



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** April 14, 2018  
CONTACT: [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT FUNERAL OF DOT  
EMPLOYEE GEORGE STAAB**

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Father Purchal, thank you. And to everyone in the Saint Andrews community, thank you so much for welcoming us all and for comforting this good family.

I want to tell that family that it was so beautiful to hear those memories and to hear those reflections. Because what I felt as I heard them is that George did what may be the most difficult and most essential thing in life which is to take that love for family and live it out everyday. And I can tell you from my own journey and from so many hundreds and thousands of people I have met over the years that there are so many good people that for one reason or another don't find the way to take the love within and to give it to their family day in a day out, year after year.

Someone who understands the best quarter of their life does that and gives of themselves so consistently has achieved in some ways as one of the greatest if not the greatest possible way of living on this earth. And that's not the kind of thing that's necessarily gets on the front pages of the papers but it is the most essential thing.

So hearing the purity, the depth, that feeling that you all have expressed for how he loved you, makes me see a greatness in him and makes me admire him even more. I also did not know until your reflections how devoted a Mets fan George was. So we should celebrate right now – Mets are as of this morning have the best record in all of baseball. And I know George is up there helping to make sure that continues.

[Laughter]

So we're here to honor him and – I want to say all of us who are here from the City of New York and the Department of Transportation, and all the other agencies – we are here today because we appreciate for what he did for all of us. We are here because we appreciate that he served us, served 8.5 million people, and gave his life in that service and that means so much.

He literally was one of the people who made New York City work. And he had a particular skill, a particular ability which was rare and advanced, and sophisticated. And one of the special abilities he had and I guess it goes back to when he used to use his hammer and build things and

get all the other kids involved. Well, in this time he had the ability to achieve things and teach others how to do them and that was so rare and so special – and particularly with these movable bridges that are a part of the landscape of the city and it's something that makes our city very special and it's something that [inaudible] back to another time. It's that very reason there are very few people sophisticated enough to know how to actually make them work and to keep them working. And George is one of those people and anyone in New York City who is trying to figure how to deal with these bridges they probably have a cell phone, because he was one of the only few people who understood. He helped to keep the City moving literally. And it was well known that he loved his work, he had a passion for it and he had a passion for teaching others and he was an example that others followed.

It's very, very hard to make sense – it's almost impossible to make sense of a tragedy that occurs like this, that is so strange and out of nowhere, so random and so impossible to comprehend. How one minute a good man is alive and then next minute he is gone. It's something that we as humans grapple with and we never could entirely make sense of it.

But it comes back to what we heard earlier. The real question is how someone lived, and what they did with the time they had. Did they live a time to the fullest? Did they give it to others? By every measure George did that. Every measure he lived fully, he lived the kind of life we could all admire. He also exemplified a group of people who often don't get to praise and the appreciation they deserve.

There is almost 5,500 people who work for our City's Department of Transportation. And they do so much, their work is essential but it's unsung, it's not the kind of work again that makes the front pages, but it's the kind of work that is essential so everyone else's life can come together so everyone can get where they're trying to go so the busiest place on earth keeps moving.

And I want to honor all of them, and thank everyone at the Department of Transportation for that work. But do so in the context of honoring George, because his devotion is an example to all of us. His understating of how important the work was. His sacrifice is something we all need to appreciate and remember and it should also be a reason to appreciate all who do this crucial work.

I want to finish by just speaking to the family once again. And I want to name everyone as I do – Tara I just want to thank you, because anyone who goes through life and lives the right way could only do so because they had a great partner by their side. To George's children, Corey, and George, Meagan, David, Elizabeth, Emily and Tara and of course we remember Thomas who was lost earlier. And to all of his grandchildren, and his sister Carolann, thank you for the beautiful remembrances. To all the family here, I can only say to you something personal from my own experience. I lost my father too early in life as well. And I can tell you that it obviously creates so much pain so many times when you wonder what might have been but I can also tell you from the heart that your father is always with you. It's an amazing feeling, but you will feel it many times. You'll feel him by your side, you'll feel him watching over you, you'll feel him like an angel looking out for you. And it's hard to describe, but it's something you'll come to know because you've got all that love, you've got a great example it doesn't go away, it's in you. And you will continue to feel it, and at any moments, including moments of doubt – sometimes

you'll wonder and it's almost like you'll hear a voice reminding you of all that your father taught you.

So he will be that angel on your shoulder. And I'm told that George's co-workers heard him say more than once a phrase – it was someone is watching me from above. Well, I know someone was always watching George from above because his life came together in so many wonderful ways. But now we can all say that George is watching us from above as well. So to the family on behalf of 8.5 million New Yorkers, my deepest condolences and to George's extended family at the DOT as well. To all who knew and loved him, I hope we all remember to keep his good memory alive and to live the way he lived.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

[Applause]

###