

Whoever saves a life saves the entire world. In memory of Alex Jeffrey Pretti, ICU nurse, civil rights activist

GIUSEPPE R. GRISTINA¹

¹Specialist in Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine.

«[...] We'll remember the names of those who died
on the streets of Minneapolis».

Bruce Springsteen - "Streets of Minneapolis"

Alex Jeffrey Pretti, a 37 years old nurse, was born in Chicago to a family of Italian descent.

He grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin, where he graduated from Preble High School. He then attended the University of Minnesota, graduating in 2011 with a degree in biology, and from 2014, he worked as a clinical research assistant at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System (HCS).

After graduating in nursing, he became a licensed nurse in 2021 and started to work in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at the United States VA Hospital in Minneapolis, Minnesota¹.

Alex J. Pretti was an outdoor enthusiast who spent time with his inseparable dog Joule but he was also a member of the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), a national union representing federal employees in the United States.

On January 24, 2026, Alex J. Pretti was killed by 10 gunshots by officers of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Minneapolis. The incident occurred during widespread protests following the killing of a woman, Renée Good, on January 7, by another officer of the same organization.

It is worthy to note that, according to the official report of the Minneapolis Police Chief, Alex J. Pretti had no criminal record and, under the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, he was a lawful handgun owner with a concealed carry permit valid in Minnesota². Lastly, two witnesses to the killing of Alex Pretti have said in sworn testimony that he never drew and used his handgun against ICE officers³.

The other details of Alex J. Pretti's killing have been reported by numerous media outlets and there is no need to reiterate them here^{4,5}. Instead, it is important to focus on three testimonies that help us understand the values that inspired Alex J. Pretti's life.

The first one is from Aasma Shaukat, a gastroenterologist and physician-scientist, Chair of the VA Gastroenterology Field Advisory Board, global leader in colorectal cancer prevention, and former supervisor of Alex J. Pretti; the second is from Jessica Hauser, a student and then colleague of Alex J. Pretti in his ICU; the third is from Mac Randolph, the son of a patient who passed away in that unit.



Alex Jeffrey Pretti.

Aasma Shaukat said she hired Alex J. Pretti in 2014 as a research assistant in the clinical research program at the Minneapolis VA HCS. Talking about him she stated: «Alex was an enthusiastic research assistant and a tireless collaborator who from day one expressed his desire to contribute to the community and society [...]. Regarding the videos of Saturday's shooting, his involvement to help someone he believed was in danger is exactly what I would have expected from Alex [...]. During the six years we worked together, Alex always stepped up to help anyone in need in our community. He later opted for more patient-oriented work, particularly with veterans, whom he considered one of the most vulnerable groups among others. That's why I wrote a reference letter for him when he



Alex Jeffrey Pretti reads the farewell speech for the death of Terrance's L. Randolph¹¹.



US VA Hospital Minneapolis – Alex Pretti's coworkers stood together in silence – not just to mourn, but to honor the life of a man who served others with compassion and dignity.

decided to enroll in nursing school. After graduation, when he returned to the VA hospital, he was a professionally well trained and strongly motivated intensive care nurse»⁶.

Jessica Hauser was one of the last nursing students of Alex J. Pretti. When she learned of her mentor's death, she wrote a post on social media that was then shared on various online platforms: «I was Alex's last nursing student. He was my friend and my mentor. In the last four months, I was by his side during my final internship at the Minneapolis US VA Hospital. He trained me to care for the most critically ill patients as an ICU nurse. Alex trained me to manage arterial and central catheters, to prepare and administer therapies, to monitor vital signs, and how to handle and intervene calmly in the most critical moments. Now, his light guides me in every room where I care for those in need as he would have»⁷.

Jessica further explains how she was particularly struck by Pretti's constant thoughtfulness in comforting patients. Human values that she also recognized in the various videos captured by citizens documenting the moments when Pretti was killed.

«Alex carried within him patience, compassion, and calmness like a constant light. Even at the end, that light was there. I recognized his familiar calmness and composure shining even in those unbear-

able last moments captured on camera. It doesn't surprise me that just before being killed, Alex was concerned about the condition of the woman violently pushed to the ground by ICE officers – "are you ok?" were his last words»⁸.

«Alex strongly believed in the rights enshrined in our Constitution», continues Jessica Hauser, «he fought for justice and peace wherever he could».

When Mac Randolph turned on the TV on January 24, 2026, the name and face on the screen were immediately familiar to him: it was Alex Jeffrey Pretti, the ICU nurse who had cared for his father, Terrance (Terry) Lee Randolph, a US Air Force airman, during his last days at the Minneapolis VA Hospital⁹.

Mac's father was 77 years old, nearing the end of his life, and was admitted to the ICU at the Minneapolis VA Hospital with a diagnosis of lung cancer. After several days, Terry Randolph said he did not want to be treated anymore.

Mac states that Alex did not just provide assistance but helped the family through that moment by calmly explaining what would happen once life sustaining treatments were forgone, making the unbearable moment less frightening.

«It was then that Alex truly became an important person that my family relied on, answering many

questions during a really difficult time», Mac Randolph said.

«It was Pretti, a 37-year-old man with a smile on his face, who answered the toughest questions my father ever asked. Alex supported us by conveying to all of us a great serenity, the same serenity that I carried with me in the moments following my father's death, while Alex read a final tribute, thanking him for his service to the country»¹⁰.

In December 2024, a video recorded by Mac captured the image of Alex, standing by the bedside where the body of Terry Randolph lay, delivering that final and respectful farewell¹¹.

Mac said he never expected to share that video. It was private and sacred. But after Alex's killing, the tribute seemed to be proof of who he truly was: a nurse who honored veterans not with slogans but with dignity. In the video, Alex speaks of freedom as something people must protect and remember, and he thanks those who have served for the sacrifices that made it possible.

These are the words of Alex Jeffrey Pretti during the farewell ceremony: «Today, we remember that freedom is not free. We must strive to obtain it, nurture and protect it, and even sacrifice for it», Pretti says in the video. «We must never forget and always remember our brothers and sisters who have served, so that we can enjoy the gift of freedom. So, at this moment, let us remember and give thanks for their dedication and selfless service to our nation for the cause of freedom. In this solemn hour, we pay them our honor and our gratitude»¹¹.

Now, Alex's tribute has become a powerful reminder worldwide of the impact compassionate nurses can have forever on a family.

For us, it is a reminder not to forget that the moral quality of our lives also reflects our behavior in the course of events of the world that involve us in the time we are given to live.

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