



Robert Reisner, 29 Generous and caring

Robert Reisner was the proverbial homebody.

There was nothing the single, 29-year-old school bus driver liked more than coming home from work to the apartment in Coventry he shared with his mother. He cooked tacos for dinner, played video games and watched the New England Patriots and Boston Bruins on TV. He even liked to read the newspaper aloud to his dog, Aggie.

Well, there was one thing he liked as much. Going to heavy-metal concerts, especially those big-hair bands of the '80s, the ones that keep reuniting and rocking year after year. His fondness for these bands of his youth often took him to The Station.

"He would go by himself. As soon as he heard about a show, he would go buy a ticket," his younger brother, Ralph, recalled.

Not that Robert wouldn't try to recruit family members to go with him to the concerts. He asked several of them to see Great White on Feb. 20. None could go.

A couple of years ago, he treated his brothers and their spouses to tickets for a farewell KISS concert in Providence.

That was Robert, always doing nice things for others, his family says. He would go one, two, sometimes three times a day to buy iced coffee at Dunkin' Donuts, and he would always bring some back for everyone else. Like the day after a snowstorm early last month, when he came by with drinks for family members while they were shoveling out driveways.

"He was very caring. He cared for everybody," said his mother, Judy O'Brien. She is divorced from Robert's father, Robert Reisner, of New York.

The family has endured some difficult times, O'Brien says. As a single mother, she had to raise her three boys without much money. Then there was Robert's health. He suffered from extreme bouts of fatigue and fever. By the time he was 11, he was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Sometimes he had to use a wheelchair.

"I used to have to carry him," O'Brien says.

Robert grew up in Scituate, but stopped going to school in the 11th grade. He delivered pizza for several different West Bay businesses, including Domino's, and had been promoted to some managerial positions. His mother says he always liked driving because it was easier on his bad leg than jobs that required standing.

A couple of months ago, he began driving school buses for Laidlaw in East Providence.

"The kids loved him. He worked so hard for it," O'Brien says. "It's what he really liked."

That and the rock bands pictured in the posters adorning the walls of their apartment. They hang near the pull-out sofa where he slept.

— Richard Salit



Walter Rich, 40 Truck was a labor of love

Walter "Waldo" Rich was a truck hobbyist who spent many of his leisure hours tinkering with the various pickups in his small fleet.

Walter, 40, of Attleboro, even had a name for his favorite truck — a midnight blue Chevy S-10 with gray pinstripes.

He called it "Dirty Deeds."

The name, painted in white letters on the truck's tailgate, was inspired by one of Walter's favorite songs, "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," by AC/DC.

Walter began work on the truck about 12 years ago, about three years before the birth of his son, Christopher.

"He built it himself — put it together from scratch," said his wife, Kimberly, 34.

The project extended long after Christopher learned how to walk. The truck won awards at several car shows.

More recently, Walter had started customizing a second S-10. This one would boast a dual cab, Kimberly said.

He also owned several other trucks.

During a recent snowstorm, Wal-

ter took out his plow and helped clear a neighbor's driveway. The neighbor, Glenn Therriault, invited him to the Great White concert, Kimberly said.

Walter was not a devoted Great White fan, but he adored '80s music.

"He kind of liked it all," his wife said. "There wasn't any one particular band that he favored over the other."

Walter also liked snowmobiling and eating seafood — especially fish and chips.

A 1981 graduate of Attleboro High School, he had worked in maintenance at a MassElectric substation on West Street, in Attleboro, for 17 years.

He was a dedicated family man who liked to make people laugh, including Christopher, 9.

The boy was often at his father's side during the assembly of Dirty Deeds.

"Ever since our son could walk, he's been in that truck," Kimberly said. "My son loved that truck because his father built it."

— Mark Reynolds



Donald Roderiques, 46 'Inky' loved tattoos, Harleys

Donald Roderiques was finally living again after years of personal turmoil.

Last fall, he had vacationed in Atlantic City, N.J. He had treated his parents to dinner for their wedding anniversary in December.

And he eagerly awaited a scheduled trip to Disney World with his parents and siblings.

After a recent visit with his mother in Fall River, Mr. Roderiques, 46, kissed her goodbye for the first time since he was a little boy.

It seemed like he had finally overcome the tragic death of his younger brother 14 years ago.

"It was a tough thing for him to accept," says his mother, Jeanne Roderiques. "He kind of gave up on life for a while."

Mr. Roderiques had always been close to his brother Ronald, who was only 10 months younger than he.

Ronald died in 1989, when a vehicle he was in rolled off a New Bedford pier and into the Acushnet River.

His older brother was heartbroken. It wasn't long before his life was falling apart.

He separated from his second wife. He left his maintenance job at the Fall River Superior Court House.

At one point, Mr. Roderiques was living in a New Bedford shelter.

Then, about three years ago, he found some help and landed a maintenance mechanic's position at Mashpee Village on Cape Cod. He had his own apartment in the housing complex.

"He was a good worker," said Mario Leduc, a coworker. "He was a quick learner."

Mr. Roderiques had a few hobbies to keep him going. He loved concerts and rock 'n' roll.

He liked tattoos. He had so many of them that his friends called him "Inky."

And Mr. Roderiques loved motorcycles, too. He didn't own any, but he kept dozens of motorcycle models in his apartment. He hoped to drive his own Harley-Davidson some day.

"I was just about on the verge of going and buying him one this summer," said his mother.

— Mark Reynolds



Joe Rossi, 35 'A big teddy bear'

Joseph E. Rossi, 35, of Pawtucket, called each member of his extended family on Sept. 11, 2001: he was driving his truck just blocks from the twin towers in New York, and didn't want his parents, sister, or stepchildren to worry about him.

"He was a big teddy bear," explains his sister, Lisa Costa.

Although his job as a long-haul trucker kept him traveling around New England and the mid-Atlantic states, he would visit his five stepchildren each week, and they kept in touch by cell phone as well, according to his oldest stepdaughter, Carrie Pardey of Pawtucket.

"I keep calling his cell phone to hear his voice on the voice mail," says Pardey. She hopes to hear the words he used to close every conversation: "I love you, I'll see you soon,

and give that baby a kiss for me."

She knows she won't hear the phrase again, but says she still gives her son, Cameron, 2, kisses from his "Pappy Joe."

Joe was always a presence on birthdays and holidays, and last stopped by Pardey's apartment on Valentine's Day, bearing cards, flowers and chocolates for everybody.

"He would give, and give, and never expect anything in return," Pardey said.

On his own birthday, he objected to gifts. Despite his protests, Pardey gave him a gift certificate to Strawberries "because he was such a music lover."

When not at concerts, Joe would do "lots of family things," like taking his stepchildren camping in New Hampshire or on picnics at Slater Park. When weather permitted, he spent Sundays on the golf course with his father, Louis Rossi of Pawtucket.

And, no matter what the excursion, Pardey says, "he always knew how to make you laugh, no matter what mood you were in."

He brought that sense of humor with him to his work, at Messier Trucking in Cumberland. Dispatcher Paul Vanasse remembers keeping in touch with "Joe40" as he drove his 18-wheeler. Over the radio, Joe was a "dispatcher's nightmare," letting Vanasse and others know each humorous detail of his trip.

He was dedicated to the job, coming in during evenings just to say hello. He made one such visit the night of Feb. 20, even though he was on vacation. He stopped in at the trucking company just before heading to The Station with his friend Dennis Smith.

Both men died in the fire.

— Jessica Resnick-Ault



Bridget Sanetti, 25 A patient, caring mentor

She was known as "Bri." Bridget Marie Sanetti, a 25-year-old teacher from Coventry, was stylish, outgoing and caring. She reached out to everyone, from students with emotional problems to alcoholics trying to dry out.

Even her cat, Lilly, had been rescued from an animal shelter.

James Williams, principal of the small Hillside Alternative School, in Woonsocket, where Bridget taught for two years, remembers how her spirit would reach even the school's most difficult students. "They'd come into school with a big attitude, and her smile would just light them up," he said.

Bridget's other love was shopping, said her mother, Annmarie Swidwa, of Fort Meyers, Fla. "She was a very good dresser."

Bridget shopped at the most expensive stores, "But she was always looking for a good price," Swidwa said.

Bridget went to the Great White concert with her friend Katie O'Donnell, 26, of Seekonk. They joined Bridget's uncle Ricky Sanetti and some of his friends. Ricky Sanetti and his friends made it out alive, but Bridget and Katie did not.

Before the show, friends had chided Bridget for wearing a nice pair of jeans, high-heeled black boots and "all the right jewelry." She stood out amid the sea of concertgoers dressed in sweatshirts and jeans.

Bridget wasn't really a Great White fan, but she went to the show for the spectacle of seeing people jamming to tunes two decades old by rock stars with out-of-style hairdos.

"She said it would be fun to laugh at all those people stuck in the '80s," her mother said.

Bridget's compassion, patience and feistiness made her a successful mentor for Hillside's at-risk teenagers.

If one of her students got out of hand, Swidwa recalls, Bridget would take them to a phone and say, "You know what? You're going to have talk to my mother."

"I would tell them they'd better behave," Swidwa said. "Bridget turned out good because she behaved, and you'd better behave."

"I never once was in her presence when she wasn't smiling," said Elaine Hazzard, the Woonsocket school district's director of special education. "Bridget was absolutely wonderful: young, sweet, caring, intelligent. The kids just truly loved her, and she truly loved the kids."

— Journal staff and wire reports



Becky Shaw, 24 'Spoiled the people she loved'

Rebecca Shaw just had a way about her.

With her long blond hair, blue eyes, stylish clothes, high heels, and perfect makeup, "she was almost a throwback with the way she carried herself, the way she walked. Her posture was impeccable," said Kerri A. Baccari, the office administrator at RE/MAX real estate office in Cranston, where Becky worked part-time.

Becky, 24, was a business management major at Providence College. Her father, John Shaw, is a professor in the college's marketing department.

"She had such a rich background she could relate to anybody," said her mother, Ann Shaw.

Becky grew up in Sudbury, Mass., where she learned to play the piano, speak French, crochet and ride horses.

But this ladylike young woman also had a penchant for 1980s rock bands.

She'd hear about a concert on the radio and say "let's go" — like the time she persuaded her reluctant friend Megan C. Connelly, with whom she shared a house in Warwick, to accompany her to a concert by a KISS tribute band.

"Plans didn't need to be made. She lived life on the wire," Connelly said.

Becky frequently ordered and paid for takeout dinners for her roommate. Sometimes, however, she tried to pass off chocolate as a main meal.

When the two roommates were bored, Becky would lead them in an adult version of "dress-up." They would go through their closets and try on all their old clothing, particularly old prom gowns.

"She spoiled the people she loved," Connelly said.

The women both worked at RE/MAX and became roommates about a year ago. Becky often went to a lounge to listen to Connelly sing karaoke.

Becky's close friend, Jeffrey Rader, of Danville, Calif., also died in the fire. They met at a concert about six months ago and had been dating seriously for the last three months.

"I don't think I'd seen her happier," said Connelly.

— Cathleen F. Crowley



Mitchell Shubert, 39 Troubles never kept him down

When he was 17, Mitch Shubert broke his back during a motorcycle training run. The doctors inserted two metal rods, wrapped him in a body cast for six months and crossed their fingers. No more riding, they said.

"I have to get back on because I can't let fear override this. I will ride again," he told his mother.

"And he did," Ann Shubert said.

Ten weeks after the accident, while still in his body cast, he was doing wheelies out in the family's pasture.

Starting right from birth, when he almost died, it seemed Mitch was always being tested. Tested by the cycling accident that ended his dreams of going pro. Tested by divorce and separation from his children. Tested by customers who took advantage of his good nature.

Mitch, 39, never quit or complained. And through it all, he never lost his broad smile or what his brother Matt called "his superhuman kindness."

"He'd give you the shirt off his back, even if he didn't have another one to put on," his mother said. "You needed it, you got it. He was just that type of person."

He tried living in Rhode Island for awhile, but the Southern boy never could take to the cold weather. Shorts and T-shirts were more his style.

Mitch returned to his native Florida two years ago and built a dirt track on his 5-acre property in Newberry, for his son and stepson to ride. Being back with family meant everything, and it thrilled him to no end to see his son Mitchie following in his dad's tire tracks.

Before long, Mitch became a Pied Piper of motocross, getting other children excited about the sport and forming lasting friendships with their parents.

"Even if you'd only met him a few months ago, it felt like you knew him your whole life," said Ronnie Irwin, who met Mitch through The Rock Church, in Gainesville.

A general contractor by trade, Mitch was the type of guy who couldn't sit still — always working, always on the go. He especially loved the outdoors: hunting, fishing, playing with his kids.

Over the years, he'd become a big NASCAR fan and went to Daytona International Speedway every chance he got. Jeff Gordon was his favorite driver.

He even liked to cook outdoors. "Man, he could make ribs that would just melt in your mouth," Ann said.

His brother Mark recently came across a photo that Matt had taken. Mitch and Mark shared the same birthday. Every May 1 the family had a barbecue bash. Mitch would show up at 7 a.m. and stay at the grill all day.

"It was a beautiful picture, too," Mark said. "We're standing there. He's got a chicken in one hand. And in the other hand, he's got a jar of 'bone-sucking sauce.' It was, like, the classic Mitchell picture, you know?"

Mitch traveled back to Rhode Island for personal reasons and to help a friend, Kevin Blom, with a construction project. Feeling nostalgic, they decided to hear some rock 'n' roll at The Station. Mitch was a born-again Christian. It was the first time he'd gone to a night club in eight years.

— Adam C. Holland



Dennis Smith, 36 'One-wheeler' a kid at heart

Dennis Smith taught himself how to ride a unicycle when he was 5 years old, and he was still riding one at age 36, up and down Calder Street in Pawtucket, where he lived with his folks, and charmed the neighborhood children.

"They just watched him," said his mother, Doris Smith, 69. "They were all eyes. He tried to jump the curb and do tricks. And they would clap for him."

It was typical that Dennis would be the one adult on the block who'd go outside to have a snowball fight with the children, as he often did this winter. You could say that, at 36, he was still a kid himself.

He was a worker of wood, a landscaper and an expert player of pool. Mostly, he was a son, a brother, a friend. You could say Dennis Smith had kids of his own if you counted all the neighborhood children.

Richard DeAndrade was Dennis's best friend — and certainly his oldest. Everyone knew them as a constant pair, Dennis and Richie. They hung around as kids, and though Richie is married, they hung around almost daily as adults, both living on Calder Street.

Starting at age 10 or so, they skated just about every weekend at the old Bobby's Rollerway on Newport Avenue, before it was turned into a banquet hall.

Richie recalled how Dennis, even into adulthood, would unexpectedly appear at parties dressed as a clown, sometimes with his unicycle, just to give everyone a kick. The unicycle, though, was his main thing. It gave him the nickname, "One-wheeler."

A huge heart, one friend said. A prankster. Always laughing. You know those people where everything gets a lot more fun once they show up? That was Dennis.

He loved to go out, and always seemed to run into people he knew. "He was Pawtucket," one friend said.

Dennis and his dad, Leo, spent countless hours in a workshop in the home they shared, and Dennis was always generous with his carpentry skills.

Thomas Benevides was a neighbor of Dennis's on Calder Street. Last year, Benevides decided to put an addition on his home, doing the work himself. Dennis began to help him, carrying some lumber. The next day, he was there again, and the next, ultimately seeing the project through for months, for no reason except that's what Dennis felt a neighbor does.

"True friends don't come into your life that much," said Benevides. "Dennis was a true friend."

That extended to all the neighborhood kids: Amanda, Cassie, Tommy, David, Richie, Brendon, Colin, Greg, Jay and Alex. They all signed a card at his funeral, fixed beneath a floral arrangement made to look like a stack of snowballs.

A kid himself, everyone said of Dennis Smith.

A kid forever.

— Mark Patinkin