

DAILY NEWS

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DAY OF MOURNING AFTER ACQUITTAL

**Crane rigger
at the grave of
collapse victim**

EXCLUSIVE

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THE NAME and dates "Santy N. Gallone 1970-2008" are chiseled into a gray stone mausoleum in Farmingdale, L.I.

They are burned even deeper in the heart of William Rapetti.

Gallone was killed along with five other workers and a tourist in the horrific East Side crane collapse on March 15, 2008.

Rapetti, the master rigger who set up the doomed machine, had worked with his friend Gallone for years.

Yesterday — a day after he was cleared of seven counts of manslaughter and other criminal charges in the tragedy — Rapetti made a poignant pilgrimage to Gallone's final resting place.

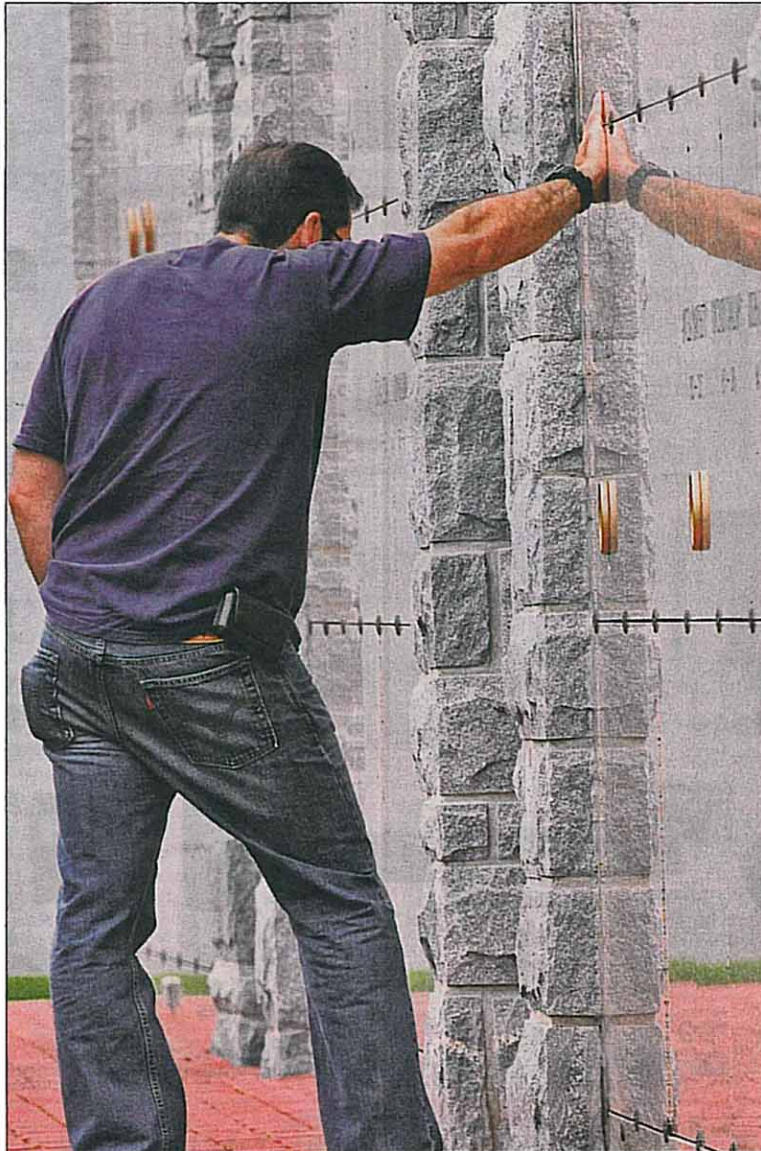
Accompanied by a friend, Rapetti, dressed in blue jeans and a Yankees T-shirt, approached the grave site at St. Charles Cemetery silently. He stood facing the mausoleum wall for about 10 minutes.

The deeply religious Rapetti, who wore a picture of the Catholic saint Padre Pio on his lapel during his four-week trial, then kneeled and placed his hand on the wall. He held it there a few moments, rose and returned to his car.

Rapetti's attorney, Arthur Aidala, said that in coming days Rapetti plans to visit the graves of all the hardhats who died in the disaster: crane operator Wayne Bleidner, 51, and workers Clifford Canzona, 45, Brad Cohen, 54, Anthony Mazza, 39, and Aaron Stephens, 45.

"They were not just workmen," Aidala said. "They were like members of his family."

Gallone, the father of a 19-month-old daughter when he died, had been a star college ballplayer who was elected to the Fordham University Athletic Hall of Fame in 2000. For a time, he played pro baseball in the Phillies organization. But like his father before him, he chose to work in construction.



William Rapetti, the master rigger who was cleared of manslaughter in the March 2008 crane tragedy that killed six hardhats and a tourist, pauses at the mausoleum of worker Santy Gallone. Photo by Stephen Barcelo

Rapetti, 49, was one of his mentors.

Gallone was working that fateful Saturday not for the \$46 an hour he was making, but because Rapetti had asked for his help, friends said.

When the 300-foot tower

crane at E. 51st St. and Second Ave. broke from its supports and toppled, it flattened a brownstone and showered the Turtle Bay neighborhood with debris.

Gallone was buried so deep under the rubble it took searchers three days to find his body.

Rapetti has remained public-

ly silent about the tragedy. But his wife, Audrey, asked reporters on Thursday to "let us grieve. . . We haven't had time to grieve."

That painful process began yesterday in St. Charles Cemetery.

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