considered an expert on government, law enforcement, criminal justice, organized crime and terrorism.



NEW YORK CITY — The nation will mark the 11th anniversary of 9/11 on Tuesday and, while **some people may want to move on**, not everyone can.

The greatest attack on American soil **continues to claim lives**. Yet another first responder succumbed to a 9/11 disease only a few weeks ago.

Retired NYPD Captain Dennis Morales of the department's Emergency Services Unit died from pancreatic cancer at the age of 50 in July. He had spent several months on top of the smoldering Ground Zero pile as part of the recovery effort.

Capt. Morales' passing is a tragic reminder that the **final 9/11 death toll will likely not be known for decades to come**.

Morales leaves behind a wife, Linda and a son, Dennis, 17.

The Morales' had a special relationship with 9/11 long before the towers were hit. They were married on Sept. 11, 1992. They never imagined the date would hold any other meaning.

"He felt blessed," Linda Morales explained. "Compared to the thousands who perished on 9/11, we at least had 11 good years."

Linda Morales, an advertising executive, exudes a sense of humor even as she continues to deal with her loss.

She said she met her husband through her brother. The two men had worked together as city corrections officers.

He said he immediately knew he wanted to marry her, she recalled. One afternoon, a smitten Morales parked his car near her Bay Ridge subway stop, pretending to bump into her.

"He had a brand new Honda and was kinda cute," she said. She accepted a ride home and the rest was history. They married that Sept. 11 and had their son, Dennis, three years later.

Linda Morales described her husband as a "very funny, very private" man who loved nothing more than taking his family on road trips to cities just to sample the local delicacies.

"We would go to Philadelphia just for a cheese steak," she said.

Morales rarely talked about his work. Some relatives did not even know he was a police captain. He was so private that when he died, his wife was afraid to have his picture accompany an obituary.

Joining the NYPD had been Morales' "passion," Linda Morales said. He quit his corrections job in 1989 and took a sizable pay cut to become one of New York's Finest.

"It was never about the money," said Linda. "It was always about being a cop and wanting to become a captain."

ESU Capt. Daniell Osipowich also remembered Morales as "a practical joker and a lot of fun, but when the bell rang, get out of his way."



Former NYPD Capt. Dennis Morales with his son, Dennis Jr. (Linda Morales)

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"When he was on the scene you knew who the boss was," he said. "These are extremely dangerous jobs and he would be the quarterback."

On Sept. 11, 2001, then-Lt. Morales of Manhattan South anti-crime was all about leadership as he shepherded civilians and his own cops to safety as the towers collapsed.

NYPD Homicide Det. Brian MacLeod, then a young officer working for Morales, joined up with him that fateful morning.

"I was by myself and I saw Dennis and I am like 'Oh My God,' and I hugged him," recalled MacLeod, who was dealing with an additional emotional burden that day. His beloved aunt, a vice president at Cantor Fitzgerald, was trapped on the 103d floor of the North Tower.

"Dennis grabbed me," MacLeod recalled. "He got choked up, but told me to relax. Dennis said, 'There are people looking to us for guidance. We have to help. You need to get yourself together.' He was leading, keeping me calm, helping people."

Morales and MacLeod narrowly escaped that day when they jumped into an ambulance as a mountain of concrete and debris rained down on them. MacLeod's aunt was not as fortunate.

Linda Morales remembered how relieved she was when her husband finally returned home the following day and collapsed in bed. He then returned to Ground Zero to work the pile.

He remained there for months, and when he was home he only talked about the volunteers there and the array of food they provided. But he kept a pair of shoes he wore on 9/11 in a box in the basement. He told his wife never to touch them.

In 2009, Morales decided to leave the job he loved to be with his family after fellow ESU Captain, Barry Galfano, was diagnosed with what turned out to be a fatal 9/11 cancer.

Last January, Morales decided to go back to work. He took an executive security job in the Bronx. He was excited.

But there was a sudden and nagging pain in a leg. No physician could explain it. Then in March, his skin suddenly turned yellow. Morales went to the hospital. Scans were taken. Blood was tested. "They saw a lot of abnormalities like cancers," Linda Morales recalled.

"That was when everything changed," she said.

Morales had pancreatic cancer, and he and his wife knew immediately their chances at beating it were slim.

But Morales chased every type of medical possibility to change his fate. Chemotherapy. Injections. Feeding tubes.

"He fought until the doctor said there was nothing more they could do," Linda Morales said.

A hospice was set up at their home. The Morales' had a week together.

"Dennis would say, 'Don't worry, I will always be with you,'" Linda Morales said.

On the day her husband passed, Linda was lying in bed with him.

"Dennis always knew the cancer came from 9/11," she said.

Instead of having a wedding anniversary Tuesday, Linda Morales plans to attend mass and then visit her husband's grave with her family.

"I want to make it a day celebrating Dennis' life, and not about his passing," she said.

And we all now know Morales's death will not be the last from 9/11.

Det. MacLeod has a hard time believing that the man who helped him get through 9/11 alive has died from the effects of that day.

"I just never thought that anyone I was with that day would get that sick," MacLeod said. "Here was a friend of mine who just turned 50-years-old and they have this terrible sickness and pass away."

"The thought of getting sick is always with me now," said MacLeod, 39, the father of a 13-year-old daughter. "It is a scary thought."

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2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	1	2	3	4	5	6

Wednesday, September 12, 2012

Dyckman Street Public Meeting

Councilmember Robert Jackson hosts a public meeting to discuss Dyckman Street's quality of life issues.

**Time: 6:30 PM - 8:30 PM**  
**Location: 4790 Broadway**

*Upcoming Events*

**Fenwick Keats Real Estate Pet Adoption Event with AC&C of NYC**

Date: Sep 29, 2012 - Sep 29, 2012  
Location: 45 Seventh Ave. at 13th St.  
Time: 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

**Allure Lounge at the Empire Hotel**

Date: Sep 6, 2012 - Sep 13, 2012  
Location: 44 West 63rd Street  
Time: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

**Bryant Park Square Dance**

Date: Sep 10, 2012 - Sep 24, 2012  
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**Contact: Gordon Parks, Ralph Ellison, and Invisible Man**

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