

I Lost a Friend

Remembering Richard Sheirer

I lost a good friend last week and his passing has made my world a little less bright. I miss him. I first met Richie Sheirer a few days after the terrible attacks by terrorists on the Twin Towers. We lost our firefighter son Michael, who along with other first responders sacrificed their lives to save others. More than three thousand innocent people were murdered that tragic day and there was a great loss of property and a major downturn to our economy. Terrorists hoped to destroy our spirit, our love of freedom and also hoped their attack would make us fearful. They failed! Today, America is stronger and more secure. Our intelligence is more effective and efficient, and we are more alert and wiser to the threat of terrorism.

During the chaotic period immediately after 9/11, I met Richie at a surviving family meeting. I was aware Richie was a fellow "Bronx-ite" and decided to approach him. I was like everyone else, searching for answers to difficult questions – including some that had not yet formed. I desperately hoped Richie would have answers. It was clear Richie didn't yet have a full grasp on the situation, but even though he couldn't provide any specific information, he understood my pain and grief. He took the time and effort to reach out to me, and to others, in circumstances that were overwhelming. During the long rescue and recovery effort, I would often see Richie at Ground Zero. He would always make his way to me and we would have intimate conversations about the work going on and how best to deal with the surviving families. Richie always had the welfare of the surviving families and their efforts to deal with their grief foremost in his mind. I came to trust Richie and be completely open with him. I knew he would keep anything I told him in the strictest confidence. Maintaining confidentiality during that period was important because of the politics of the World Trade site rebuilding and the base purposes of the real estate interests and some self-interested politicians and groups. Richie was above that and always focused on doing the right thing.

Richie Sheirer, Mike Bloomberg, and Rudy Giuliani were three people who were truthful with me at all times during the post 9/11 weeks and months. I have the greatest respect for these three as I know their interest was and remains the welfare and healing of the 9/11 surviving families. I count them all as friends. Richie was a key player in this triad. He provided a human face, an empathetic heart and a constancy of purpose to surviving families. I was blessed that he did this for me.

Our family decided the best way to remember our son Michael and respond to the tragedy of 9/11 was to do good for others. We established the Michael Lynch Memorial Foundation to provide college scholarships to the children of 9/11 victims, deceased and active firefighters and children affected by other disasters. Richie immediately became a staunch supporter of the foundation and its work, and was a key contributor to its success. He joined us every year, helping to make a real difference in young lives. Richie helped us to remember our son Michael and deal with our loss as a surviving family -- as he committed to do in the early days of 9/11. I am thankful to have known and worked with him.

Richie Sheirer was a humble, strong, unassuming, gracious, and loyal friend to me. I will miss him dearly.

Jack Lynch

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