

Officer Eric J. Joering

Westerville Division of Police

“Selfless” would be one way to describe Police Officer Eric J. Joering, said Guy Cerino, his good friend and fellow officer at the Westerville Division of Police.

“Generous” would be another.

“It’s hard to try to say one thing about him or describe him in one word,” Cerino said. “To find that word — I can’t. It’s many.”

Joering was a guy who would bring in the best cuts of the deer he’d hunted to share with co-workers for dinner at the station. And a guy who drove 40 miles in the middle of the night to comfort Cerino after Cerino’s young son died of cancer.

“At work, if you came in and had a question, or you were working on a case and you needed his help, he always dropped what he was doing for you,” Cerino said.

He recalled one time in particular, when he himself was investigating a hit-skip suspect and Joering was a detective focused on crimes involving juveniles. Joering put aside his heavy workload, Cerino said, to help him decipher what a thick packet of cell-tower data showed about the suspect.

“Eric would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it; if you needed money, he’d give you money,” said Cerino, who was hired in 2001, the same year that Joering was. “And that was the kind of person he was.”

During his years at the division, Joering received dozens of commendations, including seven Exceptional Duty awards. One of the most notable came after he helped the FBI and police departments on both coasts recover \$3 million worth of jewelry stolen from a vendor passing through Westerville.

Sgt. Tony Rudd, who supervised Joering in the detective bureau, called him an expert in police tactics and weapons. He helped Rudd choose a rifle and navigate the complicated, seven-month process of obtaining federal approval to carry it at work.

Joering also served as a training officer, a firearms trainer and a street cop. After his stint as a detective, he became a K9 officer partnered with a Belgian Malinois named Sam.

Working with police dogs was Joering’s dream job, former Westerville Police Chief Joe Morbitzer has said.

Joering, who lived with his family outside Centerburg, also loved hunting, four-wheeling, scuba diving and being outdoors. He and his wife, Jami, enjoyed spending time on their boat and going on double dates with Cerino and his wife.



MEMORIAL WALL: PANEL 29

The Joerings’ three young daughters — Eva, Elena and Ella — can be called proud daddy’s girls.

“They’re at that age where doing anything with Dad intrigued them,” Cerino said. “So if Dad’s hunting, they were like, ‘I want to go hunting with Dad. I want to spend time with Dad.’”

In a thank-you video to the Westerville community in 2018, Jami described how Sam and the girls would pile onto Joering when he sat in his recliner in the evenings. The chair, she said, is still the favorite place to curl up for Sam, who has lived with the family since the Westerville Police Division retired him after Joering’s death.

“There’s nothing better than those three girls getting to be with that dog,” said Morbitzer, now superintendent of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

On Feb. 10, Joering and Police Officer Anthony P. Morelli were dispatched to a home on a domestic-violence call. After they were let in, a man opened fire. Both officers were hit and fired at the shooter, wounding him. Joering, 39, died at the scene.

Franklin County is seeking the death penalty for the shooter, who, as a felon, shouldn’t have had a gun.

Joering is survived by his wife and three daughters; his mother-in-law, Terri Seligman; his parents, Jim and Lillian Joering; his brother, Michael (Jen); his police family; and many friends.

Cerino attributes one of the best experiences he had with his son, Jaret, to the Joering family.

He had gone to the Joerings’ home to do something — maybe help refinish the basement or chop wood, he couldn’t recall — and the Joerings decided late in the afternoon to invite the rest of Cerino’s family to come from their Grove City home for dinner.

Cerino’s son, Jaret — about 3 years old at the time and battling cancer — begged for a ride on Officer Joering’s four-wheeler.

“I wasn’t going to say no,” Cerino said. “And Eric wasn’t going to say no.”

Cerino put Jaret in front of him and would press the throttle to make it get up and go, and let off, and press the throttle and let off. Jaret couldn’t get enough.

“At that moment in time, our son had no cares in the world,” Cerino said. “I’ll never forget that day, because of Eric, and I still thank him for it. ...

“He was very generous.”