

Corporal John A. "Jay" Sampietro Jr.

Badge #584
EOW ... August 17, 2005

Jay Sampietro joined the Patrol in 1992. He was assigned to Troop E, Pemiscot County after graduating from the Patrol Academy. In 1997, he was promoted to corporal and assigned to Zone 10, Dunklin County. Jay was my corporal in Zone 10 for a little over a year. He then transferred to Troop E Headquarters to take a pilot's position. I've known Jay ever since he came on the Highway Patrol. Jay was my corporal, a co-worker, a fellow trooper, and a volunteer firefighter. But, most importantly, Jay was my friend.

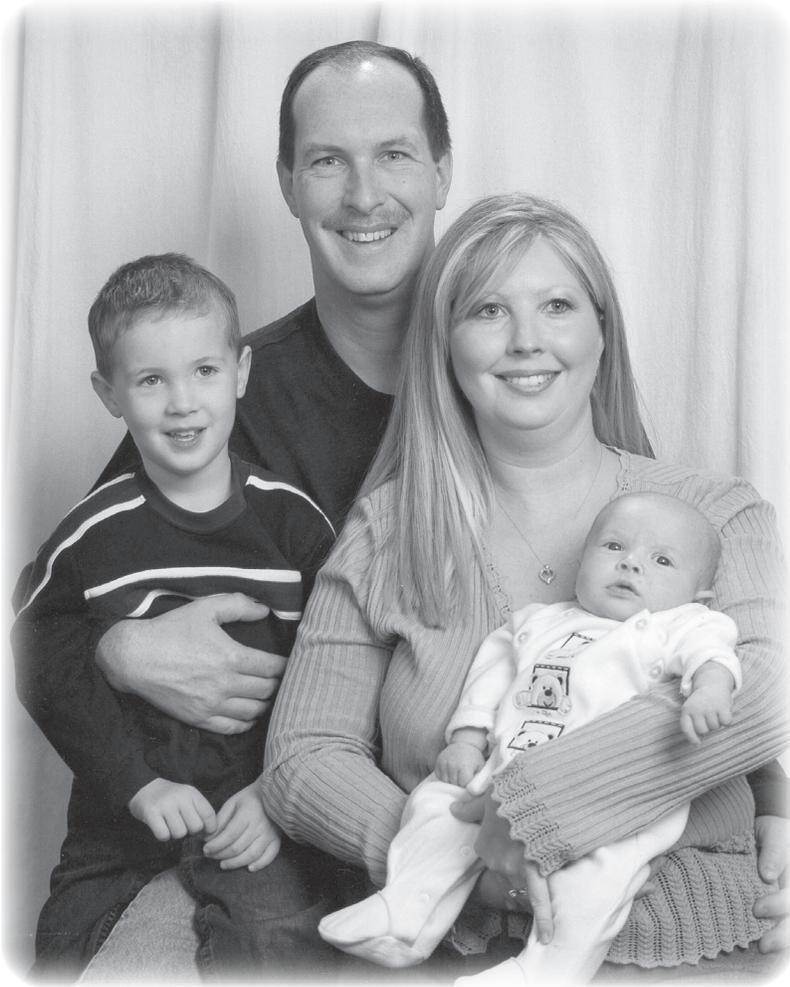
Jay was a man who was able to draw people in. No matter where he showed up, people would gather around him. He always had a positive attitude and a smile on his face, no matter what the situation. He was always in a good mood and always upbeat. That's the kind of person Jay was. He didn't have to work at it, he was just that type of person. During your day, if you had contact with Jay, it was a good day. My friend Jay always had a smile that could warm your heart. He could put anyone at ease, no matter what the situation was. He was the type of person who could, and would, take other people's burdens and share their load.

My friend Jay seemed to know people from everywhere. If I would mention a town or community, no matter how small, Jay would always say something like, "Hey,

I've got a buddy that's a policeman, fireman, deputy, or trooper that lives around there." Jay never met a stranger. He seemed to know everybody. It was easy for Jay to make friends. When he came to my zone, it seemed like it took him all of two days and he knew at least half of the people in the Dunklin County. Jay had a lot of "buddies." Everyone was one of Jay's "buddies." If Jay was your friend, you had a friend for life. That's what it was all about to Jay.

Jay was always dependable. If he told you something, you could bank on it. He was willing to help others, whether at work or otherwise. It didn't matter if it inconvenienced him or not; he was always there. If you called Jay for a favor or to help with anything, he would never ask what it was or any details, he would just say something like, "When and where do ya want me?" There were never any doubts—my friend Jay would be there. If Jay heard someone might need some help with something, he would just show up and say something like, "Heard ya might need a little help, so I just decided to come over." He was just that type of person.

My friend Jay was always spontaneous and a prankster. It didn't take him long to make his mind up about something. I remember he bought a motorcycle in Union City, TN, one time. One day, Jay mentioned to me he would like to have a motorcycle. The next day, I came to work and was getting out of my car at the zone office, and I noticed a motorcycle coming down the street. The motorcycle pulled up and stopped, and the man riding it took his hel-



John Jay, Jennifer, and Will Sampietro.

met off. It was Jay. I asked him what did he go and do? He told me, "Well, boss, I woke up this morning and still had a hankerin' for a motorcycle and went and bought one." That was my friend. If he decided to do something, he would do it. The car dealers really liked to see Jay come in. You never knew from one day to the next what he would be driving.

Jay loved "gadgets," too. It seemed he was always coming up with new "gadgets." When I saw him at the Sikeston Jaycee Bootheel Rodeo, he showed me his latest "gadget." It was a satellite radio. He seemed proud of it. Jay was telling me about it, and I remember him saying, "This thing is the stuff right here." It was Jay's latest "gadget."

Jay had a great sense of humor. In our zone we were always playing jokes and pranks on each other. We had a lot of fun. Jay and I would always "pick" at each other. I remember one time Jay and I were at a local restaurant called "Porky's." It's kind of a local hangout for us, where we can eat and get a cup of coffee. The owners are James and Mary Lou Cole. Jay and I ate there, and I decided to have some desert, so I asked Mary Lou Cole for a bowl of blackberry cobbler with some ice cream. Well, the normal serving is a small dish, but Mary Lou likes us and she knew what I meant when I said "bowl." She came out with a bowl of blackberry cobbler and ice cream about the size of a football helmet.

Jay looked at that and said something like, "Holy cow, you gonna eat all that?"

I told him I was going to eat every last bite. Well, Jay started "picking" at me, telling me I wasn't as young as I used to be and it was harder for me to keep the weight off now that I was getting a little older. I just looked at Jay and said, "Yea, I may be gettin' a little older and putting a little weight on, but at least I still got all my hair." You see, my friend's hairline was receding a little. I was "chuckling" at the "brilliant" comment I made to Jay, and all he could do was wrinkle his eyebrows and open his mouth. He was speechless, and that was unusual. He wasn't able to make a "come back" comment. Finally, all Jay could do was say a few adjectives about my comment that I can't repeat. Jay always lived life to the fullest. Every day was a brand new world for Jay.

My friend Jay was absolutely dedicated to his family. He loved his wife, Jennifer, and their two boys, Matt and Will, more than

anything. He was very caring, devoted, and a very proud father. I remember when Jay and Jennifer decided to get married. When I saw Jay, he just told me, "Hey, we're gettin' hitched." Later, when Jay and Jennifer started their family, I saw him and he came up to me and told me, "We're gonna have a baby." Jay was so proud. When Jay told me the news, I told him, "Life as you know it is going to change." Jay asked me what I meant and I told him he would find out.

When Matt was born, I saw Jay at troop headquarters. He was so proud. I asked him if he remembered what I had told him about his life changing. Jay smiled, stuck his chest out and said, "I now know what you meant." He was such a proud father. But Jay was more than just Matt and Will's father, he was their dad. There's a difference. He e-mailed me a picture of him holding his son. It was obvious in Jay's eyes that he "knew what I meant," Jay loved Jennifer and his boys more than anything. His priorities were in the right order. He was absolutely dedicated to them. They meant everything to him.

I worked the Sikeston Jaycee Bootheel Rodeo assignment in August. Jay would always be there if possible. I was blessed, but didn't know it at the time. I got to see my friend one last time. As soon as I saw him, and after the handshakes, he reached into his back pocket and pulled out his wallet. The first thing he started talking about was his boys, and showing me and Corporal Jody Laramore his pictures of Matt and Will. Like I said before, Jay wasn't just Matt and Will's father, he was their dad. There is a difference. Jay was a great dad. I got to see Jay, Jennifer, and Matt again while I was posted at an intersection going into the rodeo. They were driving in to the rodeo grounds. Jay and Matt had their cowboy hats on, and Matt was talking about the rodeo. Like I said before, I was blessed and

didn't know it. That was the last time I got to see my friend.

God, family, and serving his fellow man was what my friend Jay was all about. Jay loved his job. He was a trooper all the way. He loved his job and he believed in his job. Jay always treated people well. He was a very caring person. Jay touched a lot of people's lives.

There have been many people make comments to me about our loss of Jay. We are going to miss our friend, our "buddy" Jay. He was the kind of person and officer that others should emulate. Jay always set a high standard for himself and he met the standards of being a trooper. My friend Jay wouldn't want tears shed for him. I know he died doing what he wanted to do. He was making a difference in the world. He was an honorable man and we will miss him.

Jay wrote a reflection on the Officer Down Memorial Website when Columbia Police Department Officer Molly Bowden was killed in the line of duty. Following are Jay's words. It tells you a little about what kind of man he was.

"I tell my family on a regular basis that we must all die one day. Should I pass before I'm 90 in my sleep, I can only hope my death is in service of my community. As much as we will miss our fallen heroes, I can think of no more honorable way to die than in defending the safety and freedom of those we have chosen to serve. All who wear a badge readily accepted the possibility of death in the line of duty. Our families and friends did not necessarily agree to bear the burden of our loss, yet they do. With that in mind, Molly, God rest your soul ... you have made the Ultimate Sacrifice in the service of the citizens of Columbia. May you rest proud and peacefully. To Molly's family, friends, and co-workers: Honor and remember your fallen hero. The thoughts and prayers of many are with you."

*Corporal J.A. Sampietro
Missouri State Highway Patrol
2-11-2005*

My friend Jay will always be remembered. As long as there is an officer that gets up, puts on a uniform and duty belt, and gets into a patrol car to do their job, Jay's memory will never fade. We all need to remember, that it's not how a man dies, it's how he lived. My friend Jay lived proudly. May he rest peacefully. To Jennifer, Matt, Will, and the rest of my friend's family, know that you will be forever a part of our family. Jay's love for you and the Patrol will be in our hearts forever. You are not alone.

(This article by Sgt. Dennis W. Rainey, Troop E, first appeared in the September/October 2005 issue of the Patrol News.)

Corporal John A. "Jay" Sampietro Jr. was survived by his wife, Jennifer, a communica-

tions employee with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and their two sons, Matt and Will. Cpl. Sampietro (584), 32, was struck by a vehicle and killed on August 17, 2005. At the time he was struck, Cpl. Sampietro was assisting the Patrol's Major Crash Investigation Team at the site of an earlier traffic crash. The crash took place on Interstate 44 in Webster County, near Strafford, MO. Tpr. Sampietro was taken to Cox South Hospital in Springfield, MO, where he succumbed to his injuries. On October 25, 2006, a portion of Interstate 44 in Webster County from the 91-mile marker to the 94-mile marker was dedicated as the "Cpl. Jay Sampietro MO State Highway Patrol Memorial Highway." He was the 26th member of the Missouri State Highway Patrol to make the Ultimate Sacrifice.



Jay completed the paperwork to renumber Troop E's aircraft using Sgt. David C. May's badge number. Sgt May was killed in a helicopter crash in 1999.