



## DEATH NOTICE



### JOHN PETROPOULOS

Eleftheriani Nafpaktias

September 10, 1945 – May 1, 2021

Viewing: Wednesday, May 5, 2021, 3-7 pm

**FREDERICK FUNERAL HOME, 92-15 Northern Blvd., Flushing, NY 11358, Tel.: (718) 357-6100**

Funeral Service: Thursday, May 6, 2021, 9 am

**Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, 196-10 Northern Blvd., Flushing, NY 11358.**

**Survived by:**

**His wife: PANAGIOTA**

**His children: ANTONIA, CONSTANTINE & VASSILIOS**

**His Grandchildren: STELIOS, STELLA, PANAGIOTA, PANAGIOTA, IOANNIS & IOULIANOS**

**His Brothers and Sisters: GIORGOS, ELLI, DIMITRIOS, NIKOS & VOULA**

**And many other wonderful family members here, in Greece, in Canada and in Australia.**

### Ioannis John Petropoulos

died far from where he was born – in every respect

The fourth of eight children born into the Civil War raging in the mountains of western Greece after World War II, John's family tended livestock and lived off a meager patch of land whenever they were not migrating to pick corn for wealthy landowners in the lowlands. These were hard people, and John had a soft heart. At an age we would not consider leaving our child alone, John was sent to tend sheep and goats in the mountains alone, and in the night imagined ghosts and nereids in his midst. At the tender age of five, John was even given away to an affluent childless couple in another village, so as to ease pressure on his impoverished family.

This particular child refused to settle for this fate, however, and so he trekked through rivers and mountains to make it back to his family. He then never stopped trekking for his family. After the sixth grade, John hitchhiked his way to Athens to work small jobs, then to Germany for work as a 16-year-old Gastarbeiter, back to Greece to complete his military service during a military coup, off to Canada and then back to Greece to marry the fiery love of his life who was also his family's neighbor in the village vineyards, Panagiota. For their fifty years of marriage, whenever they were not working, Panagiota and John would rarely be seen apart from one another.

John applied for residency in South Africa, Australia, the United States and Canada. His application to Canada was accepted first, and offered him the opportunity to join his siblings in Toronto. The couple lived in Canada and then settled in New York, where they began the hard task of building their family. John did this with his hands. The 5' 3" immigrant successfully built his family's future by helping raise his adopted city to the heavens. John helped build the Twin Towers, the Citicorp building, and many others. The first building he ever worked on is Waterside Plaza on the East River. Amazingly, it sits across from NYU Langone Hospital. And John stared at it with a father's pride from his hospital room in late January, when he knew that his journey was ending.

The pride and devotion John had for his family was endless. When the Waterside Plaza project wound down and he was let go, John was struck by the terror of possibly letting his family down. But this man with a sixth-

grade education never did let them down, and secured an extraordinary life for his wife, children and grandchildren. Although John was an avid reader with interests ranging far and wide from history to politics, he was somewhat shy around adults, including those closest to him. Indeed, his thoughts on all sorts of things, including whether he had become infected and the gravity of his situation, were underestimated and discounted. John loved Kit-Kats, Games, and making others happy; and so it makes sense that he felt most comfortable in the company of children. Even in his 70s, John displayed the wide-eyed wonder of a child when introduced to new games like bowling or bocce.

John leaves behind three children, six grandchildren and more to come, who will no doubt terribly miss seeing their pappou light up as he played or joked like a child himself, even if it may have embarrassed children and grandchildren at the time. The journey of that five-year old who refused the comforts of a strange family, would take him to every corner of the globe alongside his devoted wife, partner, friend and soulmate, Panagiota. She will especially miss their time exploring, laughing and learning together. In that hospital room on the other side of the globe from his tiny village of Eleftheriani, John seemed disappointed his journey was ending. In those days before he was intubated, he spoke about how many miles he and his wife walked daily and used a breathing tool to display to us how he still had fight in him. This tremendous fight continued for three months, but ultimately ended with a single tear at the corner of his right eye, surrounded by his family.

Eleftheriani means "place of freedom" and was so named because its remoteness caused it to never be occupied by any foreign invader. He was born in that place, freed himself from it, and ultimately, needed to leave his beloved family in order to free himself from sickness. He died on our Great & Holy Saturday; the most auspicious day of our religious calendar to pass away. We hope that this man, who never let his very hard life make him a very hard person, knows the extraordinary amount of love, tenderness and pride he leaves behind. We also hope he has found a new freedom, in some joyous place that is free from the seriousness of adulthood, from which he can look down to witness all that he created, and smile.