

BRING DADDY BACK



TORN ASUNDER: City road worker Nick Antico and bride Anna Antico on their wedding day.

Girl's anguish over S.I. hit-run

EXCLUSIVE

By KATI CORNELL SMITH

Arianna Antico would give anything to be able to "rewind" time — and just erase the horrible day a heartless hit-and-run driver mowed down her hard-working dad.

The 8-year-old can't understand why her father's life was stolen while he was doing routine road repair on Staten Island.

"Why did he leave? He wasn't sick," the girl told her stepmother, Anna Antico, whose wedding anniversary is Wednesday.

"Arianna said to me the other day, 'Daddy promised me he was going to teach me how to drive when I got to be 16. Who's going to teach me now?'"

The tragedy happened at 2 a.m. Sept. 22 when a speeding SUV scattered six traffic cones, then smashed into Nick Antico,

35, and two Department of Transportation colleagues.

He was struck with such force he flew 50 feet in the air — and died after five days in a coma.

And now, "all Arianna does is cry," the stepmother said. "She told me and her mom, 'Can't we just rewind this and make it go away?'"

Vincent Ventafredda, 26, surrendered 36 hours after the accident.

The devastated family is set to sue the city and the "cowardly" driver, who faces charges of leaving the scene of an accident, which carry a maximum sentence of four years behind bars.

A law-enforcement source said the DA's office could increase the charges in light of Antico's death.

The other two workers were injured.

"What kind of monster would do something like that?" asked Anna, noting Ventafredda went to his



REMEMBERING NICK: Brothers Frank and Renato, widow Anna and sister Anna Maria (clockwise from top left) wear Nick Antico's photograph.

job as an electrician the next day.

"He is a killer and a coward and I intend on making his life as miserable as he's made this family's," said attorney Joseph Tacopina, who plans to file suit.

Antico's family hopes to prevent similar tragedies by also taking aim at the city. They claim it contributed to Antico's death by failing to provide road crews with adequate protection from traffic.

"I don't want my brother to die in vain," said Frank Antico.

In his written confession, Ventafredda claimed he was upset about personal

problems at the time of the crash.

Among them, he said, was his breakup with his girlfriend. She had filed assault charges against him in August.

"My client and his family are grieving for the victim and for his family," said his lawyer, Joseph Benfanate.

Relatives described Antico as "the jewel" of their tight-knit family.

"My life doesn't mean anything any more," wailed Antico's sister, Anna Maria Ieraci, who raised her brother after their parents were killed 22 years ago.

Anna Antico said she re-

ceives a measure of comfort in knowing his heart, kidneys and liver were donated to help save four lives.

She and her husband had bought their "dream home" in the Westerleigh section of Staten Island in June and planned to have children together.

Nick, who recently bought Arianna a puppy, was proud of the tulip bulbs he and his daughter planted at the new house.

"She was all excited. She said, 'Daddy, I can't wait for springtime to see them come up,'" said Anna.

"Now daddy won't see them."

Helayne Seidman