



John N. Aramino Memorial

1943 - 1961

John Aramino, who was born on October 10, 1943, grew up in LeRoy with his parents, John and Margaret “Mangefrida” Aramino, and his two younger brothers, Nicholas and Arthur, on Robbins Road. John played football and ran track. He was a starting fullback on the 1960 varsity football team. John was an honor student, a member of the National Honor Society, and Treasurer of the Student Council. “He was a bright kid, easygoing, and someone we could all look up to,” recalled friend and teammate David Carmichael. John was a member of St. Joseph’s Church. He was scheduled to graduate with honors from LeRoy High School on June 26, 1961. He had received an alternate appointment to the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He had also been accepted to Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, as well as Cornell University.

“John was ahead of his time; he was a great friend to many, and his future was filled with so much potential,” mentioned Joe Calourie, a close friend of Aramino. Calourie noted, “We used to call him General Aramino because he was destined for greatness.”

David Paganin added, “John was a leader who got things done. He was a great player, but an even greater teammate who always looked out for others.”

His future was filled with great hope. All of that changed on Memorial Day 1961.

The following is a summary from an article in the LeRoy Gazette dated June 1, 1961:

One month before graduation, John and a friend, Richard Fore, went to Buttermilk Falls to do some target shooting. That same day, a nine-year-old boy had also come to the site with his older sister. Aramino and Fore stopped on top of the trestle bridge to shoot at a tin can floating below in Oatka Creek. The young boy ventured out onto the train tracks to watch the two older boys shoot their guns.

Then the unthinkable happened.

Suddenly, the boys heard the train whistle and looked up to see the three-section diesel bearing down on them. It was 2:40 p.m. when a freight train rounded the curve and entered the trestle. The engineer sounded the horn. The train was traveling about 45 miles per hour.

At the sound, the youth began running toward the end of the trestle. John shouted a warning to him, which apparently the boy did not hear. John then raced to the boy, caught him by the waist with the train only about 25 feet away, and pushed him into a prone position on the ties, which extended about 40 inches beyond the rails to the edge of the trestle.

John shielded the younger boy with his own body, but a steel protrusion on the locomotive struck his head, causing instant death.

Village of LeRoy Patrolman Harold Anchor was the first at the accident scene. He later summoned Deputy Sheriffs Norman Mattice and Village Officer Calvin Lathan, who conducted the investigation along with Dr. Emil F. Kimaid, a Genesee County Coroner.

News of the accident quickly spread throughout the small, close-knit LeRoy community. The entire town was devastated. How could a young man whom everyone knew and respected, with such a bright future, be taken away at such a young age?

“The whole town was crushed when we heard the news of the accident. Learning the details of his act of bravery, though, no one was surprised. John was that kind of person,” mentioned Carmichael.

“We know John saved our boy’s life. I am not even sure I knew John, but we will be eternally grateful to him,” stated the boy’s mother.

Hearing of the fatal accident, Thomas White, Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, wrote a letter to John’s parents:

“The bravery, quick thinking, and total disregard for his own safety in pushing a young boy away from the oncoming train showed him to have been a young man of outstanding character. He was clearly the type of man whom the Air Force constantly seeks, and his absence from the ranks of cadets at the Air Force Academy will be a great loss.”

In 1963, John Aramino was posthumously awarded the Young American Medal for Bravery. The announcement was made by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, and it was the first time the medal had ever been awarded posthumously. President John F. Kennedy pinned the medal on the lapel of John’s mother during a White House Rose Garden ceremony. “The President called the young man’s actions an inspiration to the nation and said he was very proud to have the parents and family present that day to honor this great act of bravery.” The President called it “one of the most courageous acts I have ever heard or read about.”

In 1965, John Aramino’s story was featured in the November issue of Reader’s Digest:

“To those overly concerned about the moral fiber of our teenagers, we give you John Aramino.”

It is only fitting that Aramino’s gravestone bears the inscription:

“Greater Love Hath No Man than to Give His Life for a Friend.”

The John N. Aramino Memorial is a plaque made possible through a trust fund established by the Class of 1961 and interested members of the community to perpetuate the memory of John and his outstanding bravery.

