

43RD ANNUAL

NATIONAL FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL WEEKEND

May 4 - 5, 2024



Emmitsburg, Maryland



The Fire Hero Family Flag: Tenth Anniversary

A decade ago, the U.S. Congress requested an American flag to honor the families of fallen firefighters who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.

The flag first flew over the U.S. Capitol on Flag Day in 2014. It then embarked upon a nationwide journey to be flown over key landmarks across the country.

The Fire Hero Family Flag was raised over:

- ★ The U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC
- ★ The National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, MD
- ★ Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA
- ★ Department of Defense Firefighter Memorial in San Angelo, TX
- ★ IAFF Fallen Fire Fighter Memorial in Colorado Springs, CO
- ★ The Wildland Firefighters Monument in Boise, ID

Its journey ended in Emmitsburg, MD, where the National Honor Guard Commanders Association presented it to our Fire Hero Families during Memorial Weekend on October 9, 2014.

This weekend, the Fire Hero Family Flag is posted at the family hotel. Throughout the rest of the year, it is on display in the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Chapel to honor the families of firefighters who have made the supreme sacrifice to their community.



The United States Flag is a symbol of strength and unity. Its history parallels our national culture and represents the core values of the American Fire Service, the Honor Guard, and our Fire Hero Families. The dedicated and permanent Fire Hero Family Flag represents the companionship and resilience we share as we remember our fallen heroes—together.

Flag Presentations to Families

During today's Memorial Service, the family of each firefighter on the 2024 Roll of Honor will receive an American flag that has



flown above the U.S. Capitol Dome and the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in memory of their fallen hero.

We are here for you.

May 5, 2024

Welcome to the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service, where we gather to pay our respects to the sacrifice of 226 firefighters—89 who died in 2023 and 137 who died in previous years. We honor and remember these fallen heroes by paying tribute to their bravery, selflessness, and commitment to keeping their communities safe.

Behind each of the names on the following pages is a story of a well-lived life—a hero who selflessly dedicated their life to protecting and serving others. Each fallen firefighter had their own unique story filled with moments with their family, friends, and colleagues. These memories serve as powerful reminders of the incredible individuals they were—and the lasting impact they had on those around them.

As family members of these fallen heroes, you are now part of a larger community: the Fire Hero Family. It is a community of individuals who have walked in your shoes, who have experienced similar losses, and who understand the weight of grief and the journey of healing. The Fire Hero Family offers support, understanding, and the opportunity to share stories, memories, laughter, and tears.

The **National Fallen Firefighters Foundation** is here for you and your family, not just this weekend but throughout the year. I encourage you to explore the range of support services we offer, such as weekly virtual support calls, conferences, and special events. For instance, we hope you will join us again here in Emmitsburg for the Winter Retreat and Tree Lighting in December. This will give you time for fellowship with other Fire Hero Family members and an opportunity to spend some quiet moments at the Memorial.

You have my commitment—and that of everyone at the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation —that your firefighter will never be forgotten. Their legacy and your sacrifice will forever be etched in our hearts.



Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Troy Markel". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Troy Markel
Chair, Board of Directors
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

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FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jordan E. Melton

Birmingham Fire & Rescue Service – Alabama ★ Career Firefighter ★ July 17, 2023 ★ Age 29

On February 28, 1994, Jordan Ellis Melton was born to Claude and Rochelle Malone Melton. Jordan was a bright, vibrant spirit, full of energy. Early in the morning, he would awake before the house began to stir and announce; “When God says wake up, it’s time to wake up.”

Jordan was extremely smart and performed at an accelerated pace. He was educated in the Hoover City School System and was active in many extracurricular activities, ranging from t-ball to chess. Jordan fulfilled his ultimate football goal of playing for the Hoover High School football team and was a proud member of the Hoover High School Class of 2012. He attended college at the University of South Alabama and later at Jefferson State Community College.

From toddlerhood, Jordan was ambitious. His sense of ingenuity and inquisitiveness developed into a unique intelligence. He sought employment at an early age, mowing lawns in the neighborhood and assisting neighbors in need. He started in the restaurant industry, then moved into wholesale distribution. With his father, he owned a lucrative landscaping business. However, his heart for service continued to tug at him. In 2021, he decided to pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a fire chief. In 2023, he proudly graduated from firefighter recruit school.

Accomplishing the goal was always Jordan’s priority. He felt a calling to mentor young men who were losing their way and purpose in life. Over the past few months Jordan began walking a path that would take him into that place God could use him best. On July 12, 2023, another plan collided with God’s plan. However, it didn’t change God’s purpose for how Jordan’s smile, compassion, and character would be used to transform the hearts, minds, and souls of others here on earth. God’s plan is still working on a global level through Jordan’s mother and the Jordan E. Melton Memorial Crusade for Justice. A blaze of transformation is now in full effect and will create new responses to how we and future generations that are hurt, angry, or vengeful choose to react. This is not the end of Jordan’s work. It’s the beginning of a greater service, the most important chapter of his life’s story.

Jordan’s legacy remains through his strong family bonds. He is survived by his mother, Rochelle “Gaston” Malone; father, Claude Ellis Melton; sister, Jessica Elise Melton Stephens; nephew, Isaiah Ellis Stephens; grandmother, Fannie Melton (Jessie/deceased); grandfather, Robert Malone Jr. (Sandra); a special mother figure, Kim Blackledge; bonus siblings, Keon and McKenzie Blackledge; and a host of loving aunts, uncles, cousins, relatives, and friends.



Steven M. Smith

Pebble Volunteer Fire Department – Alabama ★ Volunteer Chief ★ February 19, 2023 ★ Age 46



Steven Michael Smith was born February 7, 1977, to Mike and Marsha Smith. He married Misty Smith on October 23, 2004. They say that you can never find that one person you have everything in common with, that is your one true soulmate. Well, we did.

He had one brother, Christopher Smith; a niece, Addyson Smith, and nephew, Sawyer Smith; and his mother and father-in-law, Tony and Sarah Long.

Steve was a hard worker; he was always there if you needed him. It did not matter if it was a question or to work on something, he was always there if he was home. He joined the fire department in 1998 at age 21 and worked up the ranks, serving as an officer, assistant chief, and then chief. But anybody that knew Steve knew that he did not care about the title. He wanted to make sure that his firemen were safe and that his community was taken care of.

Steve had a wealth of knowledge and was a great trainer. He earned certificates in Emergency Medical Responder, Mobile Fire Suppression Training, VFF Block 1, 2, and 3, Emergency Care Provider, Hazardous Materials Awareness & Operations, 160 Hours Certified Volunteer Firefighter, Fire Instructor, and Emergency Vehicle Driver. He was also a certified scuba/rescue diver and instructor. He loved to teach people. He trained me. He would tell me, just because I'm your husband doesn't mean I'm going to go easy on you, and he meant every word of it. He wanted you to learn so that you would not make any mistakes that could cost you your life, and that was what made him good at what he did.

Steve helped start the first chapter of the Red Knight's Chapter 8 in Winston County. He loved his motorcycles. We would ride every chance we would get. He bought me my own bike two years ago. We would get a group together on the weekend and ride or just take a spontaneous trip to Nashville. Those were some of the best times, just riding, not knowing where you would end up.

I could go on about all the stuff that Steve loved to do when we met. We did a lot of stuff. It was like we started living life, and the older we got, we started doing more. It was like we were afraid we would not have enough time to do everything we wanted. I'm glad that we did what he wanted to do, from riding in the mountains in North Carolina to scuba diving and snorkeling with the manatees in Florida. One thing is for certain—he loved his family, friends, fire department, and community.

Jeffrey Ray Wyatt

McAdory Area Fire District – Alabama ★ Career Chief ★ April 4, 2022 ★ Age 49

Dedication and determination are two words that describe the life of former McAdory Area Fire District Chief Jeffrey Ray Wyatt. Jeff, as his family, firemen, and friends called him, had a heart of gold and a grin that would light up a room. Jeff was born at St. Vincent's Hospital in Birmingham, Alabama, on November 29, 1972, to Harvey O'Neal Wyatt and Joan Davis Wyatt. He graduated from Bessemer Academy in 1991 and soon became a service underwriter for Ford Motor Company.

When Jeff turned sixteen, he became a volunteer firefighter with McAdory Volunteer Fire Department. He was a committed member of the department and spent as much time as possible helping to build and support its growth. He rose to the rank of volunteer chief in 2003. As the department and community grew, Chief Wyatt worked diligently to establish a paid department. In 2006, his dream became reality, and McAdory Area Fire District was established. Although the budget allowed for a few paid fire personnel, Jeff continued in a volunteer position until the department was firmly on its feet. A year later, he officially became the paid chief of the department.

Chief Wyatt led well and took the fire district from meager beginnings as a volunteer fire department to a fully staffed and supplied fire district. One of his firemen described a time many years ago when they dug through their pockets to find enough money to get back to the station after a call. He grew McAdory Area Fire District to three stations, eight men per shift, and the equipment to handle over 1200 calls in 2021.

His commitment to the fire department came second only to his dedication and determination to his family. Jeff left behind his wife, Katie, and children, Josh, Zach, Kyden, Khloe, and Adalyn. In his free time (what little he had) he enjoyed fishing, camping, and Alabama football. A Saturday was even better when all were there—family, fishing, camping, and football.

Chief Jeffrey Ray Wyatt passed on from this life on April 4, 2022, and the McAdory Area Fire District will never be the same again. The lives Jeff touched will always be influenced by his dedication and determination. Jeff's passion for family, his community, and his fire family will always be remembered. He loved well and had a servant's heart. In the words of his firemen, "He always put our needs ahead of his and was the heart and soul of McAdory Fire."

Chief Wyatt was laid to rest on Monday, April 11, 2022, but his spirit of dedication and determination (and that grin) will live on in the lives of his wife, children, firemen, and friends.



Tyrone E. Bell

Verde Valley Fire District – Arizona ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ October 18, 2021 ★ Age 35



Tyrone Earl Bell was born in Grand Junction, Colorado, on August 12, 1986. He moved to Arizona as a toddler with his family and was raised in the small town of Clarkdale. Tyrone was a member of St. Cecilia's Catholic parish, where he served on the altar until his teen years. He attended Clarkdale-Jerome School, where he was a friend to all and known for his sense of humor and easygoing demeanor. Always ready with a laugh and rarely one to turn down mischief, the friends he made were friends for life.

Tyrone attended Mingus Union High School, where he played football. He graduated in 2004, initially going to culinary school before beginning his career in public safety. Tyrone had excellent culinary skills, which earned him the gratitude of everyone who worked on his shift.

Tyrone began his career as a reserve firefighter with the Clarkdale Fire District and Verde Valley Fire District. Later, he became a full-time EMT at Verde Valley Ambulance Company, completing paramedic school in his off hours and becoming a paramedic in 2012.

Tyrone was hired full-time as a firefighter paramedic for Verde Valley Fire District in 2017. A lighthearted and kind friend around the station, he was a consummate professional when the emergency tones sounded. He had an amazing ability to stay focused on treating the injured and not succumb to the pressure of the moment. No firefighter who worked with Tyrone ever doubted his skill as a firefighter. He was the guy you wanted to take into any dangerous situation.

An excellent paramedic as well, Tyrone was known for having multiple pediatric saves during his career.

After high school, Tyrone met his future wife, Ashli, who was the love of his life. They married June 21, 2013, surrounded by friends and family in Jerome, Arizona.

Their son, Tyson, born January 26, 2016, was his dad's sidekick for every endeavor outside the fire station. Tyrone and Ashli spent their life together enjoying the Verde Valley with their son, from the snow on Mingus Mountain to the Verde River. They vacationed from the Midwest to Mexico with matching smiles, each truly the other's best friend. They spent their time as a family making memories, and everyone was invited to join in their fun.

Tyrone's laugh was as sly as his smile, his humbleness as true as his heart. Always generous with his time, he leaves a legacy of quiet gestures made for his community. His absence leaves a void that will never be filled, but will be surrounded by those who learned to live better and love better because of him.

Samuel J. Criner

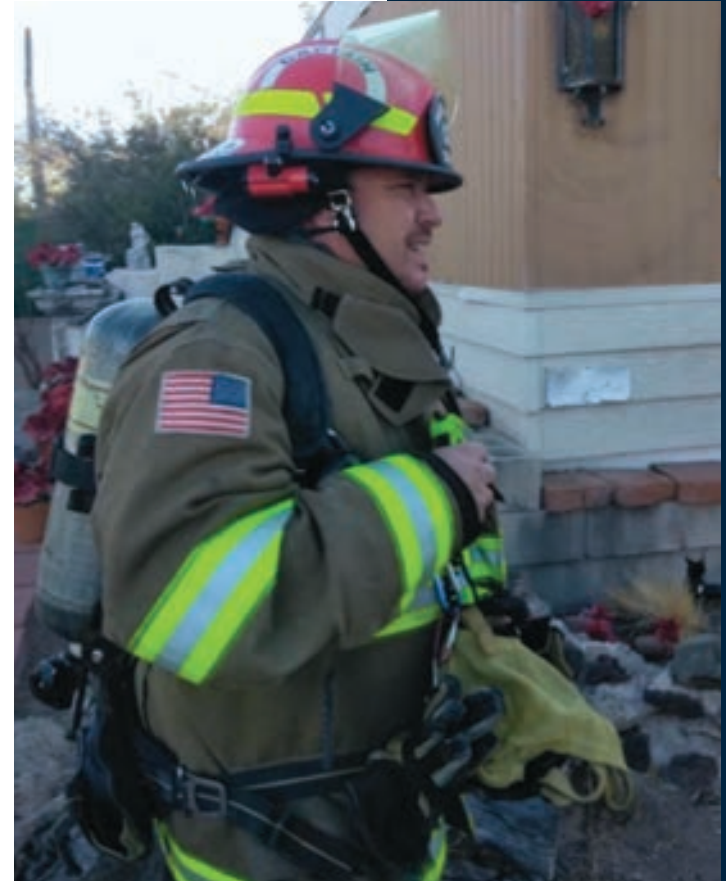
Drexel Heights Fire District – Arizona ★ Career Captain ★ November 4, 2021 ★ Age 45

Captain Samuel J. Criner, 45, was a firefighter for Drexel Heights Fire Department.

Sam was cherished by his parents and loved by his siblings. He was an amazing father to us and a loving grandfather to his grandson, Jameson. Some of the things our dad enjoyed were riding motorcycles, cooking, jokes, and spending time with friends and family. Sam would move heaven and earth to help others. One of our favorite things about dad is he always made it a point to go to our school events, even when on shift. Whenever we had a half day from school, he always took us for pizza or a fun activity.

Being a firefighter made him feel happy and fulfilled. He said it made him feel decades younger, and his favorite thing about the job was being able to mentor new firefighters. Sam has left a lasting memory with his family and those who continue to learn from his lessons and experience.

We miss him every day.



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Joshua Bischof

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Assistant Chief
August 6, 2023 ★ Age 46



As a devoted and loyal firefighter, husband, and father, Josh never stopped serving others. He genuinely cherished his friendships and was a caring son, brother, and uncle. He loved firefighting and aviation and was always up for an adventure. He lived fully and was successful at everything he did. He had an unwavering work ethic regardless of assignment, whether it was a team deployment or caring for his home and family. He adored his wife of 24 years beyond measure and lived to make his children’s dreams come true. Josh taught others to live life in faith, to be humble, and to never settle for less than achieving your dreams.

Josh began his career in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter in Mountain Center at Volunteer Fire Station 78. He then worked for San Bernardino National Forest Service with the Vista Grande Hotshots.

In April of 1999, Josh was hired as a Firefighter I with CAL FIRE. In September 2000, he was hired as a Fire Fighter II in Indio and stayed there for the next eleven years, promoting as an engineer and captain on Truck 86. In 2011, he worked at Oak Glen Conservation Camp as a fire captain and then transferred to Hemet-Ryan Air Attack Base in 2013 as a helitack captain on Helicopter 301. He loved aviation so much. He became the captain on Air Attack 310, where he dreamed of pursuing a pilot’s license of his own. In July of 2016, Josh was promoted to battalion chief for a city and then returned as battalion chief of the base in 2020. Most recently, Josh was promoted to assistant chief of Tactical Air Operations and became a private pilot in 2022. He loved

CAL FIRE almost as much as his family and served as a member of CAL FIRE Incident Management Team 4 as an operations section chief. He was an instructor for multiple cadres at the state level.

Josh set an example of integrity, work ethic, and living life BIG. He was loved and respected throughout his life by his family, friends, and colleagues.

Robert G. Brantley

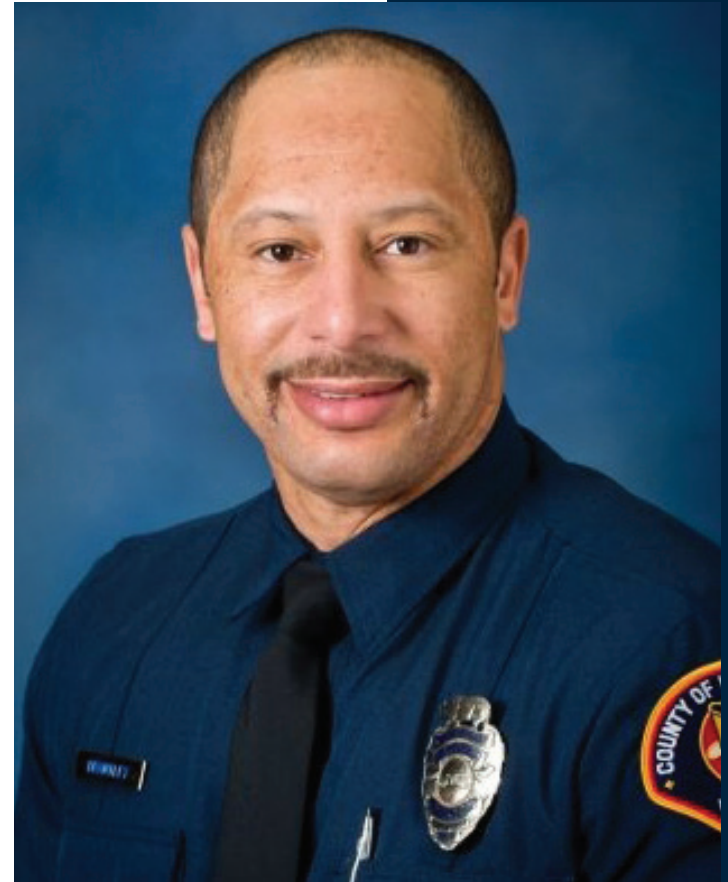
Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Firefighter Specialist ★ January 5, 2018 ★ Age 50

Robert Gene Brantley embodied the finest qualities of his profession through 19 years of service with the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

A proud Navy Veteran, Robert began his career in 1993, serving as a civilian firefighter with Marine Corps Air Station Tustin.

During his career with LA County Fire, Robert was known for a positive “can do” attitude, and he was nicknamed “Yo” by his brothers and sisters at Station 105.

Robert succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer in January 2018.



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Russell V. Fagan

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Firefighter ★ November 24, 2018 ★ Age 56



Russ loved being a firefighter. After a lot of different jobs (including dressing up as Chuck E. Cheese and Santa Claus), he served in the Air National Guard for six years. During routine training, a fire was reported. When they called for volunteers, one of his fellow airmen pushed him out of the lineup, changing the course of his life forever.

His goal was to be an L.A. County firefighter, “because they’re the best!” He earned an A.A. degree in fire science and completed his EMT certification. He ran for miles up and down hills, pulled hose, and dragged giant tractor tires while carrying a 40-pound pack on his back. He volunteered in the emergency room and tested at different fire departments. After six years, he was hired by L.A. County.

Russ was passionate about being the best firefighter he could be and enjoyed the challenges of his profession. He was a firefighter 1 and 2, HAZMAT technician/specialist, HAZMAT assistant safety officer, and weapons of mass destruction certified. Russ was one of a handful who qualified to respond when L.A. County deployed their Type 1 HAZMAT Team out of the county.

Russ loved working at Battalion Division Headquarters, with a lot of moving parts and plenty to do. Intrinsicly motivated, he would notice what needed to be done, gather other men, and handle it. A natural leader, he would come alongside new firefighters, instructing and guiding them. He wanted to share what he knew and see them succeed.

Through the Rescue Youth Program, Russell gave his heart to young men who needed encouragement, solutions, and support. He volunteered with Special Olympics and coached Little League football, baseball, and soccer. He served in his church, teaching kids, leading the men’s group, and leading the marriage group with his wife. With

Firefighters for Christ, he helped train firefighters in other countries.

Russ was passionate about surfing. He sang loudly and didn’t mind if everyone could hear him. He danced and delighted in the freedom of being himself. He was known for his bear hugs. He shared his faith by telling everyone his story, especially at the gas station. He was full of life, love, and total joy. Bold, exciting, and hilariously goofy, he loved to make us laugh. He was generous, a great encourager and cheerleader, one of the bravest people I’ve known.

Deeply devoted to his family, he leaves behind his loving wife of 38 years, Jennifer; his amazing children, Seth and Hannah; and his beautiful grandchildren, Antonia, Elise, Jo’Art, and Romy. He was the best husband and father. We are better for knowing him, and we are forever changed.

Brian Falk

Kern County Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ July 14, 2022 ★ Age 47

Brian Falk dedicated his life to courageously battling blazes, protecting lives, and serving his community. His unwavering commitment and sacrifice in the line of duty will be forever remembered, leaving a lasting legacy of bravery and selflessness.

Brian leaves behind a wife, two sons, and a huge family that loved and supported him. We will forever miss his sense of humor and infectious laugh.



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Jacob R. Flores

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Firefighter II
January 14, 2022 ★ Age 45



Jake loved spending time with his wife and children. He was always teaching someone a skill of some sort. He was very generous with his time and talents.

Jake loved trains, flashlights, anything RC, and hunting.

Jake loved being a firefighter. It challenged him, excited him, and gave him an opportunity to make his family life a better one.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Joey Gandara

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ **Career Firefighter/Paramedic** ★ **November 3, 2023** ★ **Age 63**

Joe was a firefighter/paramedic who worked 35 years for Station 3, a great department in East Los Angeles. Joe represented all the good things we want for ourselves and the people he worked around. Joe's quality of patient care and his bedside manner were excellent! Joe loved being a paramedic. He never complained about calls, busy days, or being up all night. He worked on one of the busiest squads in the county and did it with a smile on his face.

Joe was the guy you wouldn't want to miss the opportunity to sit with at the kitchen table and have a cup of coffee with. He had such a great sense of humor. He loved to snowboard, cook, and spend time with family and friends. His burgers were the best!

Joe was named Paramedic of the Year at USC Keck Hospital in 2013.

One of the greatest calls was in 2013, when he responded to an elderly female who had fallen and had a hip injury. It was that call where he met Eliza, the daughter of the patient. Joe treated the patient as he did every other, but he did something he normally wouldn't do. The next day, Joe got off duty and returned to the patient's home. Oddly, he brought a potted plant with a card that read, "Coffee?" and gave it to Eliza. The rest is history. They later married, and she blessed Joe with some of the best years of his life.

Joe will be remembered as a great firefighter/paramedic. He was given the nickname "The Squad Father" by those he worked with closely, because of his experience, knowledge, and commitment to those he trained.

Joe left behind his family that loves him very much and will miss him tremendously. We all wanted more time with you, Joe. Everyone who knew you is hurting now, but we all feel very fortunate for all the great memories you left with us.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Daniel Joseph Geary

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Firefighter II
July 5, 2018 ★ Age 38



Daniel Joseph Geary was born in Upland, California, to Randell and Rose Geary on April 18, 1980. He was a loving son, brother, uncle, and friend. He was always positive and had a wonderful sense of humor. Dan looked for the good in every situation and was hardworking and compassionate to others in their time of need. Dan's parents noticed his compassionate and caring heart when he was only two years old. At age four, he showed a definite interest in firefighting due to the wonderful influence of his two uncles who worked as firefighters for North County Fire in Fallbrook, California.

Daniel started in the fire service at age 15 as a fire explorer in Ontario, California, and earned numerous certifications. At age 18, he became an EMT while going to Crafton Hills Fire Academy. He continued on to become a paramedic and also worked as a reserve firefighter in Fallbrook and Valley Center, California. Perseverance was one of Daniel's outstanding character qualities, and it was evident throughout his fire career. Daniel's last place of employment was with CAL FIRE San Diego, where he worked with Fire Captain/Paramedic Shavawn Johnson. She shares this:

He loved being a paramedic and would regularly pull out his thank you cards from various patients he had, thanking him for his wonderful service, empathy, and help. We would regularly go to an elderly patient that fell and was a lift assist, and Dan would ask if he could change their smoke detector batteries or help with anything in their house. He always went above and beyond the call of duty. He was compassionate and empathetic to his patients. I have no doubt Dan would be an amazing engineer/paramedic today and probably would have been working on preparing to promote to a fire captain in the near future. He is extremely missed. We are all so very grateful for his

teamwork and commitment on 911 incidents. We miss him dearly and are sharing stories regularly.

Daniel passed away from complications of brain cancer on July 5, 2018. He was a man of faith who devoted his life to sharing the love of Jesus. He had a big heart and inspired those around him. He served the citizens of California with honor and distinction for over 15 years, leaving a lasting impact on CAL FIRE and the communities he served. Outside of work, Daniel enjoyed cooking, eating healthy, motorcycle riding, music, surfing, and working out. He loved his firefighter family and friends and his family, Randy and Rose Geary (parents), Jennifer Mary (sister), Jaron (nephew), and numerous aunts, uncles, and cousins. When we think of Dan, we smile and rejoice in the memories we have shared.

Scott Kelley Gomes

**CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Fire Captain
November 17, 2022 ★ Age 53**

Scott Kelley Gomes, AKA “Chops,” was born and raised in Santa Maria, California. He was a beautiful baby with beautiful eyes and lashes. He attended local elementary schools, local junior high schools, and graduated from Santa Maria High School in 1987.

After graduation from SMHS, he went to Allan Hancock College, graduated from the fire academy, and found his calling in life. He took a job with the USFS and knew instantly that the fire service was in his blood. He was hired by CAL FIRE and found his fire home. Scott wore many different hats with CAL FIRE, including EMT, firefighter, engineer, fire captain and trainer. Being a trainer was his favorite position ever.

His legacy with the fire department was playing an instrumental role in the start of a program with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, also known as ARC, a program that gives opportunity to previously incarcerated individuals. Many of his students credit their lives now to what Captain Gomes showed them, taught them, and instilled in them. His quote to his students, sons, and young people that he coached and mentored was, “Never stop chasing your dreams, because one day you might cut them.” He never stopped giving of himself, still mentoring and guiding his students even after retirement.

Scott enjoyed the outdoors, fishing, hunting when he could, but his true love was baseball. He coached and was a huge fan at all levels. He and his wife, Esther Gomes, especially loved watching their four sons play. He loved life and never met a stranger. His joy was giving back to the community that he grew up in.

He is survived by his wife of 30 years, Esther; his first-born son and best friend, Cameron Kelley; his second-born son and best friend, Carson Scott; our adopted sons and his best friends, Samuel Lewis Calder and Zachary Aiden Silva; as well as many other family members, friends, and brothers and sisters of the fire department.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

William L. Knott

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ November 29, 2019 ★ Age 65



William L. Knott was born to the late William A. Knott and Elizabeth K. Knott in Fontana, California, on September 12, 1954. William grew up in Fontana and graduated from Fontana High School in the Class of 1972.

William's father passed away when he was six years old, and his mother was crying as she was trying to fix something and was unable to fix it. This had an incredible impact on William, and he made up his mind that he would learn how to build and fix anything in the world. This started his love for taking career technical classes such as woodworking and metal shop. In ninth grade he designed and made a wrought iron clock that won him first prize at the California Industrial Arts Fair in Sacramento. He was true to his word, as he never wanted to see his mother cry again.

He went on to Chaffey College, where he received his A.A. degree and started his career as a police officer for Covina Police Department. He served as a police officer for eight years, then decided to go back to school and received his degree in fire science. At that time, he became a firefighter. He proudly served the Los Angeles Fire Department for 35 years. He rose to the rank of captain as a dedicated servant of his community. William's very best friend was a firefighter who had a daughter named Dori. They met, got married, and had a wonderful life together. He loved getting the opportunity to marry into a large family. William excelled in every area of construction and helped many of his fellow firefighters with a variety of building and remodeling projects. Any project that William took on was done to perfection.

William lived with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma for 28 years. He never let his cancer get him down and was always very grateful to the City of Hope Cancer Center for opportunities for different trials and treatments to fight his cancer and the possibility to help someone else fighting the same battle. He succumbed to the effects of job-related cancer on November 29, 2019. His wife also passed away from cancer on December 25, 2023. William left behind his two stepdaughters, Tara and Hailey; his brother, James; and many friends that he loved as family.

William will always be remembered for living his life to the fullest and helping others live to their highest potential as well. As William would say, "It is what it is."

Samuel C. Neubauer

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ **Career Firefighter Specialist** ★ **March 2, 2020** ★ **Age 47**

Samuel Christian Neubauer died on March 2, 2020, following his battle with cancer. Sam was born on July 16, 1972, in Miami, Florida, and spent his childhood in Miami and Portland, Oregon. He attended Coral Gables Senior High and graduated from South Oldham High School in Crestwood, Kentucky, after his father moved there for work.

Upon graduation from high school, he joined the Marine Corps and went to Parris Island, South Carolina, for basic training. He was the honor graduate of his platoon at graduation from Boot Camp. Afterward, he spent time in Iraq as part of Desert Storm and in Somalia as part of Operation Restore Hope. He finished his service as a corporal at Camp Pendleton, California.

Sam moved to Gainesville in 1994 for college. In 1998, he moved to San Francisco, where he worked in information technology. He began studying to be an EMT, took up surfing, met his future wife, Michelle, decided he wanted a career in firefighting, and began working toward that end. In 2010, he graduated from the paramedic course at UCLA. He worked for several years in that high stress area of being a firefighter and later took the exam to become an engineer. He drove the big rigs with great pride, as his heart was in his profession and he loved everything to do with his job. The many stations where he worked in Los Angeles County over the years included Hawthorne, Lynwood, La Puente, Marina del Rey, and Calabasas.

In 2015, Sam's son, Jameson, was born, and Sam became a committed father to this beautiful child. Because Sam lost his own father to cancer, he dedicated himself to being the best he could be for his son. Sam was a waterman. He loved surfing, particularly at "The Point" in Malibu. He sailed his sailboat and paddled his race SUPs in the Pacific. He could be spotted riding his motorcycle or hiking through the canyons of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Sam's legacy was family, living life to the fullest, service for others, and brother/sisterhood. His laugh, smile, and love are remembered fondly and missed by his family, friends, and his firefighter brothers and sisters.



Manuel Ramos Jr.

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ September 8, 2019 ★ Age 62



Manuel “Manny” Ramos Jr. was born on April 30, 1957, in Pico Rivera, California, to Manuel and Rosie Ramos. He attended El Rancho High School and had a passion for running track. He set records that remain unbroken to this day. After high school, Manny attended Rio Hondo College, where he received an Associate of Science in fire science. In 1979, Manny joined the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

Manny dedicated 33 years to serving the county of Los Angeles. During his career, Manny served the communities of San Dimas and Roland Heights. He also served in various Los Angeles County fire camps. For his service, Manny was promoted to fire captain in 2000. He was dedicated to the firefighter brotherhood and was a proud member of the honor guard. He enjoyed cooking delicious meals for his fellow firefighters at his station and was a fantastic cook.

Manny developed a hobby for real estate and travel. He had a love for the aloha spirit of the Hawaiian island, Maui. He planned to retire with his wife, Deanna, to their home on Maui before his tragic passing on September 8, 2019, soon after being diagnosed with cancer.

Captain Ramos is survived by his wife, Deanna; son and daughter-in-law, Michael and Jennifer; sisters, Diane, Rose, Cindy, and Carolyn; and mother, Rosie; along with many beloved nieces and nephews.

He is deeply missed and will always be lovingly remembered by his family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Kenneth E. Renz

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Captain ★ April 29, 2023 ★ Age 58

Kenny was born on May 22, 1964, in Burbank, California. His family moved to Santa Clarita in the 60s, and that is where he was raised. As a young boy, Kenny was fascinated by the TV series Emergency that was based on the fictional Fire Station 51 of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. While Kenny attended high school, he joined the very first LA County Fire Explorer program at Station 107, a station he would later return to as an engineer. After high school, Kenny became a fire suppression aide at Camp 9. There he flourished and found his true passion in the fire service, fighting wildland fires. Ken was hired as a sworn firefighter in 1986, in the 71st Recruit Class.

During the early years of his career, Ken met his wife, Demi, at a car accident while working at Station 3 in East LA. They married in 1990 and have three children, Tanner, Kody, and Dalaney. Following in their dad's footsteps, both sons went on to become firefighters for LA County. Their daughter is a nurse.

Kenny worked at numerous stations throughout the years. He worked everywhere from Antelope Valley to East LA and out to Santa Clarita. He also spent nine years in the LA County Wildland Fire Camps. Many of those years were spent at Camp 14, as a crew foreman. There, he took inmates to brush fires all over the state of California. When he was promoted to captain, he would regularly work as Superintendent 40. In 2019, Kenny decided to end his career at Station 77 in Gorman.

Kenny was always an avid outdoorsman who enjoyed riding dirt bikes with his kids, wakeboarding, zooming through the dunes in his Razor with his wife, hunting, and fishing. He enjoyed wine tasting, cooking, and camping with his fire buddies. He was talented in so many ways. He could repair and build anything, a trait he was sure to pass down to his sons.

Upon retiring, his dream was to live in Idaho. In June of 2021, Ken and Demi bought a home in Star, Idaho. Kenny was at his happiest with his wife and dogs in his truck while towing a big fifth wheel behind them on their way to camp.

In November of 2021, Kenny was sadly diagnosed with glioblastoma. He passed away April 29, 2023.

Ken, Demi, and their kids were given such a great life because of his career. Despite all the things this cancer had stripped from Kenny and his family, it cannot strip away his greatest achievements—his 32-year marriage to the love of his life, his three incredible children, and his long dedication to the fire service that he loved so much. We will forever mourn him and carry memories of him in our hearts.



Timothy Rodriguez Jr.

CAL FIRE – California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection – California ★ Career Captain
August 6, 2023 ★ Age 44



Timothy David Rodriguez, a loving husband, father, and dedicated firefighter, passed away tragically in a helicopter accident while fighting a fire in Cabazon, California, on August 6, 2023.

Tim is survived by his loving wife of 20 years, Dorothy Rodriguez, and their three children, Joshua, Haley, and Alexis. He was a devoted family man, always putting his loved ones first. His love and dedication to his family were matched only by his commitment to his profession.

Tim's CAL FIRE career began in 2002 as a seasonal firefighter in the Riverside Unit, working most of his time at the Hemet Ryan Air Attack Base. In 2007, he was promoted to the rank of Permanent Firefighter II at Fire Station 79 in the city of Coachella. In 2010, he was transferred to Station 37 in Desert Hot Springs, which is routinely one of the busiest of CAL FIRE's hundreds of stations. In 2014, Tim was promoted to fire apparatus engineer, and was assigned to the Hemet Ryan Air Base. In 2015, Tim was assigned to Station 12 as a company officer on a Wildland Type III Engine. In 2017, Tim transferred to Fire Station 26 in the community of Hemet, where he first started as a volunteer. In 2019, Tim was promoted to the prestigious rank of fire captain and assigned to Fire Station 14 in the city of Norco. In 2021, Tim transferred back to Hemet Ryan Air Base as a heli-attack captain. Tim's true passion was in aviation. He was immensely knowledgeable, an excellent mentor to new firefighters, and had a work ethic second to none. Tim was a firefighter's firefighter, truly respected and admired by his firefighting family. Hemet Ryan Air Attack Base was Tim's last assignment before passing.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Tim was a man of many interests.

He was adventurous, a lover of the outdoors, and enjoyed snowboarding and mountain biking often with his wife, Dorothy, accompanying him. Tim was a man of courage, always ready to face any challenge head-on. He was a courageous firefighter, a loving father, a devoted husband, and a loyal friend. His adventurous spirit was infectious, inspiring those around him to take on new challenges and experience the world's beauty. He routinely would tell friends and colleagues, "Get off your phone and get outside!"

In remembering Timothy David Rodriguez, we celebrate a life lived with purpose, courage, and love. His memory will live on in the hearts of the many lives he touched, both personally and professionally. His loss is deeply felt, but his spirit will continue to shine brightly, guiding us on our journey through life.

Tony Sousa

Air Shasta Rotor & Wing, Inc. (contracted by CAL FIRE) – California ★ Contract Pilot ★ August 6, 2023 ★ Age 55

Tony Sousa was born November 11, 1967, to Ed Sousa and Sharon Lundahl in Chico, California, and grew up between Chico, Orland, and Capay. He attended Corning High School and Butte Community College. He married Rachelle Sousa, and they raised their two sons, Connor and Carson, in Red Bluff.

Tony wanted to be a pilot since he took an aerial course at Butte College. He decided to be a helicopter pilot after his first discovery flight with Air Shasta Rotor & Wing, Inc. He was not going to be an average helicopter pilot; he was going to be the A+ pilot. He achieved top scores on all his exams. He also became a flight instructor to help train future pilots. Tony was pivotal in implementing the CAL FIRE Helicopter Coordinator (HLCO) training program in 2022. He was the first night vision goggles HLCO pilot qualified by CAL FIRE. He trained and mentored a huge brotherhood of fellow aviators to provide the HLCO service to the state of California. He was proud and humbled to be part of the CAL FIRE brotherhood and working for Air Shasta Rotor & Wing, Inc. He made some great friends who miss him dearly.

Tony was dedicated to his different careers. He worked on a dairy for ten years, working seven days a week with two days off and attending college. He started his own business, with his dad's help, and became a custom harvester. They worked side by side for 30 years. Tony also worked for a company that fabricated and sold go-karts, and he raced the karts he built. He was always experimenting to make the karts better and faster and won multiple Outlaw Kart Open Championships over his career. He loved mentoring young drivers, including his sons. Tony was passionate and determined to be successful at whatever he set his mind to.

Tony was a loving husband for 28 years and a proud father to his sons. He went on hikes, dinners, and weekend trips wherever his wife wanted to go. He shared his passions with his sons—racing, mountain biking, snow skiing, water skiing, and completing a triathlon. He cheered his sons on in their sporting events, teaching them work ethics, how to operate and repair farm equipment and vehicles. He loved hanging out with his sons. Wrestling with the boys was a favorite pastime until one day they were able to pin him down. They would dare each other to do crazy things and have a great belly laugh telling the stories years later.

Tony's last time home, he was talking about his job as a pilot, and he told his wife, "I love what I do." Words cannot express the hero that we lost. His loss will be felt for life.



Mark A. Tolbert

Los Angeles County Fire Department – California ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ May 19, 2019 ★ Age 60



Battalion Chief Mark A. Tolbert died from cancer determined by the state of California to be in the line of duty.

Chief Tolbert was a highly respected member of the Los Angeles County Fire Department. He served the citizens of Los Angeles County with passion and distinction for more than 30 years. He is greatly missed.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Andy Valenta

Vista Fire Department – California ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ April 25, 2021 ★ Age 33

Andy Valenta grew up in Southern California and knew early on that the fire service was his calling in life. After being top in his class in paramedic school and the fire academy, he was hired with the Vista Fire Department in San Diego County in 2012. Andy remained with Vista until the end of his career, 11 years later. Andy worked as a firefighter-paramedic and had an active role in the union. While there, he was awarded Firefighter of the Year in 2013. Andy was known for his big personality and even bigger heart. He honored the brotherhood and made each shift entertaining for everyone he worked with. His very first call on the job involved saving a baby's life.

One of the most talked about "Andy stories" at work involved him being challenged to eat an entire gallon of jalapeños in one sitting, including the juice. He did it, but the rest of that shift did not go so well for him!

In 2021, Andy was diagnosed with Stage 4 melanoma and died three months later, at the age of 33. He is survived by his wife, Caylie, and two young daughters, Lily (age 6) and Grace (age 4).

Andy is heavily missed by many, many family members, friends, and fellow firefighters.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Anthony A. DeSimone

North Haven Fire Department – Connecticut ★ Career Lieutenant ★ August 24, 2023 ★ Age 50



Anthony A. DeSimone was a 23-year veteran of the North Haven Fire Department. He suffered a fatal medical emergency after completing a shift. Anthony first served as a volunteer firefighter with the Northeast Volunteer Fire Company #4 and later became a career firefighter with North Haven Fire Department. He was a member of both Local 2987 and the Northeast Volunteer Fire Association. He had previously served as the family liaison for another North Haven firefighter who died in the line of duty.

He was born in New Haven, the son of the late Charles P. Simone Sr. and Marge DeLizio DeSimone, and graduated from North Haven High School in 1991. He was remembered as a pillar of the community, selfless and responsible, always willing to step up and help. He volunteered with local civic organizations including the Knights of Columbus Council 3733 and North Haven Little League.

He was the beloved husband of 20 years to Pamela DeSimone, father of Dominic and Victoria DeSimone, and brother to the late Charles P. DeSimone Jr. He was also survived by extended family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jeremy Charles Lundgren

Dover Air Force Base Fire and Emergency Services – Delaware ★ Career Fire Inspector/Captain
March 31, 2023 ★ Age 32

Jeremy Lundgren was born July 24, 1990, in Lowell, Massachusetts. He attended Tyngsboro schools, where he played football and enjoyed many other sports.

Later in life, he enjoyed golf with buddies from Dover Fire Station. His favorite golf buddy was his son, Mason.

Jeremy joined the Air Force at age 18 and went on to become a master sergeant. Jeremy continued his service as a firefighter at Dover Air Force Base, where he became a captain. He received many awards while in the Air Force, and he loved every moment of being a firefighter.

Jeremy's smile would light up any room he walked into. He was a father, brother, and a friend to many.

Jeremy is missed so much by his daughter, Kinleigh Christine (10), and son, Mason Lundgren (7). Jeremy's sister, Amanda, will always keep Jeremy's memory alive in his children with stories from their childhood.

As Jeremy's mom, I miss our friendship and phone calls from him every day. He was an amazing son to me.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

John Michael Pridemore

Clayton Fire Company No. 1, Inc. – Delaware ★ Volunteer Chief ★ March 8, 2022 ★ Age 54



John Michael Pridemore was born on February 12, 1968, in Springfield, Illinois, and was an avid Chicago Cubs and Bears fan. John moved around during his life and lived in Oregon, Massachusetts, and finally decided to call Delaware home in 1989. In early 1990, John and his wife, Kim, moved to the town of Clayton, where he immediately became involved in serving the local community.

On January 8, 1991, John joined the Clayton Fire Company No. 1, where he climbed through the ranks of the company. During his 31 years of service, John proudly and honorably served in many roles which include firefighter, lieutenant, captain, deputy chief, and was ultimately elected chief of the fire line in 2021. He was chief when he passed away on March 8, 2022. Additionally, John was the company's secretary, vice president, and president. He also served as president of the Kent County Firefighters Association in 2012. John was always eager to step up to help the fire company and local community. As a leader, he led from the front and never asked someone to do something he wouldn't do himself.

John also served his country as a military police officer in the United States Army Reserve from 1986-1998. During his outstanding service to our nation, John earned the Army Service Ribbon, Army Reserve Overseas Training Ribbon, Army NCO Professional Development Ribbon, National Defense Service Medal, Army Reserve Component Achievement Medal, and the California National Guard Commendation Medal for Meritorious Service.

John was a devoted family man, leaving behind his wife of nearly 30 years, Kim Pridemore; children, Amanda Lawrence and Michael Pridemore; and granddaughter, Sadie Lawrence. They were his whole world. He also loved his dog, Lily.

John had great friends who had become family. Together they enjoyed going to football games, getting to together for dinner, and orange crushes at the beach. He also enjoyed boating and crabbing with the family. He loved cars and had recently purchased a red 1967 Camaro convertible that he was very proud of. He was very loving, kind, and selfless. He could also be extremely stubborn and single-minded. He had a great smile and loved to laugh. In January 2022, John was hired at his dream job and was excited to go to work every day. He was very happy and proud of his life.

John departed this earth doing what he loved, serving his community. This has been a great comfort to his family and friends that miss him dearly.

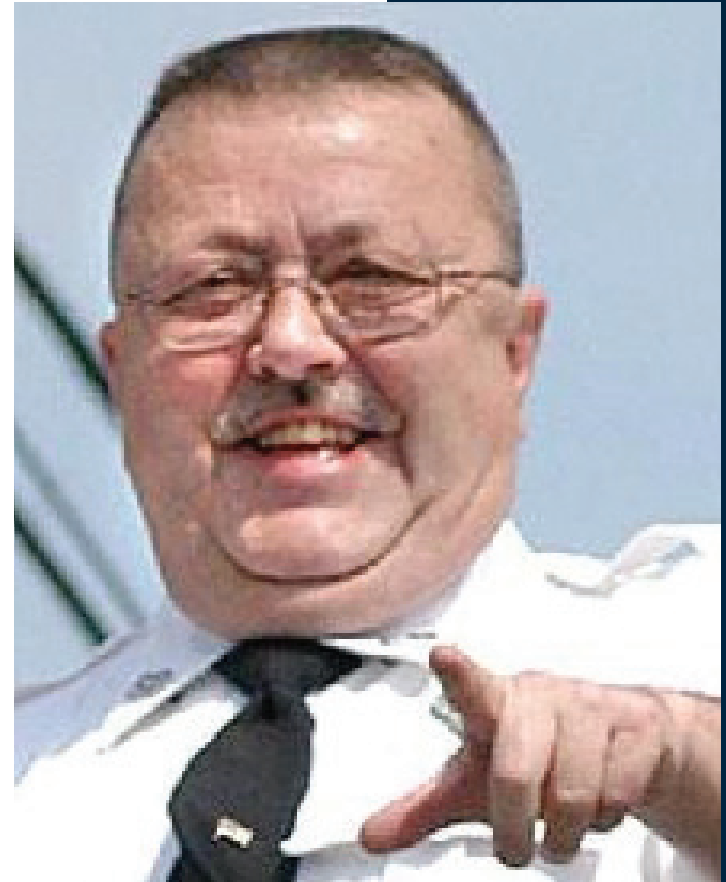
Philip S. Young

**Dover Fire Department, Robbins Hose Company No. 1 – Delaware
Volunteer Firefighter ★ August 22, 2005 ★ Age 59**

Firefighter Young proudly served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps from July 1966 until his discharge as a sergeant in September of 1969. As a mortar man in the Vietnam campaign, he earned the National Defense Service, Presidential Unit Citation, Combat Action Ribbons, Vietnamese Service Medal with three Stars, Vietnamese Campaign Medal, and Good Conduct Medal.

After his discharge from military duty, he resided in the Wilmington, Delaware, area and was an active member in the Elsmere Fire Company, joining the organization in 1970. He served as rescue captain in 1973, engine captain from 1974-1975, ambulance captain in 1980, and became a life member in 1990. He also served as a training administrator for the state of Delaware at the Delaware State Fire School from September 1974 until his retirement in August 2002.

In 1985, he moved to Dover, where he joined the Robbin's Hose Fire Company in 2002 and served as an active member. He served on the board of directors and the camera committee. When not driving fire trucks, he was always there to capture the activities of the department and its members through his love of photography. He was a mentor for young members and a brother to all. He was one of the first nationally registered emergency medical technicians in the state and served on the State Critical Incident Team.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Allen L. Roush

**U.S. Air Force Fire and Emergency Services – District of Columbia ★ Career Senior Master Sergeant/
Senior Fire Emergency Services Analyst ★ July 16, 2022 ★ Age 66**



Allen Lynn Roush was born January 13, 1956, in Warner Robins, Georgia. He grew up in Savannah, where he graduated high school and started his career with the Air National Guard. After serving a total of 40 years, 32 years in guard and active duty and another eight years at the Pentagon, Allen retired in 2014 as the Senior Fire Emergency Services Analyst, Headquarters U.S. Air Force, Washington, D.C. He provided support and was responsible for the Joint Base Operations, DoDi program development, Air Force Fire Emergency Services Guidance, White House support, and All Hazards Training. His complete military career was spent in Fire and Emergency Services, having held every position within the fire protection flight to include 10 years as fire chief.

He had numerous deployments, including supporting the Space Shuttle program, Trident Submarine operations, Operation Desert Shield/Storm, and incident command for over ten major aircraft emergency response operations. He also provided support to President Jimmy Carter during flood relief humanitarian operations in Georgia, provided support to President Bill Clinton during the 50th anniversary wreath laying at Normandy Beach, provided support to both President Bush's visits to the west coast, and worked in the emergency operations center as one of only two Air Force members supporting President Obama's inauguration. Allen had many achievements in his career, winning major military and civilian awards and obtaining many certifications and degrees.

Allen was a great patriot and an inspiration to so many. He put his whole heart into everything he did. Allen never met a stranger and could talk to anyone about anything. Allen loved to cook. It took him a long time to adjust to not cooking for the entire firehouse, which he did earlier in his career. Allen loved to travel. This was

one of the reasons he joined the military. He was always the first to volunteer. These deployments took him all over the world, giving him tons of experiences and stories to share.

Allen loved to make people laugh. He could always find a way to bring humor into any situation. Allen was a lot of fun to be around. He was always putting the needs of others before his own. Allen also loved drag racing, hiking in the mountains, and spending time with his granddaughters. Allen made it a point every day to celebrate life, because he knew how precious it was. After battling his second round of cancer, Allen passed away on July 16, 2022. Allen lived life to the fullest and is dearly missed by so many family and friends. He will forever live in our hearts.

Douglas Clemons

Polk County Fire Rescue – Florida ★ Career Engineer/Paramedic ★ June 14, 2022 ★ Age 56

Douglas Arthur “Doug” Clemons was born to his parents, Charles A. and Suzann M. Clemons, on January 17, 1966, in Akron, Ohio. From a very early age, while watching the TV show “Emergency,” he decided that he wanted to pursue a career as a paramedic/firefighter.

During his life, Doug attended the Akron Baptist Temple, where he formed a love of God, and that faith continued throughout his life. During high school, Doug played football and ran track. While running a 4x4 relay, his team broke the school record, and it has not been broken yet. After graduating from Ellet High School in 1984, he was offered a job in Winter Haven, Florida, at a funeral home.

While working at the funeral home, he started to pursue his lifelong dream of becoming a paramedic. It wasn’t long until he passed his classes and tests and started his dream career as a paramedic. While working as a paramedic, Doug also qualified as an engineer.

Doug leaves to cherish his memory his parents; his fiancée, Krissy; two daughters, Erin and Cindi; two grandchildren, Emily and Eli; brother, Randy; sister, Janelle; and many family members and friends.

As his family, we take comfort in knowing that he passed away doing what he always dreamed of, and he is with his heavenly father and family members who have passed away before him.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Austin M. Duran

Apopka Fire Department – Florida ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ July 15, 2022 ★ Age 25



Austin was instantly liked by anyone who met him. People were drawn to his gentle demeanor, fun personality, and easygoing manner. In Austin's school career he played AAU baseball and football and received an award for Most Improved Player for both sports. Growing up, Austin and his sister, Sierra, shared a special bond and were not only siblings but best friends. His love for Mustangs was eventually surpassed by his love for trucks and his Ford F-150. As an adult he enjoyed playing Xbox, spending time with friends and family, kayaking at the springs, and going to theme parks. Austin valued family and was always close to home to drop in for dinner, to visit after shift, or to help his mom. He loved all of the holiday traditions and playing games around the dining room table.

Austin found his calling at an early age, joining the Explorers in high school. After high school, he completed both Standards and EMT and joined the Apopka Fire Department at the height of COVID in July 2020. He continued his service and education, taking 700+ hours of training over the next year and a half. He was so excited when he passed the class to be a relief driver for the engine. He regarded the people he worked with not as coworkers but as brothers and sisters, and the AFD soon became his second family. Austin was tragically injured while on duty on June 30, 2022, and succumbed to his injuries two weeks later on July 15, 2022, at the age of 25.

His passing brought to light several issues within the department. Found posthumously, Austin wrote a letter where, in his words, he envisioned a fire department culture dedicated to enhanced training and mentorship. His aspiration was to nurture an environment where seeking help is embraced,

fostering a collective drive toward comprehensive improvement. This generated many changes in the Apopka Fire Department and is the basis of The 2650 Foundation. Named after his ID number at the AFD, the foundation was created to extend and offer training, education, and mentorship to other firefighters.

Austin has left an undeniable impact that will live on in all our hearts and souls. Austin's parents, Mike and Gail, and his sister, Sierra, are here today. Rest easy, Austin. We will take it from here.

James Stuart Hunt

City of Melbourne Fire Department – Florida ★ Career Lieutenant/EMT ★ March 29, 2022 ★ Age 65

James Stuart Hunt, age 65, of Palm Bay, Florida, passed away peacefully at William Child’s Hospice House on March 29, 2022, after a courageous journey with cancer.

Stuart was born in Wilmington, Delaware, on December 23, 1956, to James and Margaret Jane (Marge) Hunt. Stuart is survived by his father, James C. Hunt; wife, Nancy S. White Hunt; stepson, Bradley F. White; sisters, Susan Hunt Browning and Lori Hunt (Jay Spallina); stepfather, Herb Jarvis; and so many wonderful aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and cousins. Stuart was predeceased in death by his mother, Margaret Jane (Marge) Jarvis.

After graduating from Satellite High School in 1975, Stuart volunteered to proudly serve his country. He successfully completed the Army’s premier leadership school, receiving his RANGER TAB while assigned to Co A 1st Bn 75th Infantry Ranger/ Airborne. He was honorably discharged in 1979.

After attending University of Florida and Sante Fe College, Stuart joined the fire service in 1985 and rose to the rank of lieutenant with the City of Melbourne. After 30 years of dedication to saving lives and property, Stuart retired in 2016.

Stuart was a member of the Port Malabar Gun Range and the NRA. He spent so much of his free time with friends on the “property” at the gun range, many days of diving in our local ocean on the Weedline and in the Keys, surf fishing and watching the Gators every chance he could. GO GATORS!

Stuart loved his Groove Monsters and live music. He was definitely a Deadhead Grateful Dead fan!!

All my thanks to Stuie’s buddies, so loyal, always there for him—Carlo (my wingman and MVP), Hym, Tallman, ETM, Nelsonic, Walter, Plateau, Sidney, and Shane, just to name a few. Stuart had so many friends in his life and shared so much with them every chance he could!

From the heart of Stuart:

The purpose of life is to matter, to be productive, to have it make a difference that you lived at all—using the talents that God has given you for the betterment of others. – Leo Rosten.



Terryson Jackson

Broward Sheriff's Office Department of Fire/Rescue – Florida ★ Career Battalion Chief
August 28, 2023 ★ Age 50



Terryson Jackson was born on August 2, 1973, to Oliver Jackson and Dorothy Jno Finn, in The Commonwealth of Dominica. His formative years were filled with love and laughter, surrounded by friends and family. Terryson relocated from Dominica to Florida in 1989 and quickly adapted to life in the U.S. After a short while, a love for helping people grew in him. He graduated from McArthur High School in 1991, and while trying to figure out what to do with his life, the dream of becoming a firefighter was born. One year later, he stumbled upon another passion... golf. Despite many setbacks, he relentlessly pursued his dreams of becoming a paramedic firefighter, and along the way he developed a formidable golf game.

In March 2004, he achieved his dream of becoming a paramedic firefighter and started his career in the city of Deerfield Beach, Florida. Terryson was a natural! He loved his career and was often vocal about it. "We are blessed," and "I love my job," were heard quite regularly. It was not long before Terryson moved up the ranks. He became a lieutenant in November 2011, and joined the BSO Air Rescue team in 2012. Terryson excelled in his career path and became a BSO captain on February 24, 2016. He served on Air Rescue as a captain and program coordinator. He garnered the love and support of many of the rank and file, numerous lifesaving awards, and was an integral part of building up the Air Rescue program. Terryson set his sights on becoming a chief and went at it with reckless abandon. His work ethic unmatched, he was successful in making the battalion chief list in November 2021. Of all the many accolades and awards, none was more deserving. Terryson Jackson was posthumously promoted to the rank of battalion chief on August 29, 2023.

Terryson's love of sports led him to compete in the Sheriff's Cup Golf Tournament numerous times. He also participated in several of the Firefighter Game competitions, playing soccer and basketball. He was an integral part of the team as they won countless games and awards for the agency. He had a smile that could light up a room and a personality that was larger than life! Terryson Jackson was a father, a brother, a son, a lover, and a FRIEND. He was one of the best of us and one of the best to ever do it. He will be sorely missed!

Terryson is survived by his mother, Dorothy Finn; father, Pastor Oliver Jackson; children, Jalen Jackson and Mikaella Jackson; sisters, Sherma Jackson, Heather Lestrade, Sanjie Jackson, and Versan Johnson; and brothers, Sergeant Cleavone Brooks and Javer Jackson.

Robert George Low Jr.

Greater Naples Fire Rescue District – Florida ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ May 19, 2023 ★ Age 56

Robert George Low Jr., aged 56, peacefully passed away on May 19, 2023, with his loving family by his side. He was born on New Year's Day in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Rob is survived by his wife, Jill; his father, Bob Low Sr. of Hayesville, North Carolina; his mother, Betty Leduc (Tayo) of Hiawassee, Georgia; son, Zach Low; daughter, Kaylynn Low; sister, KrisAnn (Carole) of Hayesville, North Carolina; half-sisters, Laura, Michelle, and Carol; half-brother, Justin; and his favorite black cat, Callisto.

Rob was a lifelong learner. He received his associate degree in business management at Gwinnett Technical College, and an associate degree in fire science technology and Associate of Arts in general studies at St. Pete College. He further pursued his education and obtained a bachelor's degree in public safety administration at St. Pete College and an MBA in human resources management at Louisiana State University. He graduated *magna cum laude* for each of his degrees.

Rob dedicated his life to firefighting, starting as a volunteer at the Madeira Beach Fire Department at age 18 and later Cocoa Beach Fire Department. He was eventually hired at St. Petersburg Fire Department, where he was named both Firefighter of the Year and EMT of the Year. During his distinguished fire service career, he ventured beyond state boundaries, serving in Georgia and later Alabama. He excelled as a fire instructor, steadily ascending the ranks to battalion and deputy fire chief. He also worked as Course Manager for First Responder Training for FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP).

He was a certified National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer and held numerous additional licenses and certifications. His dedication to his field led him to become a respected member of several organizations, including the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the International Society of Fire Service Instructors, and the Society of Human Resource Management. He was most recently employed by AFC Development Inc. as deputy project manager and served as fire chief of Plainview Volunteer Fire Department in Alabama.

Regardless of the challenges life presented, his commitment to his profession and community remained steadfast and resolute. Rob will be remembered not only for his professional achievements but also for his personality. He was a builder, a thinker, a tinkerer, a fisherman, a cat lover, a jokester, and above all a loving human being. He could fix anything and everything he touched.



Jeremy J. McKay

Clay County Fire Rescue – Florida ★ Career Engineer/Paramedic ★ November 27, 2019 ★ Age 45



Jeremy J. McKay was born on June 10, 1974, in St Paul, Minnesota, to the late Michael and Carol McKay. Jeremy moved to Florida as a baby and completed his primary schooling in Clay County.

He enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps in 1995. Later that year, while home on leave from his station in California, he met his wife, Tanya. After a couple years of a long-distance engagement, they exchanged vows in their hometown.

After leaving the Marine Corps, Jeremy decided to continue his service to the public. After several years as a technician at the Clay County School Board, he completed schooling to become an important member of the Clay County Fire Rescue Department. Jeremy was with CCFR for 14 years before his last alarm on November 27, 2019, after a brave 14-month battle with cancer. Jeremy was an engineer and paramedic.

Most importantly, he was a devoted husband and father. Jeremy and Tanya were blessed with three beautiful children who have all inherited his quick wit, amazing sense of humor, and impeccable use of sarcasm. During Jeremy's battle with cancer, he decided to use his story to help effect changes in the laws for future Florida firefighters. He was a vital member of a dedicated team who were able to get 21 cancers approved to be recognized as being associated with the noble profession.

Within a few months of the Florida governor signing a law recognizing the risks to firefighters, Jeremy was called home.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Richard Brian Wolnewitz

Palm Beach Gardens Fire Rescue – Florida ★ Career Captain ★ August 16, 2022 ★ Age 44

Captain Richard “Brian” Wolnewitz, 44, passed away on August 16, 2022, following a courageous two-and-a-half-year battle with lung cancer.

Brian was born on February 16, 1978, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Shortly after, his family relocated back to Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. Brian was recruited from Suncoast High School to play football at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Brian realized his true passion for helping others and pursued a career as a firefighter and paramedic. Brian graduated from Florida State Fire College in March 2001 and immediately began his career at Palm Beach Gardens Fire Rescue. Brian served his community for over 20 years, working tirelessly to achieve the ranks of fire medic, lieutenant, and captain.

Despite meeting in elementary school, Brian and Julie married in 2013, raising a beautiful family that includes his daughter Emma, their twins Presley and Cooper, and their youngest, Harper. Brian was frequently found working in the yard and his garage and proudly grilling his favorite meats. He followed in his father’s footsteps and was a dedicated, diehard Alabama Football fan.

When diagnosed with stage IV lung cancer on January 2, 2020, being the selfless man that he was, Brian made his top priorities clear. First was to get better and beat cancer. Second was to raise awareness about the countless risks firefighters face daily while in the line of duty, including the inherent risks associated with inhalation and absorption of toxins. Third was to raise funds so that other firefighters in his situation would have the resources available to fight their battles. Brian’s efforts have helped raise thousands of dollars for Firefighters to the Rescue, an organization that helps families of public servants during times of need.

Following his diagnosis, Brian participated in and contributed to several cancer research trials at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida, MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas, and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center in Seattle, Washington. Brian hoped that one day, his participation in these trials would help change the lives of others with the development of lifesaving treatments.

Brian will forever be remembered as an exceptional leader within the fire service, training countless others in their careers as firefighters and paramedics. Brian’s softspoken and gentle tone commanded an audience, and everyone who knew Brian will agree that he was smart as a whip, loyal, kind, selfless, courageous, and truly one of a kind. Roll Tide, Roll Captain Wolnewitz; we’ll see you on the top floor.



Shaun Luke Daniel

Georgia Forestry Commission – Georgia ★ Career Firefighter ★ June 5, 2023 ★ Age 26



Shaun “Luke” Daniel was born in Dublin, Georgia, on July 29, 1996. He grew up in Cochran, Georgia, and graduated from Bleckley County High School in 2015. Luke loved participating in the school band. He was the drummer for a band called The Brad Sanders Approach. He loved playing Dungeons & Dragons with his friends. Luke attended Oconee Fall Line Technical College and graduated in 2016 with an Emergency Medical Technician certificate. He always had a passion for helping people and serving his community.

In 2016, Luke met his future wife, Megan. They started working together and traveling the country with a merchandising company doing large scale remodels/store openings. Traveling was something Luke and Megan both loved. They spent time in so many amazing cities. They kept the Passport to National Parks book filled with stickers and stamps from all the places they visited together. Luke married the love of his life on October 15, 2020, in Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Luke’s dream was to be a first responder. He applied for a job with the Georgia Forestry Commission several times. He even flew home from a job in Texas just to do an interview and fly back. It took him about four years to finally get hired in April 2023. He was so happy living his dream. Luke would come home every night talking about how much he loved being a wildland firefighter and how excited he was for the future. He wanted to volunteer to fight wildfires out west and save as many lives as he could. Luke passed away on June 5, 2023 while on a call. His dream was to retire as a firefighter, and his career sadly ended too soon.

Luke was a ginger with a huge personality. Most people thought he looked intimidating, but he was really a big teddy bear. His laugh filled up the entire room. Family was always #1. His hobbies included going to the gym, kayaking, racquetball, video games, music, and traveling. Luke was a huge Georgia Bulldogs fan (GO DAWGS!). His favorite player was Nick Chubb, which led him to be a Cleveland Browns fan as well.

I am the luckiest girl in the world to have married such an amazing man! He was one in a million. I will forever be grateful for him. Luke taught me so much about life. He was truly my best friend. I am extremely proud of everything he accomplished. Ever since we met, Luke would say “Always with Me” at the end of phone calls, text messages, or written in cards on special occasions. Now he is my guardian angel and will be “Always with Me” forever.

Stephen Paul Richards

Georgia Forestry Commission – Georgia ★ Career Firefighter/Ranger ★ October 17, 2021 ★ Age 39

Stephen Paul Richards, cherished as a beloved husband, son, father, uncle, and brother, made an indelible impact on the lives of those fortunate enough to be a part of his journey. Hailing from South Florida, specifically Homestead, Stephen's life unfolded from the radiant shores of his birthplace to the picturesque landscapes of Ellijay, Georgia.

Raised in South Florida, Stephen attended school in Miami-Dade County until his sophomore year in high school. In 1998, he underwent a transformative move to Ellijay, where he completed high school, leaving an enduring legacy in the wrestling team and his church's youth group.

Prior to high school graduation, Stephen enlisted in the U.S. Army, undergoing basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. Serving proudly with the Army Reserves in the Army Corps of Engineers, he traveled to Germany, Guatemala, and was deployed to Kuwait from 2005 to 2006, achieving the rank of sergeant (E5).

Post-Kuwait, Stephen delved into entrepreneurship alongside his father, Douglas Richards. Together, they co-founded Conasauga Timberframe, showcasing their dedication to the art of timber framing. Their craftsmanship gained recognition in Timber Homes Living, reflecting their skill and passion.

Embarking on a new chapter, Stephen devoted a decade to the Georgia Forestry Commission. As ranger 3, he played a pivotal role in fire prevention and control, serving as the electrician for his area. From issuing burn permits to educating the public on wildfire dangers, Stephen's commitment extended to creating fire breaks with his bulldozer and hand lines. Notably, he also embraced the role of Smokey Bear, embodying the importance of fire safety.

Beyond professional achievements, Stephen's warmth, dedication, and sense of service continue to inspire. Whether in military service, entrepreneurship, or safeguarding against wildfires, Stephen's impact is woven into the communities he touched. In celebrating the life of Stephen Paul Richards, we honor a resilient individual who made a positive difference through a life well lived.



Matthew Brian Smith

Bartow County Fire and Emergency Services – Georgia ★ Career Firefighter ★ March 21, 2023 ★ Age 41



Matthew Brian Smith was born on December 31, 1981, in Austell, Georgia. He grew up in Dallas, Georgia (Paulding County), with his parents and three siblings.

Matthew had such a great love for his family, especially his son, Noah. Of all his accomplishments in his life, Noah was his greatest. He and Noah shared a bond like no other. He was the best dad and, if you know Noah, you know Matthew did a great job raising him. They shared a love of the water, fishing and riding their jet skis.

Everyone that came to know Matthew knew he had a serving heart and love for others. Matthew's heart was so big, in fact, he had room for another child who needed a father figure. Matthew was always the type of guy who had to fix everything and everyone. He was always willing to lend a hand and did for so many people. He would give the shirt off his own back if he knew someone needed it. Anyone who was blessed enough to know Matt would tell you at some point he was fixing something or helping them do something in their lives. Everyone who came in contact with him would say he always went the extra mile; he didn't stop unless he knew they were taken care of. There was nothing he couldn't fix and nobody that could love you more.

Matt was a successful business owner who always dreamed of becoming a firefighter. He chased his dreams with the same tenacity that he lived his life. Those dreams came true, and through hard work and perseverance he earned his place in the Bartow County Fire Department. He found family there who loved him just as much as his family at home.

Matthew's life was cut short. He was striving to succeed within the fire department and wanted to become a paramedic. He had dreams and goals he was working hard to meet. He had plans for himself and for his son. Although we know without hesitation that he is in the arms of the Lord, he is deeply missed. Matthew left a huge hole in the lives of so many.

Matthew left behind his son, Noah, and his Godson, John. He is also survived by his parents, Terry and Virginia Smith; brothers, Terry and Travis; sister, Ginger; a host of nieces and nephews and cousins; and his treasured miniature yorkies, Zoey and Misty.

Matt is not just our angel but forever our hero.

Ryan Leonidas Taylor

City of Decatur Fire Department – Georgia ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 10, 2016 ★ Age 40

Ryan Leonidas Taylor, age 40, went to be with our heavenly father on January 10, 2016.

Ryan, a dedicated firefighter with 15 years of experience, began his noble journey as a volunteer firefighter in Morgan County, Georgia. Driven by passion for serving the community, he transitioned to a career firefighter role with the city of Decatur. Known for his infectious positivity and unwavering dedication, Ryan quickly became a loved figure among his colleagues and the community alike.

Throughout his career, he rose through the ranks, earning promotions to fire apparatus operator (FAO) and later to the esteemed position of fire inspector. His commitment to ensuring public safety and his love for his job have left an indelible mark on all who have had the privilege of working with him.

Ryan was an entrepreneur and found other ways to serve his community. Owning his own contracting business, Ryan was committed to quality and safety standards and took the time to ensure all his work was done to the highest standards. Later, following a lifelong dream with his best friend, he opened a landscape supply company where he could further provide his expert advice in a family atmosphere.

Ryan was a devoted member of the First United Methodist Church in Madison, Georgia. Ryan's faith was very important to him, and he made it a priority to lead by example with family togetherness and tradition.

Ryan lived each day to the fullest. When not at the fire station or a jobsite, Ryan could be found coaching his children's ball teams, camping, at the beach, or on an adventure out west. All these hobbies involved family. Family was very important to Ryan, and he loved, nurtured, and protected his family fiercely. Never missing an opportunity to just hang out or celebrate an occasion. Ryan's life was filled with joy, and he made it his duty to pass that joy on and make sure everyone in his life was happy and content. He was also known as "Bub" and "The Golden Boy" to his family.

We miss your contagious laughter and unconditional love.



Collin Veasley

Clayton County Fire & Emergency Services – Georgia ★ Career Lieutenant ★ March 5, 2022 ★ Age 48



Lt. Collin Christopher Veasley was born April 9, 1973. He is survived by his wife and accomplice of 19 years, René Barker Schoolar; children, Lauren-Ashley Patterson (Adam Patterson), Bentley Phillips (Amanda Phillips), Grant Schoolar, and Harrison Schoolar; and fur babies, Lincoln, Eisla, and Otto.

Collin started as a volunteer firefighter with the City of McDonough in 1991. He joined the Clayton County Fire Department in 1996 and dedicated the last 25 years to serving the deranged and delinquent. His list of certifications and awards is long but distinguished, including multiple trauma lifesaving and medical lifesaving awards, a unit citation award, and a distinguished service award.

His dedication to health and public safety exceeded the fire department, as he also worked as a paramedic for Atlanta South EMS, Grady EMS, Rescue Air 1, Atlanta Medical Center, Southern Regional, Coweta, and Clayton County Detention Centers, and the track safety and infield care at Atlanta Motor Speedway.

Collin was a member of Clayton County's Tactical Medic Program. He became a POST instructor and was instrumental in developing a weeklong officer down program that was adopted by Clayton County Police Department. He was also a part of the U.S. Marshals Southeastern Fugitive Task Force located in Atlanta, Georgia, going on all warrants as medical oversight for the team. Collin was one of only five medics who served in this capacity nationwide.

While many who knew him through the fire department referred to him as "L.T." for his rank, others knew him as Captain, a title he earned when he traded in his Harley-Davidson for sailing lessons. It is rumored he had an escape plan to outrun his woman and woes but realized a motorcycle would only take him so far away. A boat was required.

His time with us was too brief, but he lived and loved enough for two lifetimes and went through as many kidneys in the process. His first kidney was given by Clayton County Battalion Chief Dennis Worsham in 1999, and he rode it 'til the wheels fell off. His longtime friend and colleague Flo Sheain gave Collin his second kidney in 2020, giving him two more years of adventure with his beloved, largely dysfunctional "family."

He will be remembered for his infectious laugh, unmatched culinary skills, love of four-letter words, and mischievous mind.

Collin passed where he lived, peacefully abreast his wife and surrounded by those most responsible for his receding hairline, gray beard, and diminished patience, on March 5, 2022.

Tre' Evans-Dumaran

County of Maui Department of Fire and Public Safety – Hawaii ★ Career Firefighter ★ February 4, 2023 ★ Age 24

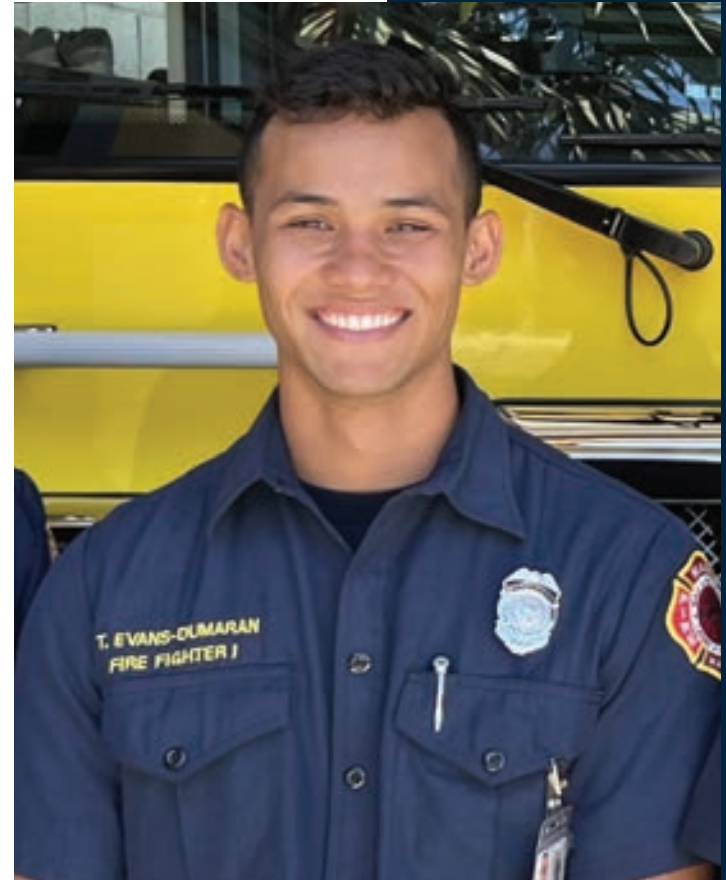
Born on April 1, 1998, in Hawaii, Tre' Evans-Dumaran lived his 24 years on this earth with tenacity, genuine kindness, and the desire to make his community better every day.

Known as a scholar-athlete, Tre' loved to learn in every aspect of his life. He challenged himself and received a gold medal in the state 110 hurdles. Tre's dream was to become a pilot one day, and he worked toward that goal by finding jobs near aircraft to earn money for flight school. He used his skills fixing helicopters and applied them to fix his own car as well as others' vehicles.

His desire to give back to his community led him to become a firefighter for the Maui Fire Department on August 1, 2019. After graduating with Recruit Class 35, he was assigned to Kaunakakai Fire Station on Molokai before transferring to his final assignment at the Kihei Fire Station on Maui.

His final alarm was in response to a call for help to remove debris and create a safer water flow for the residents of Kihei, Maui. Tre' was swept into a storm drain, where he was pushed for approximately 800 yards. His crew and fellow first responders found him in the ocean and worked hard to resuscitate him. He spent eight days in Maui Memorial Medical Center surrounded by family, friends, and his firefighter brothers and sisters before ultimately succumbing to his injuries.

Tre's infectious smile and positive outlook on life has and will forever leave a lasting impression in the lives of those he has touched.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

William “Bill” Wright

Timberlake Fire Protection District – Idaho ★ Volunteer Division Chief ★ December 24, 2021 ★ Age 79



Bill was born in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, to Leland and Annie Wright. He was the youngest of three brothers and was harassed by both Douglas and Robert, which helped him develop his tough, can-do attitude that saw him through his 79 years on this earth. Once married, he moved his growing family all over the country following “the jobs” as a journeyman electrician and lifelong IBEW member.

Bill and his wife, Margaret, landed in north Idaho and finally found the place where they could settle down in the backwoods of Athol. He was a fierce protector and provider for his children.

His children—daughter, Angela, and husband, David Riggsby, of Buckley, Washington; son, Mike (deceased); daughter, Stacie, and husband, Al Ramsay, of Athol, Idaho; and son, Benjamin (deceased)—love him beyond measure. When he became a grandparent, he was renamed “Papaw” and is loved and adored by his grandchildren, Matthew (deceased), Michael (Aubree), Jonathon (Abbie), Natalie (Candice), Caitlin (Dustin), Jordan, Mark (Justina), Mariah, Tanner, Hannah (Nick), Mikayla (Preston), Weston, Britain, Cheyenne, and Nea; and 26 great-grandchildren.

Margaret was the love of his life. When she passed away, he focused his full attention on the second love of his life, the fire service. He started as a volunteer firefighter, then added EMT and inadvertently worked his way up to division chief. Bill was a humble, kind, and giving servant in the community, both in and out of the fire department. He could always be counted on to respond, at all hours of the day or night, except on Sunday while he attended the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints meetings and on Wednesday mornings when he went to the Spokane Washington Temple. His religious beliefs, high moral and ethical standards, abounding faith, and confidence in the power of prayer were the standards by which he lived his life.

He believed in God, family, and country. He deeply understood the Constitution and Bill of Rights and the freedoms they line out. He was not afraid to share his views. He felt everyone needed to laugh, every day, of which he was a great example. He welcomed people into his tribe, into his family, and treated them as one of his own for as long as they wanted to stay. His example, service, compassion, and influence are spread far and wide, although he wouldn’t have acknowledged he did much to deserve any recognition. Bill was the greatest example of what a first responder should be. Both daughters, a son, son-in-law, and eight of his grandchildren have served or still serve as first responders. We know he and Matthew, who we also lost in 2021 (LODD), are riding along with those in our family who still serve.

Bradley Liggett

City of Freeport Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Chief ★ January 8, 2022 ★ Age 55

Bradley Jon Liggett was born December 7, 1966, in Sterling, Illinois. A native to Rock Falls, Illinois, Brad graduated from Rock Falls Township High School and attended Beloit College before serving in the U.S. Navy Reserve as a hospital corpsman for the Marines in Desert Storm. He continued his education at Blackhawk Tech and Upper Iowa University. Brad knew early on that he wanted to make a career out of public service. While he was at Beloit College, he took a tour of the fire station and was hooked. He knew this was how he could serve his community. Brad immediately asked the chief when he could do a ride along, and the chief told him to come in the next day. That was the start of his 30-year career in the fire service.

Chief Liggett became Freeport's fire chief in 2019 after serving as the chief of the City of Beloit Fire Department for 16 years. Starting his firefighting career in 1989, he served as a paramedic, motor pump operator, lieutenant, and assistant chief of Beloit before he was named chief in 2003. He was a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fire Protection Association, the Wisconsin Homeland Security Council, National Society of Executive Fire Officers, Rock County 911 Commission, the City of Beloit Heightened Awareness & Emergency Preparedness Team, the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association, and 2nd vice president of the Metropolitan Fire Chief's Association.

Other people mattered to Chief Brad Liggett. That was the sentiment of those who knew him best and worked with him for three decades. Brad saw possibilities in people. He really did live his life to serve and teach others.

Chief Liggett's passion for helping others didn't stop at the fire service. Brad was also a member the Freeport Salvation Army Advisory Board and former chairman of the Beloit Salvation Army Board, Literacy for Life of Beloit, Vets Roll, the City of Beloit 4th Fireworks Committee, and a volunteer for Meals on Wheels. Brad was a past member and president of the Kiwanis Club of Beloit, former chairman of the 2005 Stateline United Way Campaign, a Cubmaster of Pack 306, and PTA president for Morgan Elementary School and Robinson Elementary School. He was a member of the Kiwanis Club in Freeport,

Outside of work and clubs he was involved in, Brad loved to be around his friends and family. He loved to work on home improvement projects with his wife, Mary, and travel. Brad always had a welcoming smile on his face that made you feel like you knew him. He always had a smile and a hand out to introduce himself, "Hello, I'm Bradley Liggett."



Larry Peasley

Maroa Countryside Fire Protection District – Illinois ★ Volunteer Chief ★ January 4, 2023 ★ Age 76



Larry Peasley was born August 10, 1946, in Lincoln, Illinois, the son of Paul and Mary (Purlee) Peasley. He married Janet Oakes on May 30, 1980, in Maroa, Illinois. Along with being dedicated to his wife for over 40 years and his sons, he was dedicated to helping the community in which he lived. He spent many years coaching youth sports, along with serving on the fire department. He spent time serving as the township clerk for Maroa Township. Larry worked in agriculture and in fire equipment sales.

He served on the Maroa Countryside Fire Protection District for over 43 years, 25 of those years as chief. No matter the time or the day, he showed up. He did it for the community, not for personal glory. Through the ups and downs, through the good times and bad, through the toughest adversity and the toughest calls, he showed up to help. His sons, J.D. and Tim, were fortunate enough to be able to serve alongside him for the last 20 years.

Chief Peasley was always there to help his family whenever they needed him. He loved to support his granddaughters. He attended many sporting events and school functions to watch his granddaughters, Marina, Addelyn, and Hayden, do what they loved. His favorite was to watch them play softball. Along with watching his granddaughters' different events, he loved watching sports. Every night, you could find him sitting in a chair at the kitchen or in a chair with his legs kicked up, watching whatever sporting event was on TV.

Chief Peasley spent his life volunteering and helping others in need. He lives on through those that he helped, mentored, and volunteered with. His legacy is attached to a memorial scholarship in his name at the local high school. The scholarship is awarded to individuals who plan on helping and serving like Chief did for so many years. Chief Larry responded to over 5,000 calls with the Maroa Fire Department.

He spent his last waking moments responding to a call and trying to help others like he had done so many times before. He spent his last moments on earth fighting and surviving for his family. His family takes peace in knowing this and takes comfort in his fight ending. He fought a good fight. He finished his course. His family will keep the faith and continue his legacy.

Jermaine A. Pelt

Chicago Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ April 4, 2023 ★ Age 49

Jermaine A. Pelt was born on March 24, 1974, in Chicago, Illinois, to John and Lizzie Pelt. He was the youngest of four children. As a child, Jermaine was very busy and loved to keep his parents on their toes. He loved snacks and to this day, you could find snacks in every backpack he owned. He accepted Christ at an early age and was a member of Church of Christ.

Jermaine's educational journey began at George M. Pullman Elementary School, and he went on to graduate from Corliss High School, Class of 1992. He believed that knowledge was power and the key to success. Jermaine had a strong passion for education, which allowed him to obtain several degrees throughout the years. The highest was a master's degree in public administration from Governor's State University. He also attended Northern Illinois University, Morgan State University, Purdue University, Olive-Harvey College, and Chamberlain University, to name a few.

Through the years, Jermaine took up boxing, was a lifeguard at a community college, and had several real estate ventures. Jermaine also did volunteer work for the Burn Camp for Kids and Muscular Dystrophy Association, both organizations located in Chicago.

Jermaine applied to and was accepted into both the Chicago Police Department and the Chicago Fire Department. He chose to start a career with the Chicago Fire Department in 2005, and he served his community with pride for 18 years. He was known as the firehouse cook and made some of the best meals. Jermaine was also an EMT and an instructor at CFD Academy. Jermaine worked part-time as a registered nurse at the University of Chicago Ingalls and as a home health care nurse. To unwind, he vacationed many times throughout the year, enjoyed dining at restaurants, attended cultural events, and spent quality time with family and friends. He was well loved and respected by many.

Jermaine leaves behind his loving children, Jorie (Kyle) and Jared; his significant other, Ariana; parents, John and Lizzie Pelt; brothers, Christopher, Derrick (Doris), and Jerry; nieces, nephews, and a host of aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Jermaine had a deep passion for helping others, and it showed. Anyone he crossed paths with can tell you. He always went above and beyond the call of duty. He accomplished so much, yet remained humble and was down to earth. His courage, bravery, and selflessness are unmatched. Cherished memories will live in our hearts forever, and we find comfort knowing he's in perfect peace



Michael R. Pickering

Chicago Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ October 8, 2021 ★ Age 45



Michael Richard Pickering was born in Chicago, Illinois, on February 17, 1976, and he came into this world as a fighter. Michael was two months premature, weighing only 3 lbs. 13 oz. Michael fought to stay alive and grew up to be a rambunctious little boy, and it was hard keeping up with him sometimes.

Following his graduation from St. Laurence High School, he decided he wanted a career in the medical field. He completed EMT and paramedic training courses and did exceptionally well. Michael worked as a paramedic in the private ambulance sector before joining the Chicago Fire Department on May 16, 2003.

Michael advanced quickly and was so proud when he was promoted to paramedic in charge. Michael always wanted more, though. He wanted to become a firefighter, and he was accepted into the Chicago Fire training academy. Michael loved being a firefighter, and he loved his brothers and sisters in blue that he served alongside with.

Michael was very motivated and took many extra continuing education courses that received certification. He even became certified in scuba diving and was sometimes assigned to the marine unit, but Michael's heart always belonged to his regular station, Engine 29 in the Bridgeport area of Chicago.

Even with his love of being a firefighter, he still wanted to go a step further. In 2018, he became an auxiliary police officer, working some of his days off from the fire department. Michael was an 18-year veteran of the Chicago Fire Department and had planned on working another 12 years before retiring. He had so many plans and dreams. Those dreams would never come to pass, because after a three-week long, hard battle, Michael died from complications of COVID on October 8, 2021. It has been two years since his passing, but sometimes it feels like yesterday.

His family still grieves deeply, especially his two young daughters, Zoey and Ella, and stepson, John. He is sorely missed by his mother and his sister, Mary Ann, and brother-in-law, Chip. Michael was the jokester of the family. He always made family and friends laugh, and we miss that. We all loved Michael, and I know he loved us as well. He truly loved his second family, the members of the Chicago Fire Department. Michael's family was so proud of him, and I hope we told him that enough when he was alive.

The Pickering family wishes to thank the Chicago Fire Department and the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial for remembering and honoring Michael. Even though it is a sad occasion, it also brings comfort to our family knowing that his spirit is being kept alive. We will never forget your kindness and compassion. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Andrew “Drew” Price

Chicago Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ November 13, 2023 ★ Age 39

“Mahalo!” he’d say, as he gave the hang-loose hand symbol and a smirk. Always expressing gratitude was his way of life.

Andrew Benjamin “Drew” Price was born in Fort Worth, Texas, on January 7, 1984. He lost his life in the line of duty serving with the Chicago Fire Department on November 13, 2023, at the age of 39.

Drew fulfilled his childhood dream when he graduated from the Chicago Fire Academy in 2009, giving 14 years of dedication and service to the Chicago Fire Department. He truly treasured being a fireman and instructed new candidates at the academy. He was proud to represent the department and was a player on the Chicago Blaze football team.

As the most senior member of his truck, Drew drove Truck 44 with pride and rode alongside Engine 55. He never hesitated to help a new candidate, take on extra responsibilities, shoulder the grunt work of the job, and above all else, ensure his members’ safety. He loved his company like family, and he felt privileged to work alongside them, protecting and serving their community. Despite the unknown dangers they faced, Drew kept things positive and made sure to have some fun every day.

Drew had a unique ability for making people feel special. He was always the first person to open the bay doors and welcome members of the community into the firehouse for a tour. He’d leave notes for his wife to wake up to on shift days, knowing tomorrow wasn’t promised. He’d quickly text you after leaving, saying how nice it was to see you, whether it was a short visit or a night out together. And no matter how busy life got, he always remembered the little things that mattered to his loved ones. He called, he texted, he checked in, and he genuinely cared. His love was consistent, real, and sincere.

A solo trip to Hawaii shaped Drew’s life and the way in which we’ll remember him. He adopted the saying “Mahalo,” which the locals there use to express gratitude. Now we express our own gratitude for having known Drew. He touched the lives of so many and reminded us to love harder, be kinder, and search for joy in every moment.

Mahalo, Drew. We love you.



Jan M. Tchoryk

Chicago Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Lieutenant ★ April 5, 2023 ★ Age 55



Jan Michael Tchoryk was born in Chicago on September 4, 1967. He was the fourth child born to Jan and Olga, who had emigrated from Poland to establish a better life for their family.

He had three older sisters, Stephania, Maria, and Ewa, and later a younger brother, Taras.

Like other boys in his age group, he attended grade school where he learned basic skills and got into general mischief with other boys and girls. After grade school, Jan attended and graduated from Carl Schurz High School.

Throughout his grade school and high school years, Jan was a member of the Ukrainian American Youth Association.

Jan's father encouraged him to join the military to learn new skills. Jan chose to join the U.S. Navy and served from 1989 until 1993 during Operation Desert Storm.

After his military service, Jan held a few positions in the civilian world until his acceptance in the Chicago Fire Department.

Jan was the father of four children, Jacqueline, Dylan, Grace, and Olivia, and stepfather to Olena.

During his time of service, Jan took part in various Chicago Fire Department trainings and schools to advance through the ranks. He achieved the rank of paramedic and lieutenant of Ladder Company 10, where he proudly served until his passing in the line of duty while leading a crew in a firefight on April 5, 2023.

Jan met the love of his life, who awoke his spirit, Natalia Kavkun, in September of 2018. They were joined in the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony in January 2020. They lovingly spent the last three years together and were actively planning the rest of their lives at the time of his passing.

During recent years, Jan was member of a brotherhood at St. Joseph Ukrainian Catholic Church in Chicago, where he volunteered with many fundraising functions in support of the Ukrainian Army in its ongoing war against Russia.

Jan lived and loved his life to the fullest and in service to others before himself. His personality and humor were infectious and helped many others out of bad emotional and physical times. He will be sorely missed.

Last call 5 April 2023.

Kevin P. Ward

Chicago Fire Department – Illinois ★ Career Lieutenant ★ August 28, 2023 ★ Age 58

Kevin P. Ward, 58, a lieutenant and Chicago Fire Department member for 27 years, died August 28, 2023, in the line of duty as the result of injuries sustained fighting a house fire on August 11, 2023. He died peacefully with his family around him.

Kevin was born in Oxford, England, the son of John F. Ward and Valerie J. (Carney) Ward. He was preceded in death by his mother and is survived by his father; his stepmother, Beth Ward; sister, Karen (Wren) Aislinn; and nephew and niece, Keegan and Piper Aislinn. He married Corrinne Walenda in 2004 and, though now divorced, they remained close friends.

Kevin grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, earning a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Michigan in 1986. After a decade of adventures which included working as an options trader at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, a ski resort employee and hotel chef in Colorado, and a commercial fishing deckhand on a boat out of Alaska, he proudly joined the Chicago Fire Department in 1996. In his 27 years with the department, in addition to fighting fires, he spent periods of time in specialty roles, such as EMT, Lake Michigan rescue, and HAZMAT at O'Hare Airport.

Many of Kevin's favorite activities over the years involved action with an element of risk mitigated by thoughtful attention to technique—rock climbing, sailing, skiing, wind surfing, and scuba diving. Firefighting had a similar appeal for him, as well as providing a stable career, comradeship, and an opportunity for service to the community. Over the last few years his sporting interest focused on underwater hockey, where rigorous training allowed him to compete with players much younger than himself. Kevin has designed and blown art glass, in a studio/workshop with apparatus he constructed himself, with many of his friends enjoying examples of his work that he gifted to them. He also acquired a broad set of design/engineering skills including machining and welding. As an example, this included rebuilding the engine of a Porsche car that fulfilled a lifelong dream.

Kevin planned to retire with his German Shepherd, Skye, in Colorado where he owned a cabin. He would have used his excavator to prepare the foundation for his new workshop. Rising above this idyllic cabin is a rocky outcrop, from the top of which one can look out to Denver and the Great Plains to the east and see peaks of the Continental Divide to the west.



Gerald J. A. Brooks

Indianapolis Fire Department – Indiana ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ November 2, 2021 ★ Age 49



Gerald Ambé Brooks was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, to the late Gerald Jerome Brooks and Marcia Brooks on August 24, 1972. He actively served his country in the United States Air Force in 1991-1992 and subsequently with the United States Reserve for six years in the 445th Airlift Wing at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio. He remained inactive, ready reserves until October 1999. He pursued a bachelor's degree in political science by attending Wright State University, University of Cincinnati, and Indiana University - Purdue University, before joining the Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD) in 2000.

He was devoted to IFD for over twenty years as a private when he transitioned on November 2, 2021, serving as a firefighter and emergency medical technician. He was certified as a hazardous materials technician, engineer, and instructor. He was active in the Black Firefighters Association, serving on the executive board and as a former vice president and secretary.

Gerald married Doneaka Brooks on August 15, 1998, and they were married for twelve years. His son, Harlem Brooks, was born into that union. Gerald's greatest joy in life was being a father.

Gerald was very active in Harlem's life, leading by example. He took him to church and attended school activities and club sports games. He was a man of God who served the church as a deacon, volunteering often before and after service. He maintained an immaculate home and a splendid yard with floral beds and beautiful greenery. He was dedicated to health and fitness and often trained with Harlem. He was an amazing chef who loved to grill and smoke food and provided wonderful homemade meals.

Gerald loved family! He shared a beautiful relationship with Marla Talley for over a decade. He and his special lady enjoyed travel, culinary adventures, celebrations,

holidays, and creating new life memories. He often traveled to Cincinnati and Chicago to spend time with his loved ones.

Gerald was adventurous, fearless, and thirsty for new experiences. He went skydiving solo in 2002 and looked like a pro on his first jump! He loved outdoor sports like parasailing, flying a glider plane, jet skiing, and outdoor photography. Always up for a challenge, good competition, and teamwork, he participated in a Spartan competition and represented well!

Gerald leaves to cherish his memory family and friends who miss him deeply! Gerald lived a life of service, making his corner of the world better every day because he was in it!

Ronald K. Derrickson

Straughn Volunteer Fire Company – Indiana ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ September 15, 2021 ★ Age 58

Ronald K. Derrickson was born in New Castle, Indiana, on June 26, 1963, to the late J.R. and Bette Derrickson. Ron began his fire service career in 1990, joining the Straughn Volunteer Fire Department, where he served first as a firefighter and ultimately as assistant fire chief. Ron was a lifelong public servant, a role which he held in addition to his career as a press operator, die setter, and union safety official. He served several fire departments during his career, regularly serving multiple at a time, including Wayne Township Fire Department, Dublin Fire and EMS, Spiceland Fire Department, Dunreith Fire Department, and Lewisville Fire Department.

Ron proudly and bravely answered the call while on duty, but his service didn't end there. Ron's influence has resulted in saved lives, righted paths, and thriving careers in public service. His encouragement, kindness, mentorship, and compassion went beyond the call of duty, creating a legacy that lives on.

He served as a strength and conditioning coach for the Tri Junior-Senior High School football team, always pushing his kids to do better than their best. His love of strength training pushed him to become a powerlifter, winning state championships in powerlifting in the 1990s. Ron was a lifelong racer and car owner, fielding his go-kart team in the RoboPong 200 in 2015.

Ron accomplished much in life, but nothing was as important to him as his family. Married to the love of his life, Jeani, for 39 years, they shared a wonderful life that included children, Anthony (Natalie) and Kristina (Brice); and grandchildren, Audrey, Ellie, Anna, Isabelle, and Barrett.

While serving in the fire department was one of his proudest achievements, Ron's true vocation was that of "Papaw." He loved to take the grandchildren on tractor rides, spend time together snuggling in the chair, or on a trip to the racetrack, always with a hug and reminder of how much he loved them. He was ever-present for his children, immensely proud not only of their accomplishments but simply for being who they were. He was always on the sidelines, cheering them on, and encouraging them to do their best. Dad was their confidant, comforter, and hero.

Ron succumbed to complications of COVID-19 infection on September 15, 2021. While God called Ron home earlier than ever expected, it was a journey that he was ready for. A man of faith, Ron trusted in the Lord's plan. His family loves and misses him dearly and strives to honor his legacy throughout their lives.



Duane E. Erwin

Elberfeld Volunteer Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 23, 2021 ★ Age 78



Duane Edwin Erwin was born to Noble and Myrtle Erwin of Lynnville, Indiana, on December 20, 1942. He was a proud Vietnam veteran who served in the U.S. Army and earned a Purple Heart. After returning home from the service, he started working for Alcoa in the tool crib, where he made many lifelong friends, cooked a lot of breakfast, played a lot of cards, and no one is sure if he worked a day in his life.

Duane was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of nearly 50 years, Brenda; his five children, Sherry (Mark) Taber, Mark (Gail) Erwin, Michael (Tammy) Erwin, Kari (Scott) Zella, and Nicole (Lonnie) Ziliak; 12 grandchildren, Aaron, Joshua, Jacob, Samantha, Stephanie, Dalton, Nicole, Kaci, Jaci, Graci, Kyler, and Brylee; 14 great-grandchildren; sister, Judy (Charles A.) Engelhardt; and several nieces and nephews.

Duane was very dedicated to his community. In the 70s he was the Elberfeld town marshal. He went on to serve as the president of the Elberfeld Town Council for 20+ years. After Duane's passing, the Elberfeld Town Hall was renamed the "Duane E. Erwin Municipal Building" in his honor. Being a volunteer fireman was always a dream of his. When the application process opened, he was fast to apply. He went on to serve on the Elberfeld Volunteer Fire Department for 25 years. At the time of his death, Duane was acting engineer and proclaimed driver of Engine 51. Duane was also a member of the Elberfeld Kiwanis Club, Lynnville Masonic Lodge #396, Elberfeld American Legion Post 351, VFW Post 2710, Campbell Township Conservation Club, and a founding member of the Erie Canal Beagle Club.

Duane was always up for a big breakfast and coffee on the porch. He enjoyed farming, watching NASCAR, fishing, storytelling, Merle Haggard, and a good game of clabber. In his prime, Duane enjoyed playing softball and later went on to coach various youth softball teams in the area. Duane never missed a ballgame his grandkids were playing in or their school events. He lived by two rules: (1) He was always right, (2) Refer back to #1.

Duane lived for the fire tones to go off and took much pride in being a volunteer fireman. He went out on top, making his final run hours before his departure. He is dearly missed by his family, friends, and his fellow firemen, but we know every time Engine 51 rolls out, Duane is watching over us all.

Mark B. Gillam

Elwood Fire Department – Indiana ★ Career Engineer ★ October 3, 2021 ★ Age 58

Fireman Mark Brian Gillam, age 58, a lifelong resident of Elwood, passed away on Sunday October 3, 2021, following a valiant battle with COVID-19. He was born April 7, 1963, in Elwood, Indiana, to Paul M. Gillam and Sharon (Stage) Gillam.

He was a 1981 graduate of Tipton High School. He served his country in the U.S. Marine Corps before serving a long career of public service. Mark was a firefighter, licensed EMT, and held the rank of engineer for the Elwood Fire Department, where he worked for 31 years. He was a dedicated fireman who genuinely cared about his community. He married Kathy L. Kelley on February 7, 2007.

For over 20 years, Mark was a counselor for Hoosier Burn Camp, where he touched countless lives working with burned children. He was also a member of the Elwood Fire Fighters Union Local #1671, where he had served multiple terms in leadership roles. When not working at the fire department, Mark could be found running his local graphics business, Golden Threads, in Elwood with his wife, Kathy, and daughter-in-law, Cara.

Mark will be remembered for his devotion to the Elwood community. He also enjoyed being active in local sports programs, whether coaching baseball with his children and grandchildren, serving on Harry Bridges Little League Board, or umpiring for District 6 Little League. He enjoyed volunteering at the Elwood Elks Lodge, where he was a member. He also enjoyed traveling, camping, and spending time with family.

Mark leaves behind his wife, Kathy; his mother, Sharon; seven children, and 25 grandchildren.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Martin Jay Meyers

Kokomo Fire Department – Indiana ★ Career Captain ★ March 4, 2021 ★ Age 50



Martin “Marty” Meyers was born June 12, 1970, in Rochester Minnesota, and was raised in Cannon Falls, Minnesota. He moved to Kokomo, Indiana, in 1992, to pursue his career and passion in woodworking. In his down time, he was known for tinkering around in the garage, building something for himself, family, or for a friend. Besides his passion for woodworking, He also enjoyed smoking various meats. At his family gatherings, his ribs and brisket were award-winning and sought after. Marty always looked forward to his fall hunting trips on his family’s land in Minnesota with his dad and brother. One of his favorite memories was his mom’s blood sausage breakfast.

Marty was hired at the Kokomo Fire Department on June 11, 2006. He was a dedicated part of the department for 14 years, three of those years as a captain, when he passed away on March 4, 2021. When you ask around the department or his crew, Marty was viewed as a great leader. Very loyal, he would work as hard as you, always someone you could count on at any place or time and would be your best bud. His highest achievement was helping his crew at Station 6 and being a public servant to the Kokomo community.

Marty was very devoted to his wife, children, grandchildren, and family. Martin is survived by his wife, Rebecca; daughters, Vicktorya (Darnell), Bertha, and Emmalee; son, Tyler; parents, Nick and Kay; parents-in-law, Carlos and Pamela; brother, Phil (Darcy); sister, Jennifer (Nate); sister-in-law, Patricia (William); brother-in-law, Cortland (Yuby); four grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, cousins, aunts and uncles.

Marty loved being in his truck listening to good music, singing his heart out, and wasn’t afraid of who was with him or who was watching. He was one to give life advice, whether it was tough love or encouragement. He was intuitive, not just on a fireground where it’s imperative, but in day-to-day life. Marty was destined to lead. The crew and the department are missing an integral part of their organization. His talks, friendship, and love are missed dearly by all.

Donald Max Neiswinger Jr.

Owen Valley Fire Territory – Indiana ★ Volunteer Captain ★ January 18, 2022 ★ Age 50

Donald, lovingly known as Donnie by those close to him, was born in Brazil, Indiana, and raised in Spencer, Indiana. He graduated from Clay City High School in 1989. That same year, he enlisted in the Army National Guard, where during his five years of service he earned multiple awards for his marksmanship and impeccable uniform detail.

Donnie married his high school sweetheart, Rachel, in the late summer of 1990. The couple settled close to their roots and were overjoyed to welcome their first daughter, Natalie, in 1999. Two years later they were blessed with fraternal twins, Kyle and Lyndsey.

Continuing his desire to serve, Donnie joined Owen Valley Fire Territory as a volunteer firefighter. Over the course of 23 years, he completed thousands of hours of training, earning certificates in HAZMAT, extrication, and NIMS. Donnie supported the growth of the department into becoming paid personnel, which decreased response times, saving countless structures and lives. Donnie was proud to teach new recruits everything he could, ensuring the next generations will thrive. Donnie rose to the rank of captain, which is where his memory lies.

Donnie devoted his life to the support and pride of his children. Every swim meet and choir performance had him in the front row cheering in his booming voice. He enjoyed assisting his son in preparing his uniform to the highest standard for Junior ROTC.

Donnie so proudly answered his final call for service in the early morning hours of January 18, 2022. He is incredibly mourned and missed by all he loved. His service to the state of Indiana is felt to this day.

“One can only live by helping others,” is the motto that best reflects his life.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Bernard J. “Bernie” Noll

Southwest Allen County Fire District – Indiana ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ January 14, 2022 ★ Age 55



Bernard J. “Bernie” Noll was born in Fort Wayne, Indiana, to the late James and Sally Noll on May 12, 1966. Bernie started his firefighting career as a volunteer with Adams Township Volunteer Fire Department in February of 1989, then moved to Southwest Allen County Fire District on January 19, 1993. Bernie continued his volunteer role until 2001, when he transitioned into a full-time firefighter/EMT position. Bernie was a dedicated public servant for a total of 33 years when he passed away on January 14, 2022.

Bernie was dedicated to his family. He leaves behind a wife of 23 years, Roxi Noll; children, Lizzie, Riley, and Abby Noll; siblings, Rosemarie (Tim) Johnson, Jonathan (Paula) Noll, Michael (Melissa) Noll, Sara (Wayne) Unsell, James (Sarah) Noll, and Bryan (Annmarie) Noll; 15 nieces and nephews and one great-nephew; parents-in-law, Russ and Patsy Hodges; sisters-in law, Mindy (Adam) Tyler and Shelly (Dave) Myers; and brother-in-law, Daren Lehman.

Bernie loved the outdoors. He was an avid hunter. He loved his time in the woods in his deer stand, even in the cold. He enjoyed the yearly trips to southern Indiana for turkey hunting. He enjoyed many years of owning his Harley and camping with family and friends. Bernie enjoyed cooking and experimenting in the kitchen. He could grill the best BBQ chicken. Bernie spent many years as a carpenter, and there didn't seem to be anything he couldn't fix or make. Most of his time was spent tinkering in the garage on his next project with his 80s rock turned up loud. Bernie was loving, kind, silly, and a good friend to all. He didn't know a stranger and could talk for hours with anyone.

Bernie was a member of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church. His faith was very important to him. He could always be counted on to help anyone in need and was often found helping friends and family with needed projects around their homes.

Bernie's memory lives on in his friends, family, and children, who spend a lot of time reminiscing with “Bernie stories.” While Bernie is missed every day, his family takes solace in the knowledge that his heart was right with God, and he rests peacefully in His loving arms.

Kyle Thomas Osgood

Farmland Volunteer Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ May 25, 2023 ★ Age 29

Kyle Thomas Osgood was born on March 30, 1994, in Muncie, Indiana. He was a loving husband, father, son, brother, and friend. He grew up with his loving parents, Mike and Amy Osgood, and alongside his twin brother, Cody, and younger brother, Cole. Kyle spent his childhood riding bikes around the town of Farmland, playing Nerf wars, and raising pigs for 4-H. Kyle was known for his contagious smile and laugh and for his willingness to always help others.

Kyle attended Monroe Central for his entire K-12 education and continued on to Ivy Tech, where he received a degree in agriculture. Kyle had a passion for FFA and 4-H. He was voted 4-H Fair King and took great pride in being called “King Kyle.” He was an active member of FFA and was honored to serve as the FFA president. Kyle continued his involvement with FFA after graduation, volunteering to be a mentor and coach.

Kyle was a dedicated member of the Farmland Volunteer Fire Department for 15 years. He spent much of his childhood at the station and became a junior member at the age of 14. Kyle could often be found at the station doing training, chatting with friends, or completing a project. Kyle’s ultimate goal was to be fire chief like his dad before him. Kyle had worked his way up the ranks to assistant chief of the fire department. This was a position that he took with great pride, and he loved being a leader.

Kyle met his wife, Darby, in high school, but they didn’t begin dating until several years later. They were married on June 29, 2019. Together, they loved to spend time doing DIY projects around the house and being outside. They welcomed their son, Tyler, on October 1, 2021. Tyler was the light of Kyle’s life. He loved being a dad.

Kyle was friendly and outgoing, never knowing a stranger. Anyone who met Kyle would tell you he always had a big smile on his face, a story to tell, or a sarcastic comment to make you laugh. He was an avid Harry Potter fan and was a proud member of the Ravenclaw house. Kyle enjoyed camping, woodworking, gardening, and kayaking. He was always looking for ways to create memories and spend time with his loved ones. Kyle’s dedication and service to the community will be deeply missed by all.



David F. Phelps

Prairieton Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer District Chief ★ November 2, 2023 ★ Age 74



David F. “Dave” Phelps was born in Terre Haute, Indiana, to the late William and Geneva Phelps, on January 24, 1949. He married his wife, Mickey, on September 5, 1970, and they spent 53 wonderful years together. Dave was a lifelong resident of Prairieton, Indiana.

He is survived by his loving wife, Mickey Phelps; daughter, Ramie Carver (Brad); son, Drew Phelps (Amy Compton); and granddaughter, Madison Phelps (Adam Craig); along with many other family and friends.

Dave was a United States Army veteran and served as a volunteer firefighter for 59 years. Dave answered his last alarm on the evening of November 2, 2023, while fighting a fire with the Prairieton Fire Department. Throughout his many years with the fire department, Dave held positions as chief, assistant chief, captain, and was the district fire chief at the time of his passing. Dave was a longtime member of the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association.

He received many awards and recognition throughout his 59 years of service. In December 2002, Dave received the Governor’s Meritorious Service Award from the state of Indiana. In January 2004, Dave was awarded the State of Indiana Fire Marshal’s Medal of Valor for his quick actions in saving the lives of two people at the scene of a structure fire. In June of 2023, Dave was named Mr. IVFA for the state of Indiana, the highest achievement given by the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association. In November of 2023, Dave received his very last award from the state of Indiana, the Meritorious Service Medal, for his ultimate sacrifice on November 2, 2023.

Dave loved God, his family, and his community. Along with being a volunteer fireman, Dave was a lifelong member of the Prairieton United Methodist Church and served as the Prairieton Township trustee for many years. Dave was a trusted mentor, coach, and

friend to many throughout his time in the community and with the fire department. He was a positive influence, always encouraging as many friends and neighbors as he could to join the volunteer fire department, including his children. Dave’s son, Drew, is a 19-year career firefighter with the Terre Haute City Fire Department and volunteers with the Prairieton Fire Department.

Dave was a loving husband, father, and papaw. He was a caring, compassionate, and kind soul. He would give you the shirt off his back. He never met a stranger and was a friend to everyone he met.

The immense impact that Dave has had on his family, the community, and the fire department cannot be measured. He will forever be in our hearts, and his legacy will not be forgotten.

Jack Kelly Ronco

LaCrosse Volunteer Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 7, 2022 ★ Age 55

Jack Kelly Ronco was born June 20, 1966, in Valparaiso, Indiana, to Daniel and Gail (Spencer) Ronco. Jack worked for Wiers Chevy in DeMotte, but his true passion was with the LaCrosse Volunteer Fire Department. Jack was hungry for knowledge and tried to learn as much as he could about firefighting. He was a fire inspector, served as an instructor for new recruits, and took many classes to better himself as a firefighter. He was a four-time winner of the Harold A. Hall Top Responder of the Year award for his department.

Jack was a U.S. Army veteran, but the military life was not for him.

In his spare time, Jack was a longtime member of the Pegasus Command Online Game Community. Jack will always be remembered for his big heart, contagious laughter, and ability to brighten any room he walked into. Jack would have given the shirt off his back to anyone in need, which is what made him an amazing firefighter. He loved to help people.

Jack was an extremely talented musician, and music was a large part of his life. He specialized in guitar, wrote music, and sang too. Since he was a young man, he had always been part of a band with friends and family.

On April 4, 1994, Jack married Glenda Roush, the love of his life. Glenda survives, along with his mother, Gail Ronco; children, Jessica (Jose) Rivera and Matt Ronco; sister, Joy (Dave) Newton; brothers, Jerry (Karen) Ronco, Jeff (Sandi) Ronco, and Jason Ronco; numerous loving nieces and nephews; and his great nephew, Danny. Jack was preceded in death by his father, Daniel, and brother, Jimmy.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Joe A. Stucker Jr.

Fairland Volunteer Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Deputy Chief ★ October 17, 2021 ★ Age 59



Joe A. Stucker Jr., 59, of Fairland, Indiana, passed away on October 17, 2021. He was born in Trenton, New Jersey, on April 29, 1962. Joe was the son of the late Joe A Stucker Sr. and Charlene Fuchs Stucker. Joe married Janet Fisher Stucker on September 7, 1982.

Former Chief Stucker served his hometown community as a member of the Fairland Volunteer Fire Department for more than 35 years. During his time with the department, he was involved in building their new fire station and helped with purchasing several new apparatus. This included his favorite truck, Grass 621, which he was instrumental in designing. Joe was a member of the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association.

Joe leaves behind his wife of 39 years; his children, Daniel Stucker, Jessica Jo Pile (Chris), and Bryan Stucker (Krista); grandchildren, Kenedie, Keagan, Madison, Grayson, Cora, and Mia; his mother; and his sister Susan Foizey (Richard). He was preceded in death by his grandparents, father, and an infant brother.

Joe enjoyed attending truck pulls and truck shows and boating and camping on the Ohio River. Most of all, he loved spending time with his grandchildren.

Joe departed this earth doing something dear to his heart, supporting and serving his community. Joe is missed by his family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Bill L. Walters

**Waterloo-Grant Township Volunteer Fire Department – Indiana ★ Volunteer Firefighter
August 9, 2021 ★ Age 88**

Bill L. Walters was born in 1933 in Auburn, Indiana, to the late Silas (Ted) and Gladys Walters. He was one of 13 children. He was drafted into the U.S. Army right out of high school and served in the Korean War from 1953-1955.

After his honorable discharge from the Army, Bill worked in some manufacturing jobs while helping to raise his young family. In the late 60s, an old Auburn fire chief by the name of Gilbert Potts talked him into joining the Auburn Fire Department, and like his father before, it was love at first fire call.

Bill served with valor and distinction while rising through the ranks, becoming fire chief and serving in that capacity until his retirement. After his retirement from the Auburn Fire Department, Bill served as the Dekalb County building inspector for nearly 30 years, while also being a Jackson Township volunteer firefighter and first responder. Bill eventually moved to the town of Waterloo, Indiana, and promptly joined the Waterloo-Grant Volunteer Fire Department as a first responder.

Bill loved to share his knowledge with the young volunteers at fire practice or just to sit and talk with them over a hot cup of coffee after an early morning call. He loved his firefighter/first responder brethren like family. Bill served for over 55 years in the fire service, hardly ever missing a call well into his late 80s.

Bill left behind his children, Scott, Beth, and Todd; daughter-in-law, Christina; grandchildren, Trenton Stuller, Nathan Stuller, and Tyler Walters; and many great-grandchildren.

He loved to read old westerns while listening to country music. He also loved to frequent the local diners, as he knew everybody by name and never met a stranger. He loved to visit and talk about the good old days with his beloved sisters, Patricia and Shirley.

Bill departed this earth not knowing how much of a void he would leave in these small communities he served. He is honored as a fallen hero but would have brushed that aside and said it was all part of the job he loved and would do all over again.



Anthony Gerhard “Tony” Hoffman

Ionia Fire Department – Iowa ★ Volunteer Captain ★ October 22, 2023 ★ Age 43



Anthony Gerhard “Tony” Hoffman of Ionia, Iowa, passed away October 22, 2023, while serving for the Ionia Fire Department.

Tony was the first child born to Edward and Shirley Hoffman. He spent his childhood on the farm learning from his dad and uncles, as well as becoming best friends (and sometimes rivals) with his nine younger siblings.

Following high school, Tony took up the trade of carpentry. He worked for several contractors and eventually started his own business. Most recently, he was a mill worker, building custom doors.

Tony will be remembered most for his signature statement, “How’s it going?” as well as his dedication to the service of others. He was loyal to his hometown as a member of the Ionia Fire Department and played an instrumental role in the conception and fruition of the Ionia Day celebration.

Tony made the ultimate sacrifice doing what he loved. He passed away honorably serving his community and was able to leave a final gift through tissue donation.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Josh Bruggeman

Wichita Fire Department – Kansas ★ **Career Firefighter/EMT** ★ **December 29, 2021** ★ **Age 46**

To know Josh was to love Josh through his contagious smile, quick-wittedness, huge heart, and hands made of stone.

He was a brave Wichita firefighter, skillful carpenter by trade, and a passionate coach to many in the softball community.

While he was outnumbered by five girls at home, he was proud to raise his daughters with his wife, Kerri, as he watched them grow up on theater stages, volleyball courts, and softball fields.

His friends and fellow firefighters remember him not just for his helpful spirit but by his ability to make anything a competition, as well as his willingness to laugh at himself.

Josh will be missed for many reasons, but mostly because he made those around him a little bit better.

He is survived by his wife, Kerri, and daughters, Emily, Brooke, Macy, and Lauren. Josh was honored through a citywide procession thanks to the Wichita Fire Department Honor Guard.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Frank E. Enke

Girard Fire Department – Kansas ★ Career Assistant Chief ★ March 28, 1983 ★ Age 48



Assistant Fire Chief Frank Enke passed away at 48 years young after responding to multiple calls on March 28, 1983.

Frank was born in Mt. Vernon, Missouri, and was raised in Farlington, Kansas.

Frank had the heart of a servant. He loved to serve his community.

Frank was a full-time firefighter and a part-time police officer, as well as helping on the ambulance service.

Frank had three daughters, Connie, Deanna, and Kathy, who he loved.

Frank enjoyed working, fishing, and hunting.

Frank's daughters were present at the 31st Annual Fallen Firefighters Memorial Service on October 21, 2018, for the unveiling of the memorial and were presented with a Final Alarm Medal from the Southeast Kansas Firefighters Honor Guard to honor their father's service.

Assistant Chief Enke's name has been placed on the Kansas Fallen Firefighter's Memorial in Wichita, Kansas, and the Southeast Kansas Fallen Firefighters Memorial located at the Girard Fire Department.

We thank you for your service, Assistant Chief Frank Enke. You are not forgotten.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jason C. Garrett

Kansas City Kansas Fire Department – Kansas ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ December 26, 2017 ★ Age 46

Jason Garrett died December 26, 2017, at Station 19 after working back-to-back shifts on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. He served with the Kansas City Fire Department for more than five years.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Martin K. Smith

Montgomery County Fire District 1 – Kansas ★ Volunteer Division Chief ★ January 16, 2023 ★ Age 64



Martin Kyle Smith was born in Coffeyville, Kansas, to the late Joseph Lee and Delma Smith on September 15, 1958. Marty began a career at Funks Manufacturing John Deere in Coffeyville, Kansas, from which he later retired. He began his tenure at the Dearing Fire Department as a junior firefighter when he was just 16 years of age. Marty dedicated almost 50 years serving Montgomery County and was a fire chief at the time of his death.

Marty leaves behind his daughter, Heather Smith, and granddaughter, Chazlin Smith.

Marty loved cars and tinkering. He could fix just about anything. Marty loved listening to music, the louder the better. He loved to sing and play the drums. The 4th of July was something he looked forward to every year. The volunteer firemen would lip sync to bands from the early days to today's music. One of their favorite acts was KISS, with Marty dressing up as Gene Simmons, and many other bands, dressing up in full costume. He had a full stage built right on his property with concert lighting and every instrument you can imagine. They planned this for months every year! Halfway through the show, the firemen would go down to the end of Marty's pasture and set off a beautiful display of fireworks for the community.

No matter what time of day or night, regardless of what Marty was doing, whether it was a holiday or dinner time, rain or shine, if his pager went off, he was out the door. Marty unselfishly volunteered and sacrificed his life serving the community through the fire service.

Marty departed this earth doing what he truly loved. He leaves behind family, friends, and loved ones who will forever cherish his memory.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Joseph Ray Back

Whitesburg Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Assistant Fire Chief ★ October 30, 2023 ★ Age 59

Joseph Ray “Joe” Back was born in Whitesburg, Kentucky, to the late Ray and Beulah Back, on February 28, 1964. Joe spent his childhood playing in the Appalachian Mountains of southeastern Kentucky, riding horses, hunting, fishing, riding his motorcycle, and four-wheeling. In 1986, he joined the Letcher Volunteer Fire Department, where he served as a volunteer firefighter and EMT for many years. He was hired by the Whitesburg Fire Department in 1993, became assistant fire chief in 1998, and served there until the day he passed in October of 2023. Joe died while responding to an EMS call. He was at the scene assisting an elderly patient when he unexpectedly collapsed.

Joe left behind his wife of over 32 years, Lia, and his son, Matthew. Joe loved spending time with his wife and son at their farm in Blackey, Kentucky. They cared for their horses, dogs, cat, and chickens, as well as raising a huge garden every spring. They spent countless hours together riding horses and four-wheeling in the mountains they loved. Joe loved to hunt and always had a hunting dog. He would hunt with his childhood friends and cousins most nights, weather permitting.

Joe was a humble, simple man. He enjoyed watching the Andy Griffith Show with his son, Matthew. He liked sitting on the front porch of his farmhouse, drinking a cup of coffee and watching the horses graze. He loved his Massey Ferguson tractor left to him by his dad. He plowed and cared for a huge garden yearly, as well as using his tractor to mow his many acres of farmland.

Joe loved serving as assistant fire chief in Whitesburg. The town is small, and he knew most everyone. Joe could walk up and down Main Street and chat with the store owners on a first-name basis. He loved eating at the local restaurants and was well known in town. He was known for helping others, always kind and caring on his EMS runs. He was friends with everyone, not only at the fire department, but at the police department and city hall as well. He was often sitting on a chair in the fire bay with several other firemen or police officers enjoying the latest talk of the town.

Joe died while doing exactly what he loved, on an EMS run, helping a patient in need. Joe was always a servant, dedicated fireman, very loved husband and father, and best friend to so many. If you knew Joe, you will always miss him but take comfort in the legacy he left. Joe is enjoying the benefits of his well lived life in Heaven and looking forward to his family and friends meeting him there.



H.M. Bottom

City of Russell Springs Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Chief ★ October 16, 2021 ★ Age 82



Homer McKenzie “H.M.” Bottom was born September 23, 1939, the sixth of eight children to Homer and Edith Bottom of Russell Springs, Kentucky. After graduating from high school, he married his high school sweetheart, Sue. They had three daughters, Kathy, Kimberly, and Kelley; five grandchildren; five great-grandchildren, and two great-great grandchildren.

H.M. joined the local volunteer fire department at the age of 25 and served 57 years, 46 of those years as chief. In 2015, he was named Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year. He was a dedicated public servant. He served as ambulance and police dispatcher for 10 years, an EMT, solid waste supervisor, and Russell County emergency manager for 28 years. He was also a founder in organizing the first ambulance service for Russell County, Kentucky.

In addition, he was a founding member of the local rescue squad, a member of the Masons for 55 years, chairman of the 911 board, a successful businessman, and founder for a local organization called Charities for the Needy. He started this charity to help needy families in the community in times of need and during the holidays. This charity quickly grew with the help of other community members. His daughters will be continuing this work, along with his tradition of delivering gifts to those families on Christmas Eve.

H.M. was a pillar of the community. He remained on call 24/7 and was the first to respond to emergencies. He was a long-time member and deacon of Royville Friendship Church. A dedicated and loving family man, he took great pride in his family and was there for every event, offering his support

and encouragement. In the little free time he had, he enjoyed bushhogging on his tractor and taking care of his beloved horse, Thunder. He was a collector of antiques and loved to study history.

H.M. loved to make people laugh and always had a story to relate to everything. You could always go to him for life advice because he had a lifetime of experience. He was there to offer a helping hand, with a warm smile and a heart full of compassion.

We take comfort in the fact that he was able to do what he loved most and help others upon his death. He was our hero, and we are forever grateful that his legacy will live on.

Edwin Carter Conley

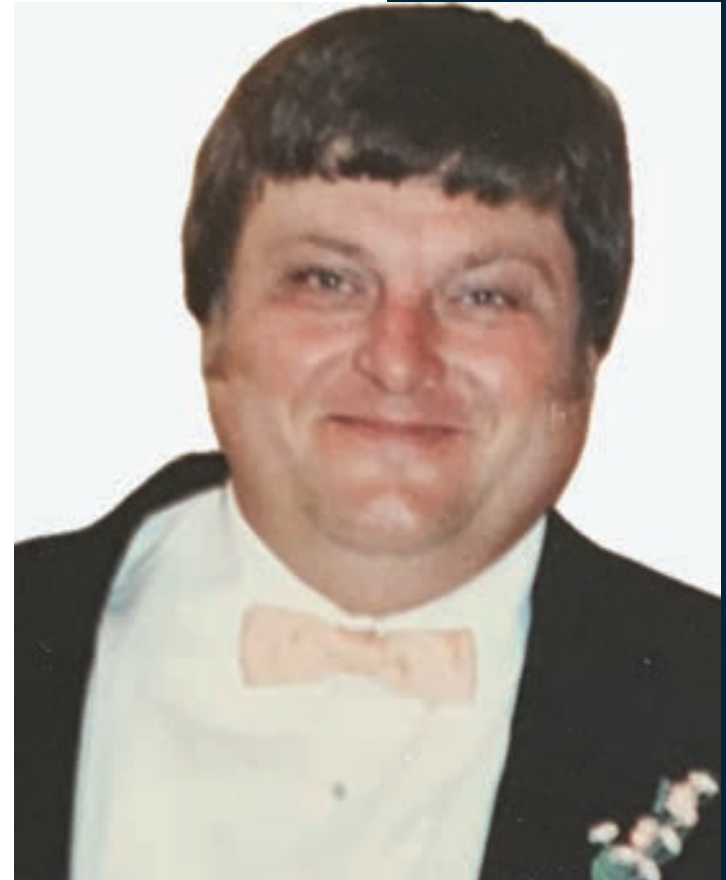
Magoffin County Rescue Squad – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Captain ★ September 12, 2021 ★ Age 71

Magoffin County Rescue Squad Captain Edwin “Carter” Conley was born in Magoffin on June 23, 1950, to Robert and Lillian Conley of Falcon, Kentucky. Magoffin County may be considered a small eastern county of rural Kentucky to some, but to him it was home. That’s where he was raised, married a loving woman, and was a proud father to two sons and eventually a grandfather. What made Carter extraordinary was his unwavering drive to help those in need. Devoted to the county that he loved to serve, for 47 years he responded to every rescue/emergency call that came through Magoffin County when he was able. In many cases he would not want to be away from the county but for a brief moment, to ensure he would be available to assist with any emergency that might arise. He also did this as a volunteer.

Carter graduated from the University of Kentucky with a teaching degree. He worked for several years before he took a job with forestry firefighting, and there his love of firefighting and helping others started. Prior to 1974, in Magoffin County if you wrecked your vehicle, your house caught fire outside of city limits, and any other possible emergencies, there was little to no help. At times, help had to come from surrounding counties to render aid. Carter and a small group of concerned volunteers took it upon themselves to form the Magoffin County Rescue Squad. The organization was completely voluntary and received funding through charitable donations, grants, and a yearly local TV auction made up of local businesses donations. Carter always wanted to ensure that the Rescue Squad had working equipment, rescue tools, and gasoline for their vehicles, using the money they had raised and continuously advocating to have better equipment.

Alongside other Magoffin County citizens, Carter helped to establish a 911 system for Magoffin County. He also volunteered for many local fire departments, all while working a normal 9-5 job for the local Big Sandy development for many years. This allowed flexibility so he could respond to emergency calls, which often meant very long days. Despite these long days, Carter always found the energy to help when the call came in. Because he was such a servant of God, he was devoted to helping the injured or sick, whether that was a friend, neighbor, or passerby.

For 47 of his 71 years, his goal was to help the people of Magoffin County in their times of need. Carter always lived by the standard of a true servant. His motto was, “If you’re stuck in a car, we’ll get you out. If you’re lost, we’ll find you.”



Regina M. Huffman

Coon Creek Fire & Rescue – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 28, 2023 ★ Age 39



Regina Huffman died on October 28, 2023, from injuries she sustained while responding to the scene of an ATV accident.

She was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, and was the daughter of Teresa Stephenson.

Regina served with Coon Creek Fire & Rescue. She was adventurous and enjoyed being of service.

She was survived by her mother, her fiancé, her six children, two sisters, and extended family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Sean Kelly

Murray Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ February 28, 2022 ★ Age 48

Michael “Sean” Kelly was born in Murray, Kentucky, to Dan and Carol Kelly on July 4, 1973. Within a year of graduating from Calloway County High School, he joined the county fire rescue squad. He served on the department until 1998, when he was hired at the Murray Fire Department. Even though serving his community was very important to Sean, knowing how much time it would take away from his family serving on city and county fire departments, he resigned from the county fire department once he was hired at the city.

Sean was a dedicated part of the Murray Fire Department for 21 years, retiring at the end of 2019 as battalion chief. Due to COVID, retirement was short lived. When the department began feeling the effects of COVID and shifts were short-handed, Sean went back to work on an as-needed basis to help fill in where needed. This was a true testament of his dedication to the men he worked beside for years.

During his time at the department, Sean had extensive training that included Technical Rescue Team training. In December 2021, a neighboring county was hit by a devastating tornado. Emergency personnel from area agencies were requested in the recovery efforts. Sean worked tirelessly and spent several hours pulling survivors from the rubble of the candle factory in Mayfield, Kentucky.

Sean was known for having the strength of Goliath. Several years ago, a fellow firefighter and friend of Sean’s was quoted saying, “If I ever need a door knocked down, Sean Kelly is my guy. When no one else can knock the door down, he can.” Another firefighter also commented on Sean’s strength. In his words, “We had a house fire and went in together to do a search. We needed a couch moved out of the way. Sean picked up one end of the couch and had it moved out of the way before I could blink.”

On February 28, 2022, Sean departed this earth, leaving a huge void in the lives of his family and friends. He leaves behind his wife of 28 years, Tracey; daughter, Kristen Kelly; and son, Sean Jackson Kelly.



Clarence Norman Lytle

Georgetown Fire and Rescue – Kentucky ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ June 26, 2023 ★ Age 52



Clarence “Norman” Lytle was born in Morehead, Kentucky, to Charlene and the late Nick Lytle on February 20, 1971.

Norman graduated from Rowan County Senior High School. Norman and his wife, Soni, retired to St. George Island, Florida, with their fur babies, Cici and Tiki.

In 1992, Norman began in the fire service by volunteering at his hometown fire department in Morehead. In 1999, he began as a career firefighter with the Georgetown Fire Department. After his retirement from Georgetown and relocation to St. George Island, he became a volunteer with the St. George Island Fire Department.

Norman’s innate kindness, joyful demeanor, and desire to serve to his community and fellow man, made emergency services a natural fit. His positive attitude was infectious, and fellow firefighters always looked forward to shifts and runs with him. They, along with all other friends and family, treasured spending time with Norman. He personified what a senior firefighter and decent person should be.

On his days off from the fire department, he worked alongside his father in a pest control business they owned and operated.

Norman loved music of all kinds, both listening to it and making it. He was an avid guitar player and tried his hand at many other instruments as well.

Norman was a notorious prankster and would give and receive pranks goodheartedly. His sense of humor and levity never wavered and would

often lift the spirits of those around him.

For most of his life, Norman would take what opportunities he could to go fishing. He held dear his time fishing with Soni in their favorite spots in Apalachicola Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.

Above everything, Norman loved spending time with family and friends and always made time to do so. He understood that these moments were precious, and they would always bring him joy.

Life without Norman has been a difficult adjustment for family, friends, and brother firefighters. Anyone who met him will undoubtedly say that they are better for having known him.

Brian Ray Morgan

Pleasure Ridge Park Fire Protection District – Kentucky ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ October 24, 2020 ★ Age 46

Brian Ray Morgan was born on May 6, 1974, and passed away on October 24, 2020, at age 46.

He was deputy chief of the Pleasure Ridge Park Fire Department, where he had served for 28 years. He received many awards and accomplishments in his career, including several lifesaving awards. Becoming deputy chief was his biggest accomplishment. Brian was remembered as intelligent and action oriented. He was instrumental in making positive changes in the fire department over the years. Known as “Papa Bear” to some at the station, he had a passion for helping others and serving his community. He was dedicated and served well.

Brian was a loving husband, father, and son. Gatlinburg was one of Brian’s comfort places and one of his favorite places to spend time with family. He loved to start fires in the fire pit at our cabin and cook hotdogs. The kids’ favorite part was to make s’mores with their dad. Brian enjoyed playing different sports throughout his life, including softball, bowling, and especially basketball. He was a mentor, a leader, and a trusted friend to many. He was committed to the crusade for children. He loved classical music and baseball, especially the Chicago Cubs.

He is survived by the love of his life, Brittany (Cassady) Morgan, and his children, Bryce, Brayden, Brody, and Brennan. He was preceded in death by his infant daughter, Brieana Morgan, and his mother, Mary Ann (Krazeise) Morgan.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Bobby Wade Mosby

Nelson Creek Volunteer Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Captain ★ May 26, 2023 ★ Age 51



Bobby Wade Mosby was born in Greenville, Kentucky, on July 30, 1971. He was a truck driver for Teamsters Local Union 215. He had a large helping hand in starting the Nelson Creek Volunteer Fire Department, where he dedicated 32 years of service and was captain of Engine 83.

He was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife of 33 years, Kathy Mosby; daughters, Amber Geary and Kendra Mosby; grandchildren, Emily Geary, Brooklynn Geary, Ava Geary, Alivia Higgs, and Dalton Geary; mother, Sylvia Frazee; sister, Lisa Nelson; and many other beloved family and friends.

He loved to enjoy many outdoor activities. You could find him hunting, fishing, riding ATVs, watching dirt track races, or just sitting around a fire. He was often known to be the life of the party, so most Friday nights you could find him having a drink in the garage with his buddies. He also enjoyed going on little vacations to the Smoky Mountains or Nashville. He was just an all-around simple man.

He was always dedicated to his family and friends and to helping others. He leaves a huge hole in the lives of everyone that knew him, and life will never be the same without him, but we find peace in knowing just how much he loved us all. He never failed to show that.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

David C. Pawley

Louisville Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Sergeant ★ September 2, 2021 ★ Age 52

Sgt. David Pawley was a dedicated and passionate fireman. He courageously served the city of Louisville, retiring after 20 years of service. He received several Medal of Merit and Medal of Valor awards for his heroism.

He continued his firefighting career with the Kentucky Air National Guard (Louisville base) and Leitchfield Fire Department in Leitchfield, Kentucky.

David was an adoring, proud, loving, and supportive dad to his daughter, Meredith, and son, Cameron. He was a dedicated husband to his wife of almost 22 years, Holli. He was a loving son to Geneva and Larry; oldest brother to Steve (Lisa), Jennifer (Glenn), and Jeremy (Melissa); and a loving uncle to 14 nieces and nephews.

David had a large personality, a big laugh, and a loud voice that could be heard by all. Firefighting was his passion, but his family was his heart!

His firefighting legacy will live on. His name will never be forgotten!



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Thomas A. Petschke Jr.

Ballardsville Fire and Rescue – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Sergeant ★ November 11, 2023 ★ Age 53



Sergeant Thomas A. “Tom” Petschke Jr. was born and raised in Buffalo, New York. He was 53 years old when he responded to his last call. Tom was part of a loving family growing up, including his father and mother, Thomas Petschke Sr. and Gail Petschke, and his older sisters, Cheryl (Steffan) and Christine (Ruffner). He was married to Colleen Petschke for just under 30 years. Tom was the very proud father of two college-aged children, Matthew and Megan Petschke. Tom had always dreamed of being a firefighter and fulfilled that dream in 2013.

Tom earned an associate degree in science at Erie Community College in Buffalo in 1990. He went on to earn a Bachelor of Science in mechanical engineering from Clarkson University. He obtained his private pilot’s license during this time. Once in the working world, Tom earned a Master of Business Administration at the University of Iowa.

Tom worked as a project manager or plant manager for several multinational companies in South Carolina, Iowa, Indiana, Virginia, and Kentucky. He dreamed of owning his own company and, in 2018, he started that venture in Crestwood, Kentucky. Tom owned and operated Industrial Turnkey Solutions, LLC. It offered engineering consulting services that took Tom all over the United States and was also a rigging company which moved heavy machinery. Tom also started up a hobby business, Petschke Pick, LLC. Petschke Picks are toothpicks made from bourbon barrel staves. Tom claimed they were the only toothpicks that were made in America.

Tom was a volunteer firefighter for ten years and a Rotarian for over 15 years. He ushered at his church for over ten years as well. He went out of his way to help anyone in need and enjoyed doing so. Tom loved anything with wheels. He enjoyed driving hot rods and attending car shows. He loved the outdoors; one of his favorite things to do was camping in the woods in central New York with friends and family.

If you knew Tom, you knew he was an exceptionally hard worker. If he had a goal, he would attain it. He had a fierce energy and was always “productive,” one of his favorite words to live by. He was a loyal family man who treasured spending time with his wife and children. He was also a loyal friend with a fun sense of humor, and he had a strong bond with those to whom he was close. Tom loved being a firefighter and was proud to volunteer for the Ballardsville Fire Department. He is sorely missed.

Ernest Ray Rudder

Bush Volunteer Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Captain ★ September 25, 2021 ★ Age 74

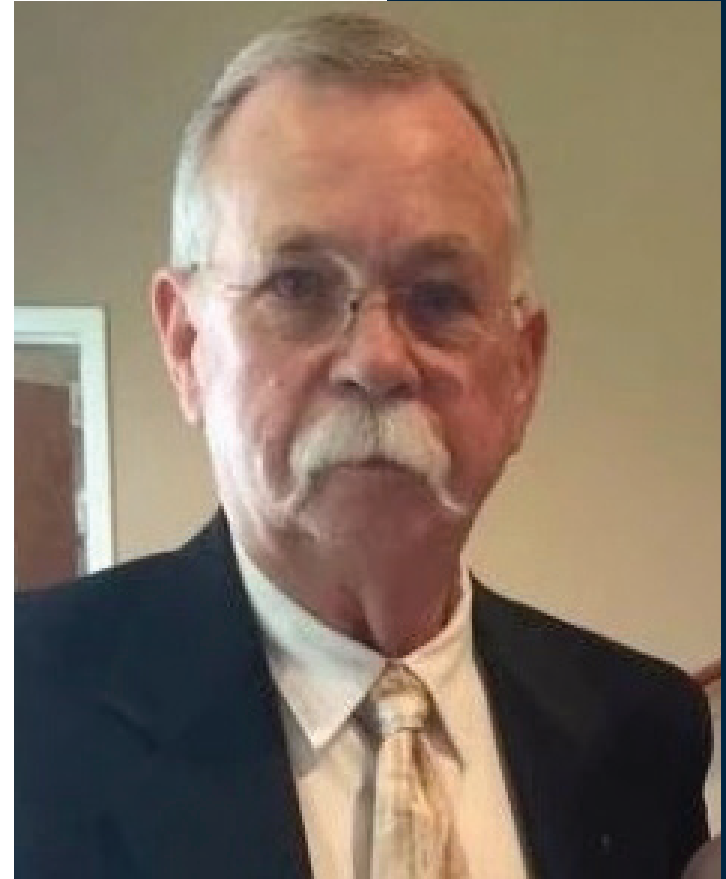
Ernest Ray “ER” Rudder was born on May 14, 1947, in London, Kentucky, to the late Birchell Rudder and Maxine (Overbay) Rudder. He was the oldest of three children. He attended Berea College and Cumberland College, receiving a Bachelor of Science in biology. He also received a master’s and Rank I in education from Eastern Kentucky University. He worked in the education field, teaching science and serving as a principal. He retired in 2000 after 30 years of service.

ER served as a founding member of Bush Volunteer Fire Department in London, Kentucky, in 1975. He served for 46 years as captain, firefighter/EMT, secretary, and treasurer of the board of trustees. He retired from the Laurel County Sheriff’s Office as administrative sergeant in 2015 after 15 years of service. Through his many years of service in the education, fire, and police fields, he undoubtedly touched many lives.

ER was a kindhearted soul that loved God and his family. He attended Providence Missionary Baptist Church and served as a deacon and treasurer. He leaves behind his wife of 54 years, Judy Rudder, and his two children, Dawn Carpenter and Marc Rudder. He also leaves behind two granddaughters, two grandsons, and two great-grandsons. He was preceded in death by one granddaughter. Following in his footsteps, both children and two grandsons are active members in the fire service.

ER passed away on September 25, 2021, due to complications from duty related illness (COVID-19).

He lived by the verse, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthen me.” Philippians 4:13. He lived each day of his life embodying a man of Christ in his work and family.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

David J. Studer

Covington Fire Department – Kentucky ★ Career Engineer ★ January 20, 2022 ★ Age 54



David James Studer, son of Loreen and the late Robert W. Studer, was a highly regarded gentleman and respected resident of Ryland Heights, Kentucky. He was a brave firefighter with the Covington Fire Department for 25 years, an honorable combat veteran of the United States Marine Corps, a proud member of CFD Local No. 38, and a devoted and loving son, husband, father, brother, uncle, and #1 pawpaw!

Dave was a devoted family man. He was preceded in death by his father and by his father-in-law, Earl L. Owens. He is survived by his mother; mother-in-law, Cindy Owens; and wife, Carie Owens Studer; beloved children, Cayden Eubank (Matt Wheeler), Ivan Eubank (Megan Crouch), and Hadley Owens; grandchildren, Finleigh, Brooks, Beau, Posie, and Charlie; brothers, Donny (Stephanie) and Jeff (Angel) Studer; sister, Pam Studer; sister-in-law, Julie Owens; and many nieces and nephews.

Dave was an incredible husband and father. He was always there for all of us. He was the “cheer dad,” the chauffeur, cook, did laundry, knew how to do algebra, was very resourceful, and was always willing to help. A “jack of all trades” is what I always called him. He knew how to do everything from building furniture and cornhole boards to electric, plumbing, and even working on our cars. He was a great provider, a hard worker, funny, and the most sarcastic person I knew. He enjoyed life and didn’t sweat the small stuff.

Dave always kept us laughing. He was as witty as they came and loved to play pranks on us. He enjoyed hunting, fishing, gardening, playing cornhole, and Tonk. But his favorite thing to do was spend time with his grand babies on his small chicken farm. They would raise laying hens from baby chicks and then

sell the eggs to neighbors, friends, and family. He started college fund accounts for them with the money they would collect from selling the eggs.

When Dave was not at home with his family, you would find him at the firehouse, his home away from home with his second family. Dave loved all his brothers and sisters at CFD and loved being a firefighter. He proudly followed in his father’s and older brothers’ footsteps and became a firefighter in 1997. In 2017, he was promoted to the rank of engineer and was assigned to Truck 1 tillerman. Dave passed away on January 20, 2022, due to complications from COVID-19, just months away from retirement. He is deeply missed by many, and his loss leaves his family heartbroken and grief stricken.

William Edward “Sonny” Thompson

Mercer Fire Protection District – Kentucky ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ August 20, 2021 ★ Age 74

William Edward “Sonny” Thompson was born September 20, 1946. He was a volunteer firefighter for 52 years. In those 52 years, he was a member of Burgin Fire Department, Mercer Central Fire Department, and had a huge role in establishing Shakertown Fire Department, where he was assistant chief.

Sonny received numerous awards over the years of his firefighting efforts. He was extremely proud to serve his community. His knowledge of fire and rescue helped train many young firefighters in his community. He was admired and highly respected by his fellow firefighters. His daughter and granddaughter followed in his footsteps and became firefighters as well.

Sonny’s hobbies include traveling, singing, and riding his 2003 Harley Road King 100th Anniversary Firefighter Edition. Most importantly, he loved spending time with his family, especially his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He was a jack of all trades, completely restoring a ‘68 Chevy truck along with a ‘65 Barth travel trailer. After he retired from his maintenance job, Sonny and his wife, Sherry, purchased a small cottage on Lake Herrington. Together, they renovated it into their favorite place to spend time with family and friends. Sonny also built a boat dock, where he spent many days trying to catch the biggest fish in the lake.

Sonny was a very devoted Christian and a member of Shakertown Baptist Church. He was not ashamed to tell anyone about his love for Jesus Christ. Everyone knew Sonny everywhere he went. He never met a stranger and would hold a conversation with anyone. He was known for always having candy in his pockets to share.

Sonny’s family was his greatest treasure. He adored spending time with them at cookouts, bonfires, and family get-togethers. He adored watching his grandchildren and great-grandchildren grow up. It was always important to him to be remembered by the little ones in the family.

Sonny departed this earth as a follower of Christ and a servant to his community. Not a day goes by that he isn’t missed by family and friends. He would have been so honored to receive this kind of recognition. This has brought great comfort to everyone who loves him dearly.



Michael Allen Ford Sr.

St. Tammany Fire Protection District #1 – Louisiana ★ Career Captain ★ September 13, 2019 ★ Age 44



Michael Allen Ford Sr. was born in Slidell, Louisiana, on May 1, 1975, to Ed and Rebecca Ford. He was married to Richelle Thibodeaux Ford on July 25, 1998, and they had two beautiful children, Sara Elizabeth and Michael Junior. They had a blessed and joyful marriage. Mike served his community for 26 years, including his four years as a volunteer. He was an observer and took his time to contemplate people and problems before drawing his own conclusions. He used humor to lighten the mood and make everyone feel at ease. He faced each challenge with bravery and dignity. He never gave up on anyone or anything. He believed in honor and was the most giving man.

He attended Slidell High School for two years and then transferred to St. Stanislaus in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, where he played varsity football and basketball and graduated in 1994. He went on to obtain an associate degree in fire sciences from Delgado Community College and volunteered for four years as a firefighter with Fire Protection District No. 1 in Slidell. On May 1, 1997, Mike joined Fire Protection District No. 1 as a full-time firefighter and EMT and dedicated his career to protecting the citizens of Slidell, concluding his career as a fire captain. While with the fire department, he trained to be a rescue diver, which led to his working on several movie and television productions.

He was a Boy Scout, an Eagle Scout, and a member of the Order of the Arrow. Upon learning how to weld, he developed a passion for metalwork and woodworking. He was a self-taught rope weaver and made his own hammock and crawfish nets. After beginning medical treatments, he dedicated time to building his beloved daughter a car for her birthday, which was one of his favorite accomplishments. He loved to watch engineering, military, and war

movies and could tell the caliber of ammunition and gun type of each soldier. He enjoyed sharing his love of history with his children and especially enjoyed spending quality time with his family and friends.

He took pride in serving his community and felt no task was too great. Mike put every effort into doing something the right way. He helped to build a playground at First United Methodist Church, coached youth basketball, adopted pets from a local shelter, and served on the board for the Slidell High School Band Boosters. Mike volunteered his time to build homes for severely injured veterans with the non-profit A Soldier's Journey Home. In addition, he loved to help his neighbors and family with DIY projects, even travelling to other states to help elderly family members.

Walker L. Hill

Baton Rouge Fire Department – Louisiana ★ Career Captain ★ December 17, 2022 ★ Age 48

Walker Hill was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on June 21, 1974. He proudly committed his life to the people of Baton Rouge, serving 24 years with the Baton Rouge Fire Department, most recently as a fire captain with Engine Company 6 C-Shift.

He began his career with BRFD in 1998 and was promoted to the role of captain in 2017. During his time of service he received four lifesaving awards, two fire service excellence citations, and even helped to deliver a baby.

Walker took great pride in his calling as firefighter, showing a deep loyalty to his career and the dedicated men and women who filled the ranks of the fire service.

His deepest devotion lay with his family and the fire department, both of whom will immensely feel his absence, a testament to the profound impact he had on those he loved most.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Erik T.S. Kreppein

Saint Tammany Fire Protection District #1 – Louisiana ★ Career Fire Prevention Officer
April 24, 2019 ★ Age 63



Erik Thomas Samuel Kreppein, 63, of Slidell, Louisiana, passed away on Wednesday, April 24, 2019.

He was the beloved husband of Judith Parson Kreppein; father of K'Cee Kreppein Ortiz (Rafael), Ehren Kreppein King (Lee), Kire C. Kreppein, and stepson, Brad A. D'Alfonso (Jessica). He was the son of the late Herbert C. Kreppein and June Rose Peters Kreppein and brother of Areme Kreppein Marks (Carlos) and the late Herbert C. Kreppein II. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Jourdan, Kruz, Jordan, Jaylen, Collin, Austin, and Aubrey, and a nephew, Max Marks.

Erik was a native of New Orleans and a longtime resident of Slidell. He was a graduate of Brother Martin High School Class of 1974, a member of Sons of American Legionnaires at American Legion Post 374 on Carey Street in Slidell.

Erik began his career as a volunteer firefighter with the City of Slidell in the 1980s and in 1992 he was hired on full-time with Saint Tammany Fire Protection District #1. He was trained and certified as a Firefighter I, II, and III, pump operator, hazardous materials, and emergency medical responder. But his true passion was in the field of fire investigation and inspection, which he became certified in by attending courses at L.S.U., University of Alabama, the National Fire Academy, and the International Association of Fire Investigators.

Erik was always comfortable working with the public, whether it was a building inspection, explaining a code violation, building concern, a classroom full of children, or a neighborhood gathering at a National Night Out against crime event.

Erik was passionate about and excelled at his job. He received two Firefighter of the Year awards, as well as several Community Service Awards, both here in Slidell and in many other areas of the country, helping to rebuild after disasters and for his work with New York Says Thank You Organization.

Erik was always a person who could be counted on to help those in need. He never needed prompting. He just said, "I'm in!!"

Thomas Julius Maury Jr.

**Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans Fire & Emergency Services – Louisiana ★ Career Chief
August 22, 2023 ★ Age 39**

Chief Thomas “TJ” Maury Jr.’s watch ended on August 22, 2023, after a heroic five-year battle against stage IV cancer. His story is one of courage, resilience, and an enduring commitment to service. His lifetime of fire and emergency service began at age 14 as a junior firefighter. He worked at Bridge City Volunteer Fire Company No. 1. and then for various fire companies within Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. In 2007, he entered federal civil fire service with the U.S. Navy. He rose through the ranks, became a paramedic in 2010, and eventually served as fire chief at Naval Construction Battalion Center in Gulfport, Mississippi, and then Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base New Orleans. He was dedicated to the future of his departments and envisioned one of operational readiness, training excellence, community engagement, and collaboration.

Chief Maury played vital roles during various emergencies, including Hurricanes Katrina, Gustav, Isaac, Zeta, and Ida, as well as the Deep Horizon oil spill. His story is featured on “Returning the Favor,” a reality web series with Mike Rowe, highlighting Chief Maury’s remarkable strength and dedication to saving lives. Chief Maury received numerous accolades throughout his career, including Firefighter of the Year in 2007, Civilian of the Quarter in 2016, Navy Region Southeast Civilian of the Year and Navy Civilian Fire Officer of the Year in 2017, and Training Officer of the Year for the Southeast Region in 2019.

Chief Maury was most known for his contagious smile, his fortitude, and his love of family, friends, and Batman. He inherited his strong work ethic from his father, Thomas J. Maury Sr., and his kind nature from his mother, Betty Jean Maury. He was spoiled by his sisters, Chasadie Flanagan and Gidget LeBlanc. Chief Maury dearly loved his nieces, nephews, and godchildren. When Chief Maury was not saving lives, he ran marathons, enjoyed football games, and attended concerts with his friends. He was married to his high school sweetheart, Betty Ann Maury, for 20 years, and has two sons, Thomas J. Maury, III and Lucas Maury, and one daughter-in-law, Vi Huynh.

It was Chief Maury’s honor to work alongside the outstanding men and women within his fire departments, and there are far too many to name. The Maury family would be remiss not to mention Chief Todd Albarado, who continues the fight to raise awareness about the occupational hazards faced by firefighters and the need for support and recognition for those who sacrifice their health in the line of duty.



Henry W. Eckhardt Jr.

Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Company – Maryland ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 5, 2021 ★ Age 72



Henry Walter Eckhardt Jr., 72, of Reisterstown, Maryland, passed away on December 5, 2021. Born on July 28, 1949, in Baltimore, Maryland, he was the son of the late Henry W. Eckhardt Sr., a dedicated member of Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company, and Ruth Eileen Eckhardt. He was the beloved husband of Patricia Evelyn Eckhardt. Surviving him in addition to his wife is his daughter, Theresa Akerman-Ihle; grandchildren, Joellen Ihle, Dylan Ihle, Marie Bitzel, Michele Buchholz, Edward Sible, and Richard Kosmicki; 12 great-grandchildren; sisters, Brenda Eckhardt and Pam Higgs; one nephew; three nieces; and his aunt, Shirley Bott. He was predeceased by his daughter, Laura Ann Akerman-Hicks.

Henry was a man of discipline and a proud veteran of the United States Navy, where he served his country with bravery during his three tours in the Vietnam War. While in the United States Navy, he served aboard the Henry B. Wilson and U.S.S. Ticonderoga and was proudly involved in the retrieval of Apollo 16.

Henry began his volunteer firefighting with the Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company in 1966, before he was called to duty by the United States Navy to serve a four-year term. During this time, Henry met his beloved wife of 50 years, Patricia Evelyn Eckhardt. After his service was completed, Henry returned to volunteering with Pikesville Volunteer Fire Company until his relocation to Reisterstown Volunteer Fire Company in August 1983.

Henry served for a number of years as a suppression lieutenant. During his tenure, he served multiple terms as a member of the board of directors. As a top 10 responder, he was driven by a sense of duty to his community and fellow men to always respond. He was an outstanding and qualified driver/pump operator of each engine and special rescue unit. Henry was an advocate for occupational

health issues and remedies for his fellow firefighters. A man of protocol and discipline, he was involved in training and mentoring new members and Junior Fire Company members at his station. He also ensured the monitoring of hand tools and special equipment carried on each engine and special equipment unit. In 2020, at age 71, Henry had the honor of driving S414 to the station prior to it being put in service, as he was the most senior active driver at the station.

Henry W. Eckhardt Jr. will always be remembered as a man of honor, integrity, discipline, and protocol. He lived his entire life in service to his fellow man and community, as was his duty.

Mark R. Fisher Jr.

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Services – Maryland ★ Career Master Firefighter ★ July 24, 2014 ★ Age 59

Mark R. Fisher Jr. was born on November 10, 1954, to the late Mark and Nancy Fisher. He attended Frederick High School in Frederick, Maryland, graduating in 1972. After working for the family business, Mark found his passion for firefighting and was hired by Montgomery County Department of Fire and Rescue, where he worked for 22 years. He was also a part-time firefighter and volunteer in Frederick County, Maryland. Mark held numerous positions as a volunteer firefighter, including chief, and his most proud, chief emeritus of the United Steam Fire Engine #3. Mark was also a member of the Maryland Task Force One Urban Search and Rescue Team, responding to many disasters, including Hurricane Katrina and on September 11th to the Pentagon. He was a part of the M.E.R.S. team, assisting them during numerous disasters throughout the years. Mark was an instructor for Montgomery County and Frederick County Department of Fire and Rescue, giving back his knowledge, love, and passion of fireground operations and services.

He was a member of the Johnny Swamper Club, Frederick Elks Lodge No. 684, and the Loyal Order of the Moose No. 948 in Charles Town, West Virginia.

Mark was a devoted and loving family man to his wife, Cherie, and his children, Mark III (Justin), Katelyn (Adam), and Britney (Vincent). He will be remembered by his grandchildren, Lillian, Iris, Tobias, Sawyer, and Jameson. He will also be remembered by his siblings, Teresa (John), JoAnne (Jerry), Susan, Jeff, and Michael (Julia), and many nieces and nephews.

Mark loved hunting and playing softball. He had a special passion for football, leading him to play semi-pro for the Frederick Falcons and a brief, but proud time as a Tampa Bay Buccaneer. But his true passion was being a firefighter. He was always ready to share his stories and knowledge with anyone ready to listen. One of Mark's dreams came true in 2012, when he purchased his lake home on Lake Hartwell, South Carolina. He enjoyed spending time on his boat on the lake with his family and friends.

Following the events of 9-11, Mark fought a courageous battle with cancer for over eight years until July 24, 2014. Mark is deeply missed by his loving family and friends.



Bryan Paul Hamilton

Naval District Washington Fire and Emergency Services – Maryland ★ Career Firefighter/EMT
January 1, 2021 ★ Age 42



Bryan “Hammy” Hamilton was born on January 22, 1978, in Charles County, Maryland, to Jennings Woodrow and Shirley Sylvia Hamilton. Bryan was a beloved son, brother, uncle, and friend. To Bryan, family was everything. Bryan loved Major League Baseball, especially the St. Louis Cardinals.

Throughout his childhood, Bryan was determined to become a federal firefighter. Like many families, Bryan followed in the footsteps of his brother, Jimmy. He would always be found at the firehouse interacting with all members. His hard work, perseverance, and passion led to that dream coming true.

On September 22, 2002, Firefighter Bryan Hamilton was hired by the Naval District Washington Fire Department and assigned to the Naval Support Facility, Indian Head. He remained there for his entire career, serving as driver/operator, managing the department’s personal protective equipment inventory, and was awarded two Life Saving Awards from Commander Navy Installation Command.

On December 13, 2020, while on duty and performing normal job duties, Firefighter/EMT Bryan “Hammy” Hamilton and three colleagues were unknowingly exposed to the COVID-19 virus. Firefighter Hamilton developed symptoms and on December 20, 2020, he tested positive for the COVID-19 virus and was subsequently admitted to the hospital on December 23. Tragically, on January 1, 2021, Firefighter/EMT Hamilton died as a result of firefighter occupational exposure/COVID-19.

He was an active life member of Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department, where he served as captain. Hammy touched so many lives; he was selfless beyond measure and always stepped up to handle any task no one else wanted to do. He strove to create a strong sense of brotherhood, make a difference, and always looked for opportunities to better the department. Firefighter/EMT Bryan P. “Hammy” Hamilton was 42 years old and had served the citizens of Maryland for 26 years.

Christopher D. Morlan

**Frederick County Division of Fire and Rescue Services – Maryland ★ Career Battalion Chief
December 23, 2021 ★ Age 46**

Christopher David Morlan was born on June 23, 1975, to David and Gina Morlan of Hyattsville, Maryland. He attended South River High School, where he excelled in baseball and arts. Chris enjoyed terrorizing his sisters, Kelly Evans and Stacey Taylor. He attended Frostburg College, where he concentrated on visual arts and graphic design degrees. Chris had another calling in life and left college before graduating. His passion for the fire service took him on a road to get hired professionally.

In July of 1998, Chris started his career with Frederick County Department of Fire and Rescue. Chris poured his heart and soul into his career as a firefighter. He quickly promoted within the department while serving at Independence Hose Company and United Fire and Steam Company. Chris loved being downtown in the heart of Frederick City. He continued to serve as a county safety officer and then into the role of captain of the safety office. In 2020, Chris hit his ultimate goal of becoming a battalion chief. He excelled in all aspects of his 22-year career. He spent copious hours diving into training and preparing his crews for the job.

Chris left behind his wife, Nicole Morlan; and his children, Christopher David Jr. (and mother, Belinda), Patrick, Nathaniel, and Abigail (and mother, Emily), and Bohdi (mother, Nicole). He also was the stepfather to Noah, Ava, and Evan Chow. Chris loved nothing more than his children and family. He spent countless hours on a baseball field or basketball court coaching his children. He took on various volunteer roles within Thurmont Little League and Catocin Youth Basketball Association. Chris loved watching his children succeed.

Chris's untimely death in December of 2021 took him away from his family. He was loved by so many and is truly missed by his children. Every day his children continue to make him proud with the service and dedication to their studies and sports.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Rodney W. Pitts III

Baltimore City Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career ★ Firefighter/EMT ★ October 19, 2023 ★ Age 31



Rodney was born on August 4, 1992, and raised in Baltimore City. He received his education in Baltimore City Public Schools. Rodney was baptized on May 18, 2023, accepting Jesus Christ as his personal savior. He always dreamed of becoming a firefighter, and he finally got that chance and joined the academy, teaching us to never give up on our dreams.

Rodney was a young man with an old soul, with a kind and generous heart and spirit. He would selflessly do anything he could for others. To know Rodney was to love him; he had a smile that would light your heart. He had a sense of humor that would make you laugh or smile just by thinking of him. When you were down, he would crack a joke and make you laugh. He loved seeing people smile and laugh.

Rodney loved his Baltimore Ravens and Orioles. He enjoyed playing sports with his uncles and tossing the ball with his son. He also enjoyed going camping and fishing with his family. Rodney enjoyed doing Daddy Daughter Day with his little princess. He also enjoyed playing card games with his mom and family.

He leaves to cherish his memory his mom, Monica, and dad, Rodney Jr.; his two children, Arianna and Hendrix; grandparents, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephew, cousins, and friends.

Rodney heard the saying “Job well done” and departed this world on October 19, 2023, doing what he always wanted to do, being a firefighter. Rodney will live on in our hearts forever and shall never be forgotten.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Dillon Rinaldo

Baltimore City Fire Department – Maryland ★ Career Captain ★ October 24, 2023 ★ Age 26

Captain Dillon Rinaldo was born in Ridgewood, New Jersey, on March 14, 1997. He was raised in Fair Lawn, New Jersey, where he graduated from Fair Lawn High School in 2015. He was an all-around athlete, playing football, lacrosse, and street hockey.

From the age of four, Dillon knew he wanted to be a firefighter. He would follow his dad, Ralph, around Fair Lawn Fire Company #4, where he was a member. Dillon joined Company #4 as a junior at age 16 and knew he wanted to make firefighting a career. At age 18, Dillon took many tests around the country, and in May of 2017, Dillon was offered a job with Baltimore City Fire Department in Maryland.

Dillon left for Baltimore in July of 2017 and graduated in March 2018 as valedictorian of his class. Dillon also managed to get a Bachelor of Applied Science degree in November 2021 from Waldorf University. He became lieutenant of Engine 46 in July 2022 and was an acting captain on October 19, 2023, on his final call. Dillon absolutely loved his job and did it proudly. Dillon was tragically injured on October 19, 2023, and succumbed to his injuries five days later.

Dillon leaves behind his parents, Ralph and Gerri; his sister, Danielle; his loving fiancée, Lauren; his pal Duncan, his beloved black lab; and numerous family members. We take solace in knowing Dillon loved being a firefighter.

Dillon made us all proud every day.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Brice C. Trossbach

Naval District Washington Fire and Emergency Services – Maryland ★ Career Firefighter
June 27, 2023 ★ Age 25



Brice C. Trossbach was born on October 4, 1997. Brice was one of the most levelheaded, unwavering, positive, and kind people you could meet. He loved life and everything in it. Anyone who knew him was proud to have known such an amazing, big-hearted person. The guys at work dubbed him “Brucie,” and it was truly always Brucie’s time to shine. Whatever he did, it was 110%. He was a mentor, a brother to many, and a shining light to whomever he was around.

Brice grew up in a close family on the family farm. He strived to be like his father and was Momma’s boy. Anytime you’d find Brice, he’d be with his older brother, Jared, and all his younger cousins who he was like a brother to. Brice was very active with 4-H growing up and active in the farming community of St. Mary’s County. Brice’s passion for the fire service started at birth, growing up in the Leonardtown Volunteer Fire Department, where his father is a life member and his brother is a member. You would often find Brice and his brother covered in grease head to toe, helping their dad complete his engineer duties. Brice was fourth generation in the LVFD. He also volunteered at Bay District Volunteer Fire Department. His commitment to community and service was unfaltering.

Brice met the love of his life, Cheyenne, in 2017. Although they grew up together, he finally knew she was the one. Cheyenne was the light of his world and brought the most out of him. They became engaged on December 20, 2021. Brice, Cheyenne, his brother, and sister-in-law, Kaitlyn, were the four best friends. Brice enjoyed being with all his friends and was always having fun, but his favorite person to hang out with was his nephew, Rhett.

Brice began his career with Naval District Washington Fire and Emergency Services in August 2019. For him, this was a major aspiration in life. Growing up as a volunteer, he wanted to turn his passion into a career. He started at Naval Air Station Patuxent River Station 1, advancing in his career fast and always being the best he could be. He had a passion as union rep of IAFF F121 and wanted to help anyone he could. He transferred to Station 2 and remained there until June 27, 2023. On that tragic morning, he was killed while operating on a mutual aid house fire when the house collapsed while he was operating the primary handline. His reputation preceded him, as he was truly a fireman’s fireman. He was dedicated to service and “making the push.”

Brice’s work ethic, musty mustache, blue eyes, and little giggle laugh touched everyone he encountered. We will continue his legacy and carry him with us forever until we meet again.

Edward D. Bergdoll

Boston Fire Department – Massachusetts ★ Career Lieutenant ★ October 26, 2022 ★ Age 60

Lt. Edward Douglas Bergdoll, affectionately known as “Eddie,” joined Heaven’s ranks on October 26, 2022, after a valiant battle with occupational cancer. He was surrounded by his treasured family, Boston Fire colleagues, Engine 16 crew, and IAFF Local 718 members.

Born as the youngest of seven to Evelyn (Doyle) and Fire Captain/Army Veteran Frank “Buddy” Bergdoll, Eddie embodied the unwavering work ethic of his parents. His deep faith in Christ, indomitable responsibility, dedication to family, and drive to serve defined him.

A 1980 graduate of Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, Eddie followed in the footsteps of his late father, Buddy, who also succumbed to occupational cancer. In 1984, Eddie joined the Boston Fire Department, alongside his brother David. Starting at Ladder 21, Eddie later moved to Engine 33 and was promoted to fire lieutenant in 1999. His most extended tenure was with Engine 16 of Dorchester-Mattapan, before a final shift to BFD Headquarters, rounding off a commendable 38-year career.

Parallely, Eddie worked as an EMT with Fallon Ambulance in the late 1990s and early 2000s, where he met his cherished wife, Nancy. Of all the roles he embraced, being a loving husband and doting father to four daughters was his most prized.

Eddie’s legacy lies in his love for service, the camaraderie of the fire department, the joy of fatherhood, and a zest for life.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Peter M. Skerry

Winchester Fire Department – Massachusetts ★ Career Lieutenant ★ December 3, 2022 ★ Age 72



Peter M. “Pete” Skerry was born on November 12, 1950, in Winchester, Massachusetts, to the late Walter and Evelyn Skerry. He graduated from Winchester High School in 1968, attended Essex Agricultural for tree work, and later became a certified tree surgeon and arborist. He went on to work for the Winchester Cemetery Department for several years and owned and operated Skerry Landscaping on the side. He was hired by the Winchester Fire Department in 1978 and graduated from the Massachusetts Fire Academy in 1979. He served as a Winchester firefighter and EMT until retiring as lieutenant in 2014.

In his spare time, Pete liked to spend time at his camp on Stanley Pond in South Hiram, Maine, where he enjoyed boating, fishing, bonfires, exploring the woods, and spending time with family and friends. He also spent time skiing Pat’s Peak in Henniker, New Hampshire, and attending the shows of his son’s band, Threat Level Burgundy. He was their biggest fan and #1 roadie.

Pete wore many hats in his life—husband, father, brother, uncle, cousin, lieutenant, “cat daddy,” band roadie, friend, and best friend. To say that he was dedicated to helping others would be an understatement, not only professionally, but also helping his friends, family, and even total strangers at times. It would not surprise most to hear about times when he would stop on the side of the road to help someone who was broken down or to strike up a long, friendly conversation with someone who was just asking for directions. That was the kind of guy Pete was. He never stopped helping people, both on and off the clock. His generosity knew no bounds; it was his love language.

Pete was also known for being very practical, but most importantly, he would want to be remembered for his sense of humor. He could always be counted on to make others laugh, whether it was through fart jokes or Three Stooges references or clever movie quotes.

Pete passed away on December 3, 2022, after a valiant 17-month battle with occupational lung cancer. In addition to his wife, Kathy, Pete is lovingly survived by his son, Peter M. Skerry Jr., and wife, Ashley; his cat, Aslan; and his many “furry grandkids.” He is further survived by several siblings, in-laws, nieces, and nephews.

Ronald Gene Cassada

Ottawa Lake Whiteford Fire Department – Michigan ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 27, 2021 ★ Age 66

Ronald Gene Cassada was born July 1, 1955, to the late Douglas Gene Cassada and Joyce Marie Cassada.

Ronald was employed as an electrician with First Energy for more than 33 years. He served on their fire brigade until his retirement in 2019. He was also an Army veteran, serving as an instructor during Desert Storm.

Ronald was a dedicated firefighter/first responder of the Ottawa Lake Fire Department for over 22 years. Ronald was always one of the first to respond, if not the very first. He loved every minute of being a firefighter. Whether it was a fire, medical call, car accident, or just weather related, you could always count on him to be there. Ronald loved the public relations side of the department. He loved showing off the fire trucks. He lived for the annual pre-school Fire Safety Day, as well as County Fair Day, where he shined at showing all the kids the fire trucks.

Ronald loved his family and would do anything for them. Ronald enjoyed his last couple of years by spending the weekdays with his grandson. He loved taking him on walks and going to the park and, of course, a visit to the fire station

Ronald is survived by his loving family, his wife, Karen K (Smith) Cassada; son, Alexander Gene (Alexis) Cassada; daughter, Michaela Belle (Josh) Hollis; sister, Karen (Luke) Duncan; brother, Raymond Cassada; brother, Robert (Susan) Cassada; and his two grandsons, Oscar Alexander Gene Cassada and Ronan Brian Cassada.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Ricky Albert Hill Jr.

Flint Fire Department – Michigan ★ Career Firefighter/Apparatus Operator ★ February 25, 2023 ★ Age 49



Ricky Albert Hill Jr. was born in Flint, Michigan on October 24, 1973, the son of Ricky and Rebecca (Phillips) Hill Sr. He graduated in 1991 from Carman-Ainsworth High School and joined the Flint Fire Department in 2007, receiving his paramedic license in 2012. Ricky was a paramedic/firefighter and was promoted to apparatus operator in 2019.

Ricky was a proud firefighter who served his community and fire family well. Once becoming an apparatus operator, his fellow firefighters remember him as being the best driver and always the first to help when needed. He helped pull the line and was able to anticipate what was needed at scenes and have it out and ready when somebody would come back to the truck. He always checked on his men and made sure to tell them, "Good job," and keep their spirits high. He always wanted to help and make a tough job easier for his crew. The department remembers him as a friendly, caring, and compassionate man. No matter where they went, Ricky would stop to make friends and talk to anyone. He listened to his crew and made them feel seen and heard with his sincerity. He never failed to make even the worst shifts better with his sense of humor and sheer light that was infectious to all those around him.

He had a passion for creativity. He was a skateboarder, a talented musician, artist, and pinball player extraordinaire. Ricky was a devout Christian and member of Corunna Road Baptist Church. He enjoyed camping, gardening, the outdoors, and keeping aquariums. Most of all, he was an amazing father, role model, and best friend.

Music was one of Ricky's biggest passions, and he was talented. He filled his home with instruments and songs. Whether at the station or at home, you could find him with a guitar in his hand, singing (or rapping) a tune. When he wanted to learn how

to play a song, he would have it mastered in days. He loved playing his music for other people and loved it even more when they joined in. Whether it was his family, friends, or strangers, he encouraged people to join in on his songs, as he wanted to spread the happiness that music brought into his life with others.

His memory is cherished by his wife, Amira Hill; two children, Ethan and Kailey Hill; his friends and family; and his brothers and sisters at the Flint Fire Department. He is missed dearly and grieved deeply. We honor his memory by remembering to be kind to everyone we meet, singing and dancing and truly listening to each other the same way Ricky would.

We love you and miss you deeply. Continue to watch over us and fill our hearts with your song.

Ethan M. Quillen

Paw Paw Volunteer Fire Department – Michigan ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ February 22, 2023 ★ Age 28

Firefighters know all too well the risks they face on the job, yet they choose to do it every single day. As he ran out of the door for a fire call that fateful night of February 22, 2023, Lt. Ethan Quillen was aware of the danger as he left his dinner table, turning back to kiss his wife, Kaitlyn (Katie), and hug his daughter. As an ice storm raged down on the small community of Paw Paw, Michigan, residents heeded warnings and stayed indoors, but not the firefighters, who are 100% volunteer.

During the storm, the Paw Paw Volunteer Fire Department responded to many calls for trees and lines down. Ethan tragically met his fate that night, while on a call for a downed power line.

Lt. Quillen joined the department on September 19, 2019, a week after he married the love of his life, Katie. Through hard work, dedication, and a gift for firefighting, he was quickly promoted to lieutenant of Grass Rig 1207, and then to engine 1201, the main engine.

Ethan was born to Dean and Sharla on March 18, 1994, in Armidale, New South Wales, Australia. He earned the nickname “Bear,” because he never crawled. Moving around on all fours, with a head of dark hair, he looked like a bear. As a curious and adventurous little boy, he often brought lizards and frogs into the home to surprise his mother. When Ethan was six, his family moved to the U.S., much to the delight of his mother, who no longer had to worry about venomous reptiles hiding in her home.

As a child, he enjoyed trains, trucks, and tractors, a passion he shared with his grandfather. You could always find him climbing on the tractors at the county fair. As a teen, he enjoyed bull riding, wrestling, working on his truck, and playing practical jokes with his high school friends. The school had to rewrite the handbook twice due to their antics.

After high school, he went to college for diesel technology, knowledge that would help save his fire department thousands of dollars in truck repairs. He became a Marine in 2013 and served two tours of duty in Iraq and the Middle East, until his honorable discharge in 2017. He was a proud Marine, proud to serve his country.

In his 28 years, he accomplished many things, one of which was growing a handlebar mustache that most would be jealous of. His proudest accomplishment was becoming a father to his daughter, Loghenn.

Ethan will always be remembered for his leadership, jokes, generosity, willingness to help others, and his mustache. He died doing what he loved to do, serving others. He made the ultimate sacrifice, giving his life for free. He will forever be loved and missed.



Philip Allan

Seminary Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ May 17, 2023 ★ Age 49



Philip Samuel Allan, 49, of Magee, Mississippi, passed away from his earthly home to his heavenly home on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He was born on Thursday, January 24, 1974, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Philip was a member of Corinth Baptist Church in Magee, Mississippi. He was a loving husband, father, son, brother, nephew, and friend.

He was a graduate of Forrest County AHS in Brooklyn, Mississippi. He then attended Jones County Junior College, where he obtained an Associate of Arts degree and began his career as a public servant as a National Registered EMT. He obtained his 1001 Based Firefighter training through the Mississippi State Fire Academy, as well as many other certifications.

He has served as an EMT/fireman for Magee Fire Department and various other fire departments in Covington and Smith Counties. He committed his life as a public servant, helping anyone at any given time. He worked for over 25 years as a police dispatcher for various sheriff and police departments in Simpson, Covington, Smith, and Rankin Counties. He will be greatly missed by all of his loving family and his firemen brothers.

He was preceded in death by his son, Jacob Samuel Allan; his mother, Linda Herrin Allan; his father-in-law, George Robinson; and his mother-in-law, May Hubbard McNeese.

Survivors include his loving wife of 25 years, Jean Robinson Allan; his son, Michael Allan; his daughter, Jessica Allan; his father, Gilbert Allan; his sister, Sonya Sumrall (Ronny); his uncle, Sam Herrin (Jo Deb); two sisters-in-law, Christy Barr

(Brad) and Caroline Robinson; and a host of other family members and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Wayne Doyle

**Lowndes County Emergency Services Volunteer Fire District 3 – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Chief
February 8, 2022 ★ Age 62**

Chief Wayne Doyle of the Lowndes County Volunteer Fire Department (Mississippi) holds the distinction of the longest-serving leader in District 3 history, contributing over 40 years to community safety until his passing on February 8, 2022. Born on April 11, 1959, in Columbus, Mississippi, to Kenneth and Shirley Hitt Doyle, Wayne initially pursued a career in homebuilding and pivoted to the field of fire protection in 1981 when he joined the Lowndes County District 3 Volunteer Fire Department.

Starting at Rural Hill Fire Station, Wayne rapidly ascended the ranks, becoming station captain in the late 1980s and subsequently assuming the role of assistant chief in 2000. As his leadership continued, Wayne’s impact on the department’s growth was substantial, overseeing the addition of new stations, the replacement of vehicles, and the expansion of facilities.

In 2012, Wayne Doyle earned the title of fire chief, leading the department through continuous improvement. His commitment transcended traditional firefighting, as reflected in his certifications in EMS and tactical training. Wayne played a pivotal role in establishing District 3 as the first fully trained search and rescue team in Lowndes County.

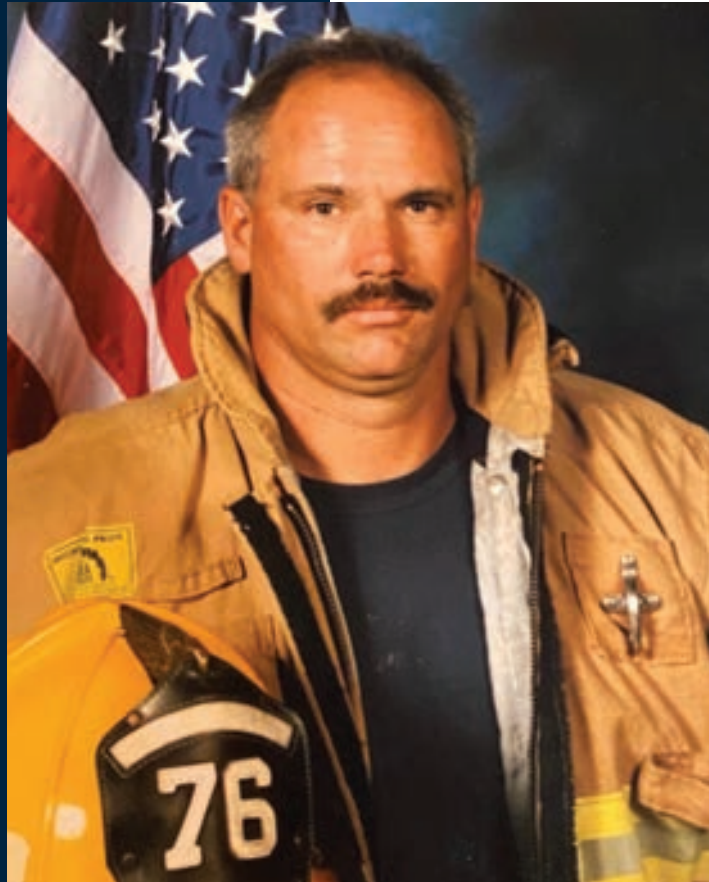
Beyond his professional commitment, Wayne dedicated his time to community service. He served as a firearms instructor, conducted tactical training, and held the position of safety team leader at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church. He was survived by his wife, Janice; mother, Shirley; son, Kevin; and stepdaughters, Ivy (Justin) Harris and Amy (Robert) Moore. Wayne left an indelible mark on the Lowndes County District 3 Volunteer Fire Department.

In a poignant tribute to Wayne Doyle’s legacy, the Lowndes County Board of Supervisors renamed the Rural Hill Fire Station to the Wayne Doyle Memorial Fire Station in February 2023. This renaming serves as a lasting testimony to his years of unwavering dedication to District 3 and the broader community. Chief Doyle’s legacy is characterized by his love for his firefighter family, a servant’s heart, and a passionate commitment to protecting others.



Marshal “Mark” Hilley

Gulfport Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Career District Chief ★ September 1, 2021 ★ Age 53



Mark Hilley was born October 22, 1967, to Bonnie Jean Copeland Cuevas and Kenneth Hilley. The eldest of four, he had three sisters, Lisa, Daphne, and Julianne. Mark graduated from Gulfport High School in 1986 and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, serving for eight years. He saved many lives as a lance corporal Amtrak crew chief. Mark received the Navy and Marine Corps Medal for his acts of heroism. He learned several life lessons in the military that followed him for the rest of his life.

Mark dedicated many years to Nissan and Honda as a master auto technician but found his true calling as a firefighter. He dedicated 20+ years to the Gulfport Fire Department and Harrison County Fire Service. After serving as an EMT, he developed a passion for the medical side of emergency service and became a paramedic. Starting as an engineer, he worked his way up the ranks and became a district chief for Gulfport Fire Department and a battalion chief for Harrison County Fire Service. With his passion for seeing things through and his dedication to becoming the best at what he did, his reputation preceded him.

The epitome of a family man, Mark made finding the balance between work and family look effortless. Family meant everything to him and was his biggest source of joy. Even with his responsibilities and commitments, he made family top priority during game nights, vacations, movie nights, and family dinners. He worked hard and believed in playing hard, too. He loved amusement parks and anywhere with beautiful water for scuba diving. He became a master dive instructor and taught many departments' dive rescue teams. He was captain of the dive team and was instrumental in making the dive trailer. If Mark took an interest, he was all in.

Mark had a deep love and an ear for music and the ability to play most instruments, including piano and guitar. He got a call one time to play with an upcoming artist with a sudden need for a backup guitarist. Mark had never heard of him, and it was almost four hours from home, so he turned the offer down. Later, he discovered that the artist was none other than Tim McGraw, a memory he would laugh about.

Mark was funny, kind-hearted, sentimental, and incredibly loving. He made many lifelong friends and felt fortunate that he had a list of men that would be there for him no matter what time or place, because he was that kind of friend himself. Mark Hilley was one of a kind. He left a lasting impression on all the lives he touched and is deeply missed by many. Although his life was cut short, he truly lived life to the fullest.

Clint Jacobs

Wiggins Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 5, 2021 ★ Age 46

Clint Jacobs, the oldest of seven children, was born to Donald and Patricia Jacobs on September 25, 1974, in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. He attended many schools during his school years. In 1993, Clint graduated from Stone High School in Wiggins, where he met his high school sweetheart, Wendy. Immediately after graduation, Clint began working to provide for his future wife. May 7, 1994 was the day his life changed forever, and his family had just begun. Over the next eight years they added three children, Ryan, Kayla, and Sara.

Clint worked hard to provide for his family through the years. One day on his way home from work he came upon a wreck. He was asked to lend a hand, as there weren't enough people that answered the call. It was that day that he first had the urge to become a volunteer firefighter.

He absolutely loved being able to help anyone and everyone. That was just his nature, and he never met a stranger. Clint even thought about taking classes to become an EMT, and we had no doubt that he would be a great one. Unfortunately, that was never to be. He contracted COVID and was sick for a very short time before his passing at age 46. He was a volunteer for Wiggins and South Central Fire Departments for almost two years.

Clint is survived by his wife, Wendy; their three children and their spouses; and five grandchildren, Dallas, Hayden, Bryson, Addley, and Carter.

We are so thankful that Clint and all the others that gave their all have been given the honor to be placed on this monument.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Kenneth Wayne Rainey

Bridgetown Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Driver/Engineer ★ December 14, 2020 ★ Age 51



Kenneth Wayne Rainey, age 51, was born September 23, 1969, in Memphis Tennessee, to Jessie and Elizabeth Rainey.

Kenneth was a wonderful father to his two daughters and two sons, Lindsey Sasse, Kaytlin Rogers, Zachariah Rainey, and Jessie Rainey.

Kenneth was a U.S. Army veteran and was a driver for Union Auto Parts.

As a child, Kenneth was always fascinated with firefighting. He became a volunteer fireman after his service in the U.S. Army and served his community until his death.

Kenneth was kindhearted and loved helping others. He is deeply missed by his family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Guandes Deshun “Mook” Smith

Sardis Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Captain ★ February 8, 2021 ★ Age 27

Guandes Deshun Smith, who everyone knew as “Mook,” passed just a few days shy of his 28th birthday. He left behind two children, ages 5 and 7, and a stepson, age 12.

Mook was kind, smart, very intelligent, and helpful. He always put the ones he loved the most first, and that’s what everyone loved about him. He was a great father, son, brother, and grandson.

His death was tragic to family, and no matter how many times we prepared ourselves for his passing, we weren’t ready to let him go.

He’ll forever be in our hearts.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Lee Tatum Sr.

Greenleaf Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Captain ★ March 25, 2021 ★ Age 66



Lee Edward “Buddy” Tatum Sr. was born in Memphis, Tennessee, to the late Hosie “Lee” and Shirley Tatum on August 16, 1954. Buddy was a welder and machine mechanist for most of his work life prior to retirement. Buddy was also well known for his generous heart and dedication to the community that he called home for 40 plus years.

He was a very dedicated part of the fire department for over 25 years. During his time of service, he was voted into various ranks and named Firefighter of the Year. He completed his training at the Mississippi State Fire Academy, in addition to various training courses for equipment, and EMS alongside fellow volunteers, including his son.

Buddy was a very devoted Christian man who loved his family and his church family dearly. He leaves behind his wife of nearly 50 years, Valerie “Jean” Tatum; daughter, Brandy Key, and her husband, Scott; son, Lee Edward “JR” Tatum Jr., and his wife, Jessica; and his six grandchildren, Adrian (Austin), Daniel, Summer, Autumn, Makayla, and Brooklyn.

He loved the Lord, good music, and fellowship. He was always up for a trip or vacation with his beautiful wife, whom he called “Baby Doll,” and a grandchild or two to tag along. He modeled to his daughter and son how to be an outstanding human. His grandbabies were his world, and he made sure they knew that often. Buddy was always a listening ear and a phone call away for so many and would always tell it to you straight and pray for you often. During his retirement he found himself more available to serve in so many ways to his family, church family, and his community.

During his downtime, you would most likely find him watching TV with his wife and dogs, sitting in his recliner, which no one was allowed to sit in, unless you were one of the grandbabies in his lap. After his newly found love for his chickens, he would often have “egg” stories to share. Usually, it was a quick brag on how many more eggs his chickens laid than yours. He was a jokester who could make you smile; that’s for sure.

Although so many hearts were shattered when he departed from this earth, his family and friends have found great comfort in knowing he is now in his heavenly home in the arms of Jesus. His earthly chains are gone, and he has been set free.

Andrew Starling Whittle Sr.

District One Volunteer Fire Department – Mississippi ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ October 7, 2021 ★ Age 58

Andrew Starling Whittle Sr. was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, to the late Grover Harry and Margaret Whittle on March 30, 1963. Andrew married his wife of 38½ years, Norma Sue, on March 27, 1983. They had two sons, Andrew Jr. and William Daniel.

Andrew always had a passion for taking things apart, just to see how they worked and how difficult it was to put them back together. He became a diesel mechanic and over the years would become a shop supervisor and shop manager. Everyone that worked with Andrew would come to love and respect not only the boss, but also the friend that he became. If you had a problem, Andrew was the man that could solve it.

When his sons were old enough to join the Boy Scouts, Andrew became a Boy Scout Leader, where he helped influence not only his boys but countless others. He wanted them to learn that life was about what you could do for others and the difference you could make in this world. He became a Mason at Robert Andrews Lodge #612 in Tunica, Mississippi, and eventually became the lodge's secretary, a lifetime position. The Boy Scouts and Masons taught Andrew valuable lessons on how to lead, follow, and become a man of great integrity.

A motor vehicle accident in 2003 took the life of their son, William Daniel, at the age of 15, which left the family devastated for years. That same year, Andrew and his wife became grandparents, and for the next seven years Andrew held his family a little closer, while trying to find his way in life.

In 2011, District One Fire Department was the opportunity for him to once again make a difference in the lives of others. He spent countless hours at the firehouse or on calls to better his community. Andrew and his son Andy provided the needed vehicles for Tate County firemen, countywide, to be trained in extrication. This provided a faster response time to aid and assist in MVAs with entrapments. Andrew was the assistant chief for District One VFD.

He was diagnosed with COVID in August of 2021 and on October 7, his watch came to an end. Andrew leaves behind his wife, Norma Sue; son, Andrew Jr.; and four granddaughters, Elizabeth, Madison, Aleigha, and Sophia, who know the true meaning of HERO—they call him Pawpaw.

Andrew was a true firefighter. He knew what caring for the older and younger generation meant. He had noble qualities, and he had love for his fellow man.

Our family and community are forever changed for knowing such a wonderful man.



Lloyd M. Ruediger

New Haven-Berger Fire Protection District – Missouri ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ June 26, 2023 ★ Age 84



Lloyd M. Ruediger was born in Berger, Missouri, on October 26, 1938, the son of the late LeRoy Sr. and Edna Minnie (Willimann) Ruediger. He was united in marriage to Myra Lea Groner on April 11, 1964, at St. Paul's Church in Berger, Missouri. Lloyd is survived by two sons, Greg Ruediger and wife, Michelle, and Rick Ruediger and wife, Pam; a daughter, Lisa Schaeffer, and husband, Chris; four grandchildren; and nine great-grandchildren.

Lloyd proudly served his country in the United States Army from October 1961 to September 1967 in the 92nd Artillery in Germany. He worked as a truck driver for Kellwood Manufacturing most of his life. He was a member of St. Paul's Church in Berger and a very dedicated member of the Berger Community Volunteer Fire Department, which would eventually become the New Haven-Berger Fire Protection District. Lloyd served in many ranks throughout his prestigious volunteer career, including chief, assistant chief, second assistant chief, captain, lieutenant, secretary, and treasurer. Lloyd's professional fire service accomplishments include Firefighter of the Year in 1999, 2004, and 2013; Officer of the Year in 2007 and 2017; and a CPR save on June 24, 2014.

In the few moments Lloyd wasn't serving his community with the fire department, he enjoyed hunting, fishing, and spending time with his family. Lloyd selflessly gave his life to the community in the line of duty on June 26, 2023, having served the community for 59 years.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Raymond M. Wynn

Kansas City Missouri Fire Department – Missouri ★ Career Captain ★ March 27, 2021 ★ Age 62

My husband, Captain Raymond Wynn, was with the Kansas City Fire Department for 32 years. He was extremely proud to be a firefighter and always said, "If you love what you do, you will never work a day in your life." Several words that best describe him are passionate, loyal, and positive. He was fiercely protective of his three independent, responsible, and talented kids, both sides of our blended family, and his brothers and sisters on the job while serving his community.

Ray will be remembered not only for his strong advocacy on behalf of firefighters, but also for his love of music, golf, and football.

Ray was diagnosed with three separate primary tumors on his tongue, neck, and lung. He was determined to do whatever it took to beat it and made sure his family, doctors, nurses, and friends all carried his positive mental attitude (PMA) through the last brutal five years of his fight. We expected him to beat lung cancer just as he fought tongue and neck cancer. Ultimately, he lost his decade-long battle with cancer on the evening of March 27, 2021, at home, surrounded by our love.

We were both convinced that all three types of his cancer diagnosis were due to exposures he encountered and the gear that he was provided during his career as a firefighter. Along with his children, Monica, Julie, and Dan, I continue the fight to educate and help provide a path for others who may have to deal with cancer and the associated care.

There is not a day that goes by, or a milestone of birthdays, weddings, and family get togethers, that we do not all miss him terribly. He didn't do anything small or quietly, and his infectious spirit has left a massive void in our hearts.

No amount of money can heal our hearts, but by being persistent and steadfast, we did receive judgement that his death was in fact a line-of-duty fatality. This will not bring Ray back to us, but there is a small comfort knowing that he would want us to be taken care of in his absence. There are several resources that Local #42 assisted with to help us navigate the medical and legal process. It is our hope that if another family inevitably must endure this brutal reality, these same resources are made available to them.

We could not have survived this journey for the last several years without our firefighter family and union support, as they were all consistently "on call" for our family, every day and every step of the way. We are blessed to be part of such a special group. First responders go above and beyond the line of duty to protect the communities they serve and never ask why.



Augusto “Augie” Acabou

Newark Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Career Captain ★ July 5, 2023 ★ Age 45



Augusto Domingos “Augie” Acabou, 45, perished in the line of duty while fighting a fire on July 5, 2023. Augie was a lifelong resident of Newark, born and raised in the Ironbound section. He graduated from East Side High School in 1996. Augie found employment with HMMH JFK Hospital in 1997, first in the linen department and later transitioning into a security officer position, which he held to date. In 2013, Augie graduated with Class 43 as a Newark firefighter, settling into a position with Engine 16.

Augie found great joy entertaining everyone around him by singing and playing guitar, playing practical jokes, doing impressions, and basically doing anything that would garnish a laugh and a smile. He was quite athletic, playing high school football with a brief career in boxing. Augie could also be found on the softball field with his hospital’s softball team and with the county league.

He was a simple man raised by a modest Portuguese family with good values. His character, however, was far more complex. Augie has been described as a selfless individual whose voice and smile instantly brought joy to all those around him. Those who knew him would often say he was the real-life Superman, even going as far as tying a cape around his neck while jumping off the balcony as a child, only to find himself flying into everyone’s hearts. And that he did. Augie’s humility was evident in his interactions with others. He never sought recognition or praise for his kindness and generosity. His quiet strength and genuine care for others touched the hearts of everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. He inspired you to be a better person.

The bond between Augie and his brothers, Miguel and Joao Acabou, was a source of strength and adoration. They stood by each other through thick and thin, sharing precious moments, laughter, and cherished memories. Augie valued his brothers

deeply and treasured the unique connection they had. During their time together, the three brothers created a tapestry of shared experiences, childhood adventures, and grown-up dreams. Their bond was forged not only by blood but by a genuine affection that transcended words.

He was the devoted and loving son of Manuel and Maria (Da Cunha) Acabou; beloved brother of Joao Acabou and his wife, Marlie, and Miguel Acabou; cherished uncle of James Acabou; loving grandson of Augusto Da Cunha. He is also survived by his life partner, Cynthia Gulics, and her daughter, Gillian; uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, and fellow firefighter brothers.

Augie’s loss leaves a void that can never be filled.

Wayne M. Brooks Jr.

Newark Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Career Captain ★ July 5, 2023 ★ Age 49

Wayne M. Brooks Jr. was born on June 3, 1974, in Glenridge, New Jersey. The son of Linda (Terry) and Wayne Brooks Sr., he graduated from St. Benedict's Prep in 1992. Wayne was an exceptional student and a successful athlete. He was a member of the first minority Sabre fencing team, "The Gray Bees," to make it to the Junior Olympics, representing St. Benedict's.

His life goal was to serve his community. Wayne made the decision to take the Newark Firefighter and Police examinations, where he achieved top scores in both, making him a sought-after recruit for both departments. After much consideration, knowing he had family members serving in law enforcement, he decided to make the brave decision to become a professional firefighter, graduating first in his class! Wayne served proudly in the Newark Fire Department for 16.5 years.

Wayne is known for his culinary skills throughout the Newark Fire Department, where he often prepared large meals for his colleagues that were Top Chef worthy. Wayne had a crabcake recipe that was worthy of a medal of honor from the president! During his career as an exemplary firefighter, he took many young recruits under his wing, teaching them the expert ways of how to become better firefighters. Wayne, always looking for the value in others, never judged, always giving them a chance. His fellow firefighters know "Bear" as a reliable, dependable, selfless member of the company, going above and beyond to make sure his fellow firefighters were supported, never seeking accolades or recognition.

Wayne was a devoted family man, leaving behind his wife, Michele Brooks; children, Taylor Brooks and Dasia Vaughn; mother, Linda Brooks; brother, Jason Brooks; sister, Tiffany Brooks; nephew, Kaiden Brooks; and niece, Skylar Davis. Wayne was extremely proud of his daughters' academic achievements. Dasia graduated from Ramapo College with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and Taylor graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a degree in nursing.

Wayne had a passion for the Chicago Bears, horror movies, bowling, mountain biking, fishing, blackjack, and was an avid gamer. His gaming family was part of Michele and Wayne's daily household life. One of Wayne's favorite shows is The Walking Dead, and his home was known as the haven if ever there was an apocalypse. Family and friends looked forward to their epic gatherings year-round where there was music, good times, good food, and lots of love. Everyone was welcome at Michele and Wayne's home.

Wayne left this world bravely doing what he loved, and we will forever hold him in our hearts as our Hero!



Anthony C. Duivenvoorde

Sussex Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ April 12, 2023 ★ Age 62



Anthony Cornelius “Tony” Duivenvoorde was born to Peter and Tina Duivenvoorde in Sussex, New Jersey, and was a lifelong resident of Wantage Township, New Jersey. He was a firefighter with the Sussex Fire Department.

Tony worked as a security guard for Comet Security of Vernon Township and was a former assistant manager at Foodtown. He was a Dallas Cowboys fan and enjoyed playing golf.

Tony was well known in the community as someone who put himself before others and was always willing to offer a helping hand.

Tony was the beloved husband of 30 years to Laura Duivenvoorde, the devoted father of Anthony Duivenvoorde, the dear brother of Peter Duivenvoorde (Lori) and Marla Donald, and the cherished uncle of Mackenzie Donald.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jeff M. Pfeiffer

Deptford Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 24, 2023 ★ Age 66

Jeff M. Pfeiffer joined the Almonesson Fire Company/Deptford Fire Department at age 17 as a junior firefighter, soon after becoming junior chief. At age 18, Jeff became a 2nd lieutenant in charge of training. The following year he was promoted to 1st lieutenant, a position he held for three years. He was then promoted to 2nd assistant chief for five years, followed by a promotion to station chief. Jeff served as chief for nine years, then stepped down to serve as a Class A firefighter. Eight years later, Jeff was promoted to captain and served in that position for five years. He served as battalion chief for 11 years, retiring from the position to become a driver/operator. Unfortunately, shortly after this, while backing the engine into the station from a call, Jeff went into cardiac arrest, which he did not survive. Jeff served a total of 50 years of active service.

Jeff served in numerous capacities over his many years of service. He was an Almonesson Fire Company Trustee for 20 years. He served as director of public safety (2 years), emergency management coordinator (8 years), president of the Deptford Fire Chiefs Association (9 years), Deptford fire training coordinator (11 years), Delaware Valley Fire Judges Association (35 years), Delaware Valley Fire Judges chief (24 years), and co-chairman of Deptford Township Police & Fire Memorial. He also served on the Gloucester County Hazardous Materials Committee and was the coordinator of the Foam Task Force for Gloucester County and Camden County.

Jeff received many community service awards. He introduced the first chief's car foam unit, tower ladder, and foam/brush truck to Deptford Township. He was the chairman of the Almonesson Fire Company 75th anniversary.

Jeff was also responsible for retrieving the first ladder truck in the town out of retirement and restoring it completely.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Timothy R. Pflieger

Keyport Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Chief ★ September 30, 2022 ★ Age 32



Timothy was born in Red Bank, New Jersey. He lived in Keyport for eight years and then moved to Holmdel. He was a graduate of Holmdel High School and Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, New Jersey. He loved baseball. He started playing travel baseball at age eight and continued through high school. He loved Notre Dame football, the New York Yankees, the New York Giants, and the New Jersey Devils.

Timothy was employed as a dispatcher for Holmdel Township for many years and then began working for the New Jersey State Department of Transportation on the road crew. He loved serving his hometowns and his community.

At the age of four, he started going to the firehouse with his dad. This is where his love of firefighting began. He became a cadet and, as soon as he was 18, he enrolled in the Monmouth County Fire Academy. After graduating from the academy, he became a member of Keyport Fire Patrol. He worked his way through the ranks as first lieutenant, captain, and then chief of the department. He was honored to follow his dad, who was chief in 2015. Timothy was also an active member of Holmdel Fire and Rescue #2 in Holmdel, New Jersey.

Timothy loved to learn all he could about firefighting. He was always continuing his education at the fire academy and had moved into the role of trainer for his department. His ability to network with other firefighters and township departments was his biggest strength. He was always offering advice, a calming voice, and his expertise to his fellow firefighters. He took command of each fire scene with confidence and good sense. His

catch phrase to his men was, "Let's Go Get It!" He is truly missed by Keyport and Holmdel Fire Departments.

Timothy leaves to honor his memory his parents, Chuck and Melanie; his sister, Angela; and his grandmother, Joan. Life without him will never be the same, but we know he died doing what he loved, serving his community proudly as chief. We are grateful and blessed for all the support from our firefighter brothers and sisters who continue to keep his legacy alive. A very special thank you to Keyport Fire Department and Holmdel Fire and Rescue 2 for honoring our boy and supporting our family.

Rest Easy, Chief Pflieger. 2266 forever.

Edward Steines

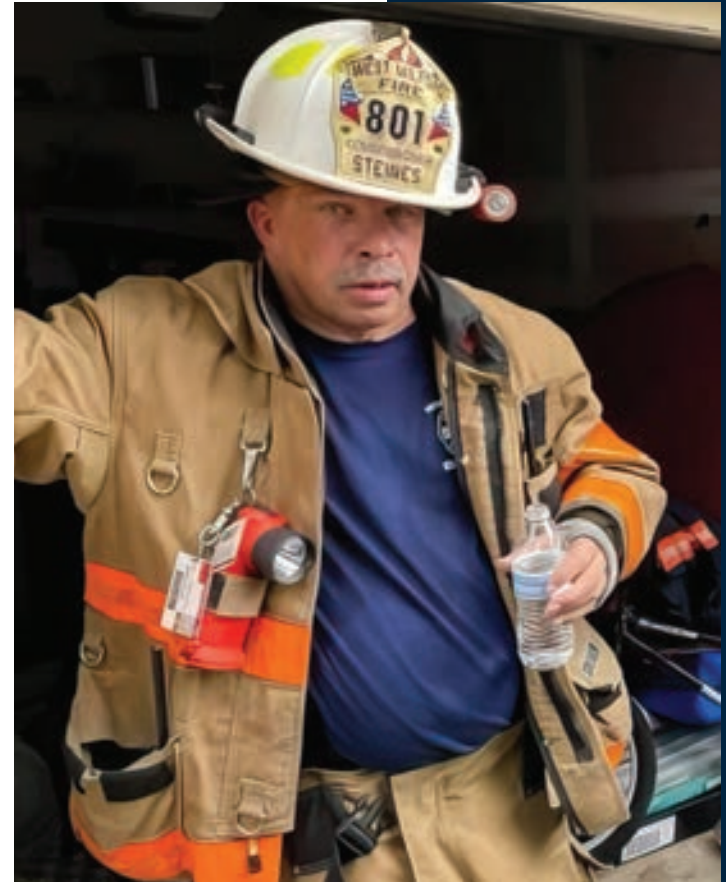
West Milford Fire Department – New Jersey ★ Volunteer Commissioner ★ August 16, 2023 ★ Age 64

Commissioner Edward “Ed” Steines served with the West Milford Fire Department for 45 years. He held the rank of chief of Company 3 for 13 of those years. In 2000, he was elected the department’s fire commissioner “801” and held that position until the day he passed. Additionally, Commissioner Steines was the municipal OEM coordinator for the township of West Milford for 12 years, a member of the West Milford First Aid Squad for 12 years, and was employed by the township DPW for 38 years, serving as the DPW director for the last seven years.

Ed was a mentor to all who worked with him and an even better friend. He loved being of service to others and was always there whenever anyone needed help. It was his true passion. Outside his service, he enjoyed being outdoors and painting and was a spirited Philadelphia Eagles fan.

He is survived by his wife, Michelle; his daughters, Kristi Steines-Curatolo (husband Michael), Rachel Steines (fiancé Michael Canzoneri), and Taylor Steines; Michelle’s daughter, Brittany; and his adored grandchildren, Ethan Yarger, Justin Curatolo, and Hunter Canzoneri.

Ed passed away at his home on August 16, 2023, following a response to a fire incident. He will always be remembered for his lifelong dedication to serving his community and being the “go-to” guy for so many. His family will always love and miss him and will forever cherish their memories of him.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Thomas W. Anderson Jr.

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ July 7, 2023 ★ Age 61



Firefighter Thomas William Anderson Jr. of Syosset, New York, passed away on the morning of July 7, 2023. He passed as a result of a nine-year battle with cancer, which was inflicted as a result of his selfless service as a 9/11 first responder.

Thomas, known as Tom, was born to Thomas Sr. and Marilyn Anderson, on November 21, 1961, in Manhattan, New York. He and his sister, Arlene, were raised by their parents in College Point, New York. Thomas Sr. was a lieutenant with the FDNY, inspiring Tom Jr.'s passion for the FDNY.

Tom joined the fire department at age 27 on July 5, 1988. He was assigned to Ladder 22 in Manhattan. He received two Unit Citations while in Ladder 22 and a Class 3 Medal, for which he was awarded the Pulaski Medal, an annual award given to a member of the FDNY who upheld the department's tradition for bravery, valor, and service. He eventually transferred to Ladder 140 in Ridgewood, Queens, and then to Squad 270. It was with Squad 270 that he, alongside fellow firefighters and other first responders, heroically responded to the search and cleanup efforts at Ground Zero on 9/11 and throughout the grim days that followed. He later worked at Ladder 162 in Queens Village until the end of his firefighting career. Tom lived his life passionate about the work he did as a firefighter, approaching every element with selflessness and bravery. His remarkable achievements have filled his family's hearts with immense pride.

Tom was always an energetic and active person. He loved to work out and lift weights. He encouraged and inspired this passion in his three children, nephews, and niece, and it is now part of his family legacy. He also had a passion for biking and was known for going on long challenging rides with his friends at the Massapequa Bike Club, but also loved going on more relaxed rides with his family

along the Jones Beach bike path. Tom was a positive influence on those around him with endless energy and determination to make the most out of every day.

Tom fought hard and bravely in his battle against cancer for nine long years. Despite spending so much time in and out of hospitals and doctor appointments, he never lost his sense of humor. Throughout his entire journey, he cracked jokes and made silly faces with those around him. He will forever be remembered for his quick sense of humor and his ability to make others laugh. Tom is survived by his wife, Barbara; his three children, Thomas III, Caitlin, and William; along with his daughter-in-law, Kenna, and son-in-law, Ben, who all love him and miss him so much.

Jason D. Arno

Buffalo Fire Department – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ March 1, 2023 ★ Age 37

Jason D. “Jay” Arno died on March 1, 2023, from injuries sustained while fighting a structure fire at a commercial building.

Jay lit up every room he walked into. North Buffalo born, he attended St. Rose of Lima grade school before attending Canisius High School. He entered the culinary arts program at Erie Community College, which allowed him the opportunity to intern as a chef in Italy.

After many years in the restaurant business working both front and back of the house, Jay decided to enlist in the Buffalo fire academy. He graduated and became a Buffalo Fire Fighter in 2019. It was one of the greatest achievements of his entire life. He was proud to serve and protect his community and work alongside the brave men and women of the Buffalo fire department.

Jay and his then fiancée welcomed a baby girl in June 2019 and were wed in September 2022. Jay was a devoted husband and an adoring father to his wife, Sarah, and daughter, Olivia. He lived and breathed for his family.

He is also survived by seven siblings, his parents, and countless friends. He was cherished by all who knew him and left an unforgettable mark on every life he touched. He is greatly missed.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Edward “Red” Corrigan

North Patchogue Fire District – New York ★ Volunteer Fire Police Officer ★ February 26, 2021 ★ Age 83



Edward “Red” Corrigan was born in Patchogue, New York, on June 5, 1937, to Martha and Edward Corrigan. After graduation from Patchogue High School, he proudly served his country in the U.S. Army as a paratrooper.

Red was an active member of the North Patchogue Fire Department for 53 years at the time of his passing. Over the course of his fire service, he attained the rank of lieutenant of the fire police, captain of the department, and was posthumously awarded the rank of honorary chief.

Red was part of the Patchogue Fire Department racing team, the Forty Thieves. He later served as an official for local and state fire department tournaments.

Red was the president of the Brookhaven Town Volunteer Firefighters Museum for many years. During his tenure, the museum expanded greatly with the addition of acquired fire trucks and memorabilia.

His love of being a firefighter included being the head mechanic at the Holtsville Fire Department, where he made sure all the equipment was in top condition.

His public service was not limited to the fire department. He served in the Brookhaven Town Code Enforcement, where he rose to the rank of lieutenant and served for several decades. He also served for a time with the Suffolk County Police Department as a provisional police officer.

His private life was just as important, as he was a trustee at the First Baptist Church of Patchogue. He was also part of the sound team. He and his wife, Nancy, served together weekly in the Awana children’s program.

Red was a loving family man, leaving behind his wife of nearly 60 years, Nancy, as well as a daughter, Donna (and husband, Mike). Red was predeceased by his daughter, Laura, four years earlier. Red loved his four grandchildren, Michael, Andrew, Melissa, and Erick, as well as his six great-grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.

He found time for several hobbies that he really enjoyed, including photography—he took his camera wherever he went. Red loved to color pictures, which he gave to everyone. Mostly, they were encouraging Bible verses. He loved trains and had built his own layout. He also had a love for NASCAR and had the opportunity to go to several races.

Edward “Red” Corrigan died in the line of duty on February 26, 2021, and will be missed greatly and remembered by all who knew him.

Peter E. Dromms

North Syracuse Fire Department – New York ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 25, 2023 ★ Age 77

Peter E. Dromms was born in Lansingburg, New York, to the late Henry H. and Elizabeth Dromms on August 9, 1945. Pete graduated from North Syracuse High School in 1963. After graduation, he enlisted in the United States Navy, serving on the USS Allen Sumner during the Vietnam War until October of 1967. After his military service, Pete worked for Verizon as a technical support engineer for 36 years before retiring. He continued his public service with the fire department up to the day that he succumbed to his injuries on March 25, 2023, 2½ months after suffering a cardiac event while fighting a residential fire on January 13, 2023.

Pete was the longest serving operational member of the North Syracuse Volunteer Fire Department, serving 55 faithful years. He joined the fire department on November 7, 1967, and never stopped responding to emergencies. He held several positions during those years, including chief of fire from 1979 to 1983, fire warden, association treasurer, association president and chairman of the board of directors. He received several awards for his efforts and leadership, including Officer of the Year in 2004, and Firefighter of the Year in 1997 and 2015.

Pete spent his summers in Old Forge, New York, where he proudly served with the Old Forge Fire Department and Ambulance Corps. He became affectionately known as “Cowboy Pete,” as he was hardly ever seen without his cowboy hat. He was known for calling the push ball tournament at the yearly fire school and Bingo on Monday nights at the fire hall.

Pete always had something to say. Whether it was a story from the past or an educational moment, he could chat your ear off at any time of the day or all day. He was a teacher to many over the years, with some still learning from him up to the day that he departed this earth. He was always dedicated to his family, whether it was home family or fire department family. Pete leaves behind his wife of 52 years, Gail Dromms; children, Jennifer (Mark) Burkhart and Patricia (Michael) Moore; and grandchildren, Madison Burkhart, Riley Burkhart, Mackenzie Moore, and Martin Moore.

Pete’s story and legacy will forever live on through the love that he shared with his family, the fire service, and the community that he served. He was a hero to many and will never be forgotten.



Rebecca “Beckie” Eleczko

Millgrove Volunteer Fire Department – New York ★ Volunteer Lieutenant/EMT ★ January 4, 2021 ★ Age 32



Rebecca “Beckie” Eleczko was born in December of 1988. She attended and graduated from Buffalo Traditional High School.

Beckie came from a firefighting family. Her father, Bob, was the chief at the time of her passing. Several other family members are or were active with the Millgrove Volunteer Fire Department, including her Uncle Chris (past chief), her brother, Brandon (assistant chief), and her grandmother, Karin (past EMS captain). Her cousin, Jake, is a member of the Depew Fire Department, and another cousin, Caitlyn, is a past member of the Bowmansville Fire Department.

Beckie said from a very young age that she wanted to become a firefighter and help people, and she was so very proud when she became a member of the Millgrove Volunteer Fire Department. Her proudest day was when she became a NYS certified EMT and was on the path to becoming an instructor like her grandmother, “Trauma Mama.”

Beckie is also survived by her sister, Kayla, with whom she had an inseparable bond. They enjoyed texting and talking constantly throughout every day. It was not uncommon for the two of them to just hop in the car and head two hours to Erie, Pennsylvania, for some Krispy Kremes or just a random concert anywhere the car would take them.

Beckie had a profound love for her family and every animal that crossed her path, but none more than her turtle, Painter, and her dog, Mufasa.

Also left with her memory are her Uncle Dan, Aunt Tammy, Aunt Shelly, and cousin, Ryan (“our Marine”), as well as too many friends to mention who miss her smile every day.

Beckie was honored in 2022 at the National EMS Memorial in Arlington, Virginia. In honor of Beckie, her family was accompanied by over 20 of her “fire family” and friends from the Buffalo area. Beckie is the first person in the history of the Millgrove Volunteer Fire Department to have their number permanently retired.

Dennis A. Farrell

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ February 23, 2021 ★ Age 58

On February 23, 2021, the FDNY lost another beloved member due to a September 11-related illness with the passing of Dennis A. Farrell.

Born on November 12, 1962, Dennis was a graduate of North Rockland High School's Class of 1980. He attended St. Thomas Aquinas College and later received a nursing degree from Orange County Community College.

Dennis came from a long line of firefighters with his father, brothers, uncles, and cousins serving on the job. In 1990, after serving six years as a New York City correction officer at Rikers Island, he joined the FDNY. He called Ladder Company 59 in The Bronx his "home away from home" for 12 years until his retirement in 2002. Dennis's years with the FDNY were among the best in his life, and this was where his fellow firefighters became his brothers. The firehouse also helped cultivate his passion for cooking, for which everyone around him was thankful.

He was an outdoorsman who loved fishing, hunting, and camping. He spent his life in service to others and was involved in numerous fundraising activities. Specifically, Dennis was a tireless supporter of St. Baldrick's Foundation, a volunteer-driven charity that supports research to find cures for childhood cancer. He was the running captain of his team, and he often lent his time and culinary skills for fundraising events throughout the year.

A devoted and loving husband, father, son, brother, uncle, Grumpa, and friend, Dennis was kind and generous, gentle and fun, loving and honorable—a man who loved and lived life fully and is missed by many. If you were fortunate enough to know Dennis, hopefully you can still hear his contagious laugh or recall a precious memory.

Dennis's final act of selfless generosity was that of an organ donor. Life as we knew it is forever changed, but we take great comfort knowing he rests in God's "perfect peace."



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Russell Feliciano

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 10, 2022 ★ Age 62



Born in Brooklyn Hospital on February 19, 1959, Russell grew up in a household with four siblings and his mother and father. When Russell was older, the family moved to Brentwood, New York, where Russell graduated from high school and received a wrestling scholarship to Southern Connecticut State College. He was recognized for honorable service in the United States Armed Forces.

With a push from his beloved father, Richard Feliciano, who died in the line of duty after 35 years at FDNY Engine 224, Russell began his career with FDNY. He served with Ladder 108/Engine 216, Ladder 104/Engine 221, Ladder 146/Engine 229, and retired from Ladder 111/Engine 214, “The Nut House.” Russell went by the nickname “The Hammer.” On January 10, 2022, in his home in Florida, Russell would finally be at peace after battling health issues due to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Before his departure, he wrote a book, Forgotten Heroes of Ground Zero, in tribute to all heroes who lost their lives that day. Russell loved being a firefighter and lived up to the name “The Bravest,” knowing there is no higher level of respect than serving with the FDNY.

Russell wasn’t just a firefighter. He was a beloved husband and father to his wife, Yi Juan, and his daughter, Selena Feliciano. When not with the FDNY, he was an entertainer for children’s parties and would paint faces and DJ. Russell also visited children’s hospitals as Santa, the Easter bunny, and other fun characters. He helped run fundraisers and school activities with PTAs. It became a family business and time to bond together as a family and create memories for those we served.

Russell loved to cook for his family and friends, inviting them to his home and making it a “vacation from their own life.” He spent many hours taking care of his home so others could enjoy it, which made him happy. His door was always open to all. Even if it had been years since you had seen him, he was ready to sit down and have a chat. Russell loved to crack jokes and talk to everyone. He made friends everywhere he went, and he always “knew a guy who knew a guy.”

Russell was also a devoted grandfather to his grandson, Giovanni Anthony. One of his happiest joys was becoming a grandfather. Though he was only a part of Giovanni’s life for a year, he made a big impact, and his grandson will always know his abuelo. Russell was an amazing man that will forever be missed but never forgotten.

John P. Fogarty

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ August 25, 2020 ★ Age 81

John P. Fogarty, known as “Jack,” died from illness related to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Many of his fellow firefighters from Ladder Company 3 in Manhattan died in the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, and he spent many days searching for them at Ground Zero. He retired after more than 40 years of service with the FDNY. Throughout his entire career he was a member of Ladder Company 3. In 1977, he received the Thomas E. Crimmins Medal from the Bathhouse Fire. Modest by nature, he considered himself lucky to be a fireman and would have said he was just doing his job.

Jack loved being at home with his family on Long Island but loved being at the firehouse as well. One of his favorite things to do was plan a meal that he would cook for the guys during his tour. He would shop around his grocery stores on Long Island getting the best deals. He prided himself on cooking a four-course meal for \$4 a guy. Needless to say, his fellow firefighters enjoyed working on the same tours as Jack.

Jack was a father of three and a U.S. Army veteran. Known as a family man, he prided himself on the relationships he had with his wife, children, brothers, nephews, nieces, and grandchildren. He lived a life with a code of honesty, respect, and finding good in all situations. Fogarty not only inspired members of his family to be like him but young members of the department as well. Current members of Ladder Company 3 say Jack left a legacy that they all aspire to follow. The corner of the street where he lived on Long Island was dedicated in his honor in 2022.

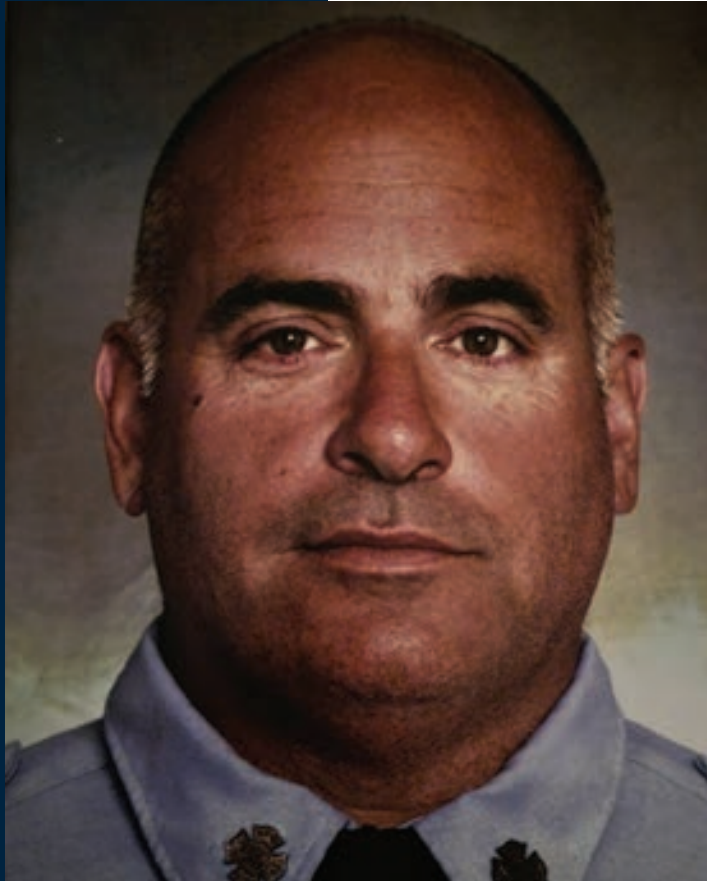
He is remembered as a true American hero who dedicated his life to helping people—a great fireman who never wanted to quit and a great man who was a hero to his children and grandchildren. Jack touched the lives of many and was often considered everyone’s best friend.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Frederick H. Gallagher

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ March 1, 2022 ★ Age 61



Frederick Gallagher was born on January 2, 1961, in Brooklyn, New York. Born to Frederick and Lillian Gallagher, he was the eldest of his four siblings. When Fred was six, the Gallagher family set roots in West Islip, where Fred's remarkable story unfolded.

Fred's high school years at West Islip High School were marked by his athletic prowess. A dedicated member of the wrestling team, varsity baseball catcher, and a formidable presence on both sides of the football field as defensive tackle and fullback, Fred showcased his versatility and passion for sports.

His educational journey continued at NY Tech, where he pursued a major in business. Fueling his love for sports, Fred earned certification as a baseball umpire, eventually officiating varsity baseball for Eastern Suffolk Baseball. He shared his knowledge and love of football, starting by coaching 11-year-olds in the youth football league and then coaching high school football for over 35 years. His coaching career culminated as the defensive coordinator at St. Anthony's Catholic High School.

In March of 1986, Fred made a pivotal decision, following in his father's footsteps to join the FDNY. Over his 26-year career, he served with dedication and pride in the same firehouse on Sheffield Avenue, in East New York, beginning in the engine company and later transferring to the ladder company. Fred cherished every moment, often describing it as "the greatest job in the world." He embraced the excitement of every run and operation, along with the unparalleled camaraderie that came with it.

September 11, 2001, left an indelible mark on Fred's life. Engaging in the rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero, he later contributed to the clean-up on a month-long detail. Fred retired in May 2012. Tragically, on March 1, 2022, Fred succumbed to a

9/11-related illness, leaving an enduring legacy.

In July 2001, six weeks before the tragic events of 9/11, Fred tied the knot with his beloved, Ellen. Together, they reveled in the joy of boating and shared a passion for travel, camping adventures, and a love for live music. Their life together was filled with love and laughter.

Fred's impact extended beyond the field and firehouse. A mentor at heart, he provided guidance to countless individuals, earning the respect and admiration of those he coached and mentored. His passing has left an immense void in the hearts of his wife and family and in the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing him. Fred Gallagher's legacy lives on in the lives he touched and the inspiration he provided to all who crossed his path.

Michael H. Gebert

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ September 11, 2022 ★ Age 28

Michael Gebert was just 28 years old when he passed away on the morning of September 11, 2022.

Michael was appointed to the Fire Department of New York on June 27, 2016. Upon graduating from the fire academy, Mike was assigned to Engine Company 324 in the Corona section of Queens, New York. His willingness to tackle any task and his infectious smile made him a beloved member of the company. He was that person that would drop everything to help family, friends, or even a stranger.

He was an alum of Saint Francis Preparatory High School and Saint John’s University of New York. He volunteered at Saint Francis Preparatory as a football coach and played hockey, basketball, and softball in fire department and local recreational leagues. His love for his favorite sports teams, the New York Rangers, Mets, and Jets, was only topped by the love he had for his family and friends.

Mike survived two previous battles with cancer, once as a teen and the second as a young firefighter. In 2014, Mike competed in the New York City Marathon to raise funds for pediatric cancer research. No one would ever know Mike was battling cancer; he never complained and always had a smile on. He had an ability to make everyone around him a better person.

Mike is survived by his mother, Elizabeth; father, Thomas; brothers, Matthew and Brendan; and sister, Jennifer. They created the FF Michael Gebert Memorial Foundation in his honor. This foundation holds true to the values that Mike held so close to his heart, rare pediatric cancer research and helping families in their fight with cancer. Mike is greatly missed by all who knew him, but his legacy of giving and kindness will carry on.

“93 to infinity”



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Wayne T. Goehring

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ July 19, 2021 ★ Age 51



Wayne Goehring died from illness related to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. A native of Queens, New York, he served with the FDNY, Engine 311, for 11 years, from 1999 until his retirement in 2010. He was survived by his wife, Debra, and his three daughters, Lianna, Stephanie, and Carly.

When I think of Wayne, I think of my Hero. He was a hero to many on the day of 9/11, but for our family, he was ours every day. He was a husband, and a dad to his three girls who he taught the art of music, camping, and just about everything.

When off duty from the firehouse, he was an electrician and a drummer. He was talented in many trades and creative with his hands. He loved the outdoors and took long hikes daily. He was a true inspiration with lots of energy each day. Even after we found out about his illness, he kept up his positive outlook on life.

I am so thankful for the time we had with him and will never forget!

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Steven H. “Bullwinkle” Harris Jr.

Fort Johnson Volunteer Fire Company – New York ★ Volunteer 2nd Assistant Chief ★ February 13, 2023 ★ Age 57

For more than 40 years, Steve devoted his life to the Fort Johnson Volunteer Fire Company. Beginning in the early 80s as a teenager, he was a member of their Explorer Post through the Boy Scouts and later became a full, active member of the company. He came up through the ranks and held various positions.

He was a mentor to many and a fount of information for fire-related topics. His most recent rank was 2nd assistant chief, and he served as the department’s historian and financial secretary. Steve stood shoulder to shoulder with his fellow members as they dealt with the tragedy of others, and many were there with him in his final hours. Steve was awarded life membership when he reached 20 years of membership. Steve previously worked for GAVAC when they were all volunteer years ago.

Steve had two children, Tori and Brandon; one stepchild, Ryan; and three grandchildren, Gabriella, Isabella, and Cecilia. Steve’s daughter, Tori, is currently serving as 2nd captain with the Fort Johnson Volunteer Fire Company and working towards life membership with 16 years of service. Steve adored his son, Brandon, and his granddaughters, Gabriella and Isabella, oftentimes meeting at the firehouse so the girls could learn about the trucks and what Grandpa did. Steve loved his children and shared an unbreakable bond with all three of his granddaughters.

Known by many as Bullwinkle, Steve was an avid Bills fan.

Steve loved the firehouse and considered the people there his second family. Fellow members shared their memories of Steve. *He may have had a stern voice, but he always had a soft heart. He was a great mentor, leader, and friend. He was quick-witted and always had a joke ready. Every time he saw me, he would put his arm around me and say, “Hey kid, you know I love you, right?”* – Chief Jaime Swezey

One of my favorite memories with my father was when he first took me up in the bucket of the tower. When he was showing me the controls and how to operate them, I knew I wanted to follow after him and dedicate my life to being a firefighter like he was. He may have been harder on me than others, but I knew it was because he didn’t want anyone to think I was getting special treatment. I cherish everything he taught me. When I look back over the years we had with my father, some of my favorite memories with him were at the firehouse.



Robert J. Kelly

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Fire Marshal ★ December 20, 2020 ★ Age 61



Robert J. Kelly Jr. was a strong and courageous man with a heart of gold. Robert was born to Mary and Robert Kelly in Levittown, New York, in 1959. He was a graduate of Division Avenue High School, Class of 1977. After high school, he went on to study hotel management at SUNY Delhi, New York. After a successful career in the restaurant business, Robert joined the NYC Fire Department as a firefighter on September 8, 1991. He was assigned to Ladder 128 in Queens. On March 31, 2007, Robert was promoted to fire marshal at Fort Totten, Queens, where he served the city of New York until he retired in August 2012.

While his career with the FDNY was important to him, nothing compared to the love and devotion he had for his family. In 1987, Robert married Jacqueline Schouten and later had four girls, Nicole, Kristie, Jaime, and Jillian. Family was the pillar and strength in Robert's life; there wasn't anything more important to him. His legacy lives on in his girls with the morals and wisdom they each have, the strength to persevere in hard times, and the love they have for each other.

Robert fought courageously after his brain cancer diagnosis in July 2019, which was a result of his work as a firefighter in NYC on and after 9/11. He passed away on December 20, 2020, while surrounded by his loved ones and brothers of the FDNY.

He is survived by his wife, Jackie Kelly; four daughters, Nicole, Kristie, Jaime, and Jillian; and grandson, Leo. Since Robert's passing, he has had three more grandchildren, Lucia Mignano, Nora Wittenberg, and Rory Robert Dutton. He is also survived by his two sisters, Sheila Kelly and Susan Papalia (Kelly).

All those who had the honor of knowing Robert knew he was a genuine, kind, loyal, give you the shirt off his back kind of guy. He is remembered for his sense of humor, his incredible ability to fix anything, and for his love of unreliable sports teams (Let's go, Mets and Giants!). The man enjoyed the simple things in life, classic rock and a cold beer, but above all he put his family first.

The loss of Robert was a great loss in so many ways. We lost a husband, father, and best friend. He was the guiding force in all our lives. His bright and generous spirit is missed by so many.

David M. Lachenauer

City of Watertown Fire Department – New York ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ March 23, 2018 ★ Age 61

David M. Lachenauer was born June 27, 1956, in Watertown, New York, to George and Helen Lachenauer. He graduated from Watertown High School in 1974, received an associate degree from Corning Community College, and had almost completed a bachelor's degree at Empire State College when he became ill. One of his proudest accomplishments was his graduation from the Executive Fire Officer Program.

Dave joined the City of Watertown Fire Department in 1985 and was a dedicated part of the department for over 32 years. He was a battalion chief, president of the union for 13 years, and treasurer for four years. He served as 2nd District vice president of New York State Professional Firefighters Association, IAFF state representative, 2nd District health and safety representative for NYSPFF Association, trustee for Jefferson, St. Lawrence, and Lewis Counties Central Trades, and fire coordinator for the Jefferson County HAZMAT Team. He also found time to be an EMT instructor/coordinator, code enforcement officer, building inspector, zoning enforcement officer, installer for Hayes Fire Equipment, chief of Three Mile Bay Volunteer Fire Department, and a driver for Anchor Motor Freight.

Dave loved and was deeply devoted to his wife of 30 years, Cindy; children, Jason West, Sarah Burke, Jamie Jesmer, and Laura Myers; and grandchildren, Tyler West, Dekota West, Garrett West, and Liam Lachenauer. He was so proud of his family. One of his goals was to make sure his men (his second family) were safe and made it home to their families at the end of their shift. The men knew they could come to him with any question, and he would give them an honest and straightforward answer. Dave did not beat around the bush.

On 9/11/2001, Dave was at Fort Totten for First Line Supervisors Training, when the FDNY came and asked the class for help. They were sent down before the second building collapsed. This experience changed Dave forever, giving him greater appreciation of his family and life and the drive to learn more about this changing world. He encouraged our children to pursue a higher education, and seeing all four of them achieve this goal gave him a thirst for more knowledge and opportunity. He felt you had to practice what you preach.

Dave loved hunting, fishing, and going to auctions. He was a formidable card player and had a wicked sense of humor. To this day, people come up to me telling me how he helped them. He was tough as nails on the outside, with a heart as big as all outdoors. No words can express how much we miss him, but we know he will always watch over us and how blessed we were to have him in our lives.



Leonard Llewellyn

Mattituck Fire Department – New York ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ August 24, 2023 ★ Age 82



Leonard “Lenny” Llewellyn was a 53-year member of the Mattituck Fire Department (MFD) in Mattituck, Long Island, New York. Since joining the MFD in 1970, he achieved the rank of lieutenant. During his service in 1985, Leonard also served as one of the founding fathers of the MFD Junior “Bulldog” Fire Department program. The overall goal of the program was to promote fire safety among school-age individuals and communicate the fire department’s role in serving the community. His principal responsibilities within the department were in traffic management, safety, and communications. As a safety officer, he rose to the rank of captain in Fire Police Company #5. Lenny also served as the MFD’s official photographer.

In both 1992 and 2002, Lenny was honored by the MFD as Fireman of the Year. He also served as president for the North Fork Volunteer Fireman’s Association from 1996 to 1998.

Mr. Llewellyn owned and operated a fire extinguisher company with residential and commercial customers throughout the east end of Long Island. He was active in the local historical society and was an active member of the local Coast Guard Auxiliary. During his service in the Coast Guard Auxiliary, Leonard received several award citations, including a Coast Guard Unit Commendation (5 times), a Secretary’s Outstanding Unit Award, a Presidential Unit Citation, an Auxiliary Membership Service Award (2 times), and a Special Operations Service Ribbon.

He also taught a boating safety course for hundreds of youngsters and adults through the United States Power Squadron.

One of his personal interests was monitoring weather conditions for the National Weather Service. Each day Leonard would gather and forward weather statistics collected in his backyard to a centralized location on Long Island.

At the age of 82, while responding to a fire call, Lenny was hit by a car while crossing a street in a designated crossing area just a block away from the firehouse. He sustained massive internal injuries and died two days later.

According to a statement from the department, Lenny was a pillar of the fire prevention program. Residents of Mattituck remember Leonard Llewellyn as a compassionate and committed lifelong member of the community.

James C. Mager

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ April 8, 2023 ★ Age 61

James C. Mager was born in The Bronx, New York, to the late FDNY Lieutenant Harry J. Mager and Loretta O’Keefe Mager on April 2, 1962. He was the youngest of six children—three girls, three boys. Following in his father’s footsteps, Jimmy joined the Fire Department of New York in 1989. He is credited with 20 years of service to the department, in addition to serving four years in the United States Navy.

As an FDNY firefighter, Jimmy served the good people of Woodhaven, New York, and the surrounding areas of Queens and Brooklyn out of Engine Company 293, known as “The Woodhaven Wildcats.” He mainly served as chauffeur at 293 and oftentimes fulfilled assignments at other departments, constantly gaining new insights and tactics, a continuous education.

Additionally, Jimmy worked tirelessly as a plumber and electrician with some of his FDNY brothers. These skill sets would serve him tremendously on the job as a firefighter and provide the needed income to help raise his family.

As a child, Jimmy faced a number of challenges. At the age of eight he was diagnosed with Perthes disease, a rare condition in children in which the blood supply is disrupted and the femur deteriorates. A brace was designed for him at the Hospital for Special Surgery, but this did not slow Jimmy down. He actually played on the local basketball team with the brace!

Such challenges shaped his character and his values. In a few years’ time he recovered, obtained a black belt in karate, and continuously enjoyed all physical activities including running, swimming, and bike riding. He spent his childhood in Parkchester in The Bronx, surrounded by his five siblings and many dear friends, and later moved to his treasured home in Long Beach. All of us loved to hear and continue to share Jimmy’s many stories. We are comforted today when we are reminded of the richness of his much too short life.

As is the case with so many, Jimmy suffered the scars of 9/11. He was diagnosed with very aggressive small cell lung cancer and succumbed to his illness on April 8, 2023. He leaves behind his wife, Kathy; son, Michael; granddaughter, Micah; and siblings, Lynn, Henry, and Elizabeth. He will join his parents; his sister, Laurie; and his brother, Matthew, in heaven. We are all comforted in the knowledge that Jimmy Mager will not be forgotten!



Anthony Malfi

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ June 8, 2021 ★ Age 53



Brooklyn born and bred, Firefighter Anthony Malfi defined what it meant to be a New Yorker. Every day he woke up and bettered himself, always helping a neighbor along the way. On the City of New York's most infamous day, September 11, 2001, and the endless days after, Anthony would show up when his neighbors needed it most. At the time, Anthony was living on Staten Island with his wife, Sally, and six-year-old son Michael, while serving with Engine 243/ Ladder 168. During his service in Bensonhurst, Anthony served as a chief's aid. He served for eight years, until his retirement in 2004.

The Fire Department of New York was not the first time Anthony served his city. He was a member of the Department of Correction from 1990 to 1996. Anthony served Maximum Corrections on Rikers Island, and the most lighthearted thing to come from it is Anthony winning MVP of the prison-wide softball tournament. In 1998, his daddy's girl, Madison, was born, and even after his passing Anthony curated a beautiful life for his wife and children.

Anthony was a role model to many, well beyond his children. While we have admiration for those who served at Ground Zero, those around Anthony admired him as an individual. Anthony was someone who believed in you and wanted to help you see it through. Anything he ever did, he always saw through. If anyone who knew him ever needed a helping hand, a word of advice, or a shoulder to cry on, they looked to him. He wore many hats and took great pride in whatever he devoted himself to. He always gave it his all. His effort and actions as a husband and father are the reason behind days like Father's Day.

Anthony's friends were his family and knew they could count on him for anything. Some of his closest friends were from teenage years, DJing in the 80s, or the early 2000s when Anthony found his passion for golf. In his usual nature, he had to try to be the best golfer he could.

In between his time in the FDNY and his time on the green, he owned and operated a highly successful contracting business. Anthony was the hardest worker most people knew. He was a mentor to his many employees who to the present day are still proudly working in his honor. His last accomplishment in life would've been Master Plumber, but during his test prep course in 2019, he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer as a result of his service at the World Trade Center.

May Anthony forever be remembered for his selfless nature, in which he made the ultimate sacrifice.

Anthony N. Mauro

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 27, 2023 ★ Age 34

Anthony N. Mauro was born April 14, 1988, in New York City, New York. Tony was a beloved father and husband and the best friend and colleague that anyone could ask for. He was a six-year veteran of the FDNY. He tragically lost his long-fought battle with grade-4 glioblastoma brain cancer on January 27, 2023. Tony was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his wife, Ally, and two young children, Chiara and Anthony.

Tony loved his job and was so proud to be a firefighter. During his time off, he loved traveling and making memories with his family. Tony was fearless, authentic, and lived each day to the fullest. Tony was someone you could always count on, and he did whatever he could to help others. He found laughter, even in some of the most difficult of times. He was a true light in the world who inspired all who knew him and even those who did not have the opportunity to. He taught us to never give up and to fight 'til the very end. Tony departed this earth on a high note and was finally at peace after so much suffering. Knowing he is at rest with the Lord brings comfort to his family and friends, who miss him every day and love him so very much.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

James F. McCauley Jr.

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Lieutenant ★ September 20, 2022 ★ Age 64



Born in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, on June 15, 1958, James F. McCauley Jr. was the first of four children born to James F. and Joan McCauley.

The family moved to Staten Island, where Jim attended St. Rita's Grammar School, McKee High School, and was a parishioner of Holy Catholic Church for over 50 years.

Jim was extremely athletic and while attending McKee High School, he played and excelled in varsity basketball, baseball, and hockey. He coached the Mid-Island Babe Ruth team and assisted with the travel hockey team his young son, James, played goalie for.

From the time he was a young boy and would visit his father at the firehouse, Jim's dream was to become a fireman. As a young man, he followed his passion and joined the FDNY in 1979. He worked in Harlem, New York, for 22 years before rising to the rank of lieutenant. Throughout his career, Jim received multiple commendations for saving lives.

Continuing his fondness for hockey, Jim played on FDNY's hockey team for a number of years. As an avid NY Rangers fan, he enjoyed attending countless hockey games at Madison Square Garden with his son. He also enjoyed traveling south in the winter months to spend time fishing with his good friend Greg in the Florida Keys.

Jim retired from the FDNY in April 2011 after 32 years of service. He and his wife, Robyn, moved to Conway, South Carolina, in September 2013. He loved living in South Carolina and would always say, "It's a beautiful day in paradise." Jim was an outstanding cook and enjoyed preparing delicious meals for his wife and himself. He often prepared enjoyable dishes for special community events. An avid golfer, Jim enjoyed playing numerous rounds of golf with his wife and friends on many of the beautiful golf courses South Carolina has to offer. When not golfing or cooking, you could find Jim working outside in his meticulously kept garden. He loved

planting colorful, seasonal flowers to enhance and brighten the landscape surrounding his home. In his home that he loved so much, Jim enjoyed relaxing in his favorite chair, reading his books.

On St. Patrick's Day, you would find Jim in the kitchen making corned beef and cabbage as the sounds from his FDNY bagpipe CDs filled the air. He loved listening to his Irish music, especially The Makem Brothers and The FDNY Pipes and Drums.

Jim served in the rescue and recovery efforts at Ground Zero on September 11, 2001, and for several months afterwards. In 2021, he was diagnosed with 9/11 related cancers and passed away at home on September 20, 2022. He is deeply missed every day by his wife and soulmate as well as his family.

Brian E. O’Flaherty

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ December 3, 2022 ★ Age 80

Brian O’Flaherty, a decorated member of the FDNY, died from illness related to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Following in his father’s footsteps, he joined the FDNY. Brian began his career in Brooklyn at Ladder 105 where his father served, and later served as a lieutenant at Ladder 102. He moved to Manhattan, where he spent 12 years as the captain of Rescue 1. Later, he worked as a captain’s representative for the Uniformed Fire Officers Association and as a battalion chief in the 9th Battalion in Midtown. He finished his 38-year career as Chief of Safety.

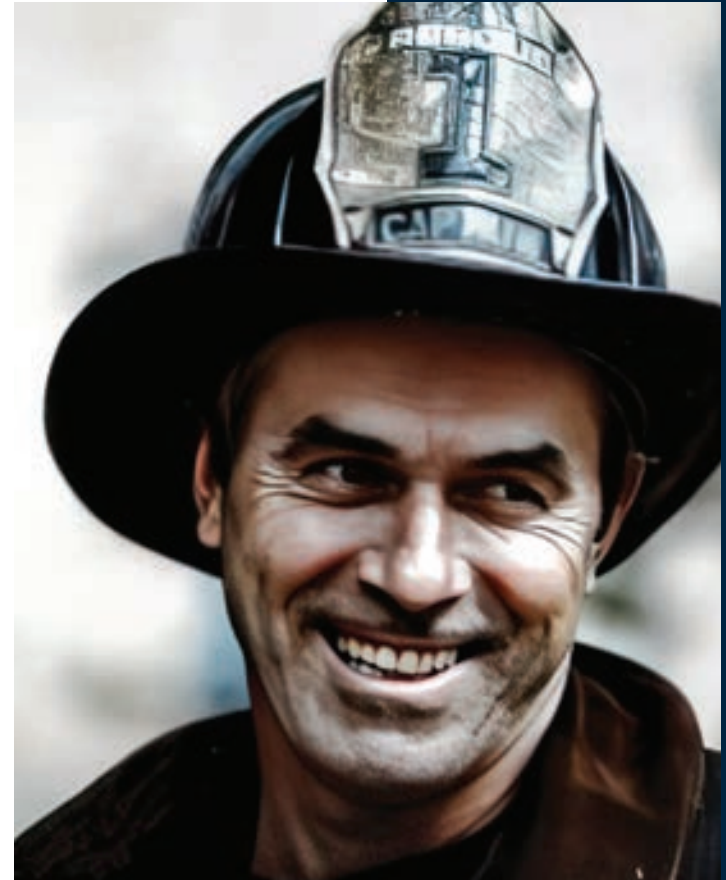
Brian was born and raised in Queens. After graduating from Martin Van Buren High School, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on submarines. After his military service, he earned an associate degree and joined the fire department.

Brian met Karin at the beach in South Hampton. Their shared love of the sun and the water inspired them to move to Long Island to raise their family. Longtime residents of Rockville Centre, they moved to Long Beach to enjoy retirement. Brian participated in many sports during his lifetime and was a great skier, an avid sailor, FDNY hockey player, and a dedicated golfer with the FDNY Highrise Golf Club. He also traveled widely, including many motorcycle tours, golfing trips, and visits to see friends and loved ones. He especially loved spending time with the grandkids on their visits to “Pop’s Beach.”

He is survived by his loving wife of 54 years, Karin; his four children, Kristin (Robert), Kerry (Joe), Tara, and Tim; and his four grandchildren, Tessa, Theo, Emmy, and Natalie.

Brian’s love for his family and friends was only matched by his love for his FDNY members and his service to the people of The City of New York. He loved every single day that he went to work. His favorite quote that he would end his meetings at the firehouse with was, “You have to go out and just live for today.”

Without his love, words of encouragement and advice, his family and fellow firefighters would not be who they are today. We are all eternally grateful for his extraordinary life as an example of how we should live ours.



James T. Redmond

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 11, 2021 ★ Age 69



James Redmond died from illness related to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. Jimmy joined the FDNY in 1981 and proudly served until his retirement in 2002.

He was born in Queens, New York, to the late William and Marilyn Redmond. His family moved to Levittown, New York, in 1960. He graduated from Division Avenue High School, Class of 1970.

He was known for his athleticism and played baseball and football in his youth. Later in life, he enjoyed golf with his fellow FDNY brothers.

He was a loving father to Jaime Redmond-Hoffman and Cody James Redmond, stepfather to Billy Castle, and proud grandfather of Victoria Hoffman, Gage Hoffman, and Levi Redmond. He is also survived by his brother, John Redmond.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Karl J. Sederholt

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Fire Marshal ★ May 22, 2023 ★ Age 74

Karl Sederholt died from illness related to his response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. He served with the BFI Special Operations Command. He was appointed in 1977 and retired in 2003, serving New York City with honor for over 20 years

He served in the U.S. Navy prior to joining the FDNY.

After retiring from the FDNY, he became one of the commissioners of the Glen Cove Fire Department.

He was a member of the American Legion.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, and four grandchildren.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Christopher P. Viviano

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Firefighter ★ January 19, 2022 ★ Age 53



Christopher P. Viviano was born on August 21, 1968, in Levittown, New York. He graduated from Division High School in 1986, where he played football and lacrosse. He then went to Nassau Community College, where he received his associate degree in science. Shortly after, he attended New York Institute of Technology, where he studied physical therapy.

He was called to service by the New York City Fire Department in 1999. Being a New York City firefighter was a lifelong dream for Christopher. Christopher served with Ladder 157 in Brooklyn, New York, for 22 years. He dedicated his life to the noble mission of bravely protecting life and property in New York City. He was known as a gentle giant for his strength and compassion. Many spoke of his immense physical strength and calm under pressure. Members of Ladder 157 said they always felt safe when they were working with him. He always had a smile and a good joke to relieve tension. During his outstanding career he was cited for bravery. He was a World Trade Center first responder and part of the rescue and recovery effort for many weeks after. Though still active duty, he succumbed to World Trade Center-related illness on January 19, 2022.

Christopher was a devoted and committed family man, leaving behind his wife, Laura, and three sons, Gabriel, Darien, and Cayden. He was a hands-on father involved in all aspects of his three sons' lives. Whether he was coaching their sports teams or helping them with science projects, he was always enthusiastic. He was an avid outdoorsman and would often spend time with his sons fishing, camping, skiing, hiking, and bike riding. He was a jack of all trades and could fix or build anything. He could often be found in the garage with his sons building a new project.

Christopher left this earth doing the job he loved, which has been a comfort to his family and friends who miss him dearly. His family and friends are proud to have known such an incredible man.

Patrick J. Whalen

Fire Department City of New York – New York ★ Career Lieutenant ★ August 22, 2021 ★ Age 62

Patrick J. Whalen served with the FDNY from 1982 to 2001. He received the Dr. Albert A. Cinelli Medal of Honor for heroic actions at unusual personal risk. Patrick responded to lower Manhattan on the morning of 9/11/2001 with the members of Ladder 83 and worked tirelessly in the rescue and recovery effort.

Twenty years later, in the spring of 2020, Pat was diagnosed with a 9/11-related cancer and fought valiantly for 15 months before departing this earth far too soon. He gave his life in service to others.

We will never forget him and the bravery he showed every day as a member of FDNY.

Patrick loved his family, his faith, and his community. He was a beloved husband, father, and friend. We miss him every day.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Ricky D. Allen

Conover Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Engineer ★ March 4, 2023 ★ Age 36



Ricky Allen was born on February 3, 1987. He grew up in Newton, North Carolina, and graduated from Newton Conover High School. He loved to be outdoors, and he had a God-given talent of playing drums. He began playing at age three, not even able to reach the kick drum pedal. He was self-taught and enjoyed playing in the band while in high school and for his church as an adult. He was often found using his fingertips to beat on whatever hard surface he could find at the moment!

Ricky followed in his grandfather's footsteps and became a junior firefighter for Conover Fire Department at age 17. He dedicated the next 19 years of his life to Conover Fire Department, ending his career as Fire Engineer II. He also served on the Taylorsville Fire Department for the last year of his life.

Ricky, like many other firefighters, put in countless hours of continuing education and held many certifications, including North Carolina certifications in Firefighter I & II, EMT, Technical Rescue, and specialties in water, structural collapse, trench, and hazardous materials. Ricky was well respected by his peers; some of the words they used to describe him were resilient, meticulous, friend, dedicated, steadfast, faithful, and loyal. He was quite the prankster and kept his crew laughing. His smile was just about as big as his heart.

Ricky was a devoted family man, leaving behind his wife of 11 years, Nicole, and two beautiful daughters, Sophia and Ellie. Ricky took pride in being the best husband and father he could be to "his girls." He was steadfast in his faith and led his family with strength, grace, and humility. He was always the one who grounded our family and reminded us to count our blessings and to thank God for everything we have. He was the best brother and uncle, always the fun one. Just as he lit up the room at the station with his snarky comments and humor, he would have our

homes echoing with laughter at each family gathering.

Everything Ricky did was done well, with pride and with meticulous attention to detail. He was the best car detailer around! He was very active and always doing something. If not for his family, he was doing for others. He had a true servant's heart.

There is a massive void left in our hearts and in our homes, as we miss Ricky so terribly. We are grateful for salvation and the promise that we will see him again one day. We carry his memory with us in everything we do, and we are often reminded of his presence this side of Heaven, as the sky is painted with breathtaking sunsets and the stars seem to shine a bit brighter above us.

Eddie Dewayne Fender

Asheville Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Fire Investigator ★ January 8, 2022 ★ Age 57

Dewayne was born in Buncombe County, North Carolina, to Linda Fender and the late Jock Fender, on November 27, 1964. God called him home on January 8, 2022.

Dewayne was a loving and devoted family man. He was the rock to his family. Dewayne is survived by his wife of 34 years, Kelly Fender; his daughters, Monica Ingram (John) and Madison Roberson (Tyler); his grandchildren, Nathan Ingram, Sydney Ingram, J.D. Ingram, Miley Ingram, Makinley Ingram, Jakeb Ingram, and Maggie Roberson; great-grandson, Zayden Ingram; brothers, Doug Fender (Sandy), Donald Fender (Jennifer), and Darian Fender (Shannon); close friends who were like family, and many brothers and sisters of the Asheville Fire Department.

He was dedicated to his job at the Asheville Fire Department. He served for 28 years, from January 31, 1994, to January 8, 2022. During that time, he held many positions. He advanced to a firefighter intermediate on June 29, 1996, and was promoted to firefighter II on June 31, 1999. He transitioned to fire engineer on February 1, 2002, and then took on the role of fire specialist on October 18, 2010. Dewayne was also involved with the HAZMAT, swift water rescue, and scuba diving teams at the fire department. He was an active member of the local fire department union.

Some of Dewayne's greatest joys were vacationing, camping, fishing, boating, four-wheeling, and being outdoors spending time with his family. He dedicated his life to his family. He made sure to be at every sports, school, and life event for his daughters and grandchildren when not at the fire department.

His other joy was deer hunting. He was an avid hunter and outdoorsman. He loved hunting with his buddies, his girls, and his grandchildren. Dewayne greatly enjoyed passing along his hunting expertise and made sure hunting would be a tradition that was carried on for generations.

Dewayne was a man who everyone would turn to when they needed help, and he was always there to answer. He was a smart man with many talents. He knew how to do almost everything put in front of him or would work hard until he could.

Dewayne knew where he was going when he left this world, and his faith only grew stronger towards the end of his journey. He leaves to cherish his memory a deeply grieving family and many friends that miss him dearly. Life will never be the same without him.

The greatest legacy one can pass on to one's children and grandchildren is not money or material things accumulated in one's life, but rather a legacy of character and faith. – Billy Graham



James William Goudelock

Town of Dallas Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Paid-on-Call Captain ★ July 23, 2022 ★ Age 39



At a very young age James wanted to do two things in life—drive a wrecker and be a firefighter. He accomplished both and was great at both. James joined the Fire Explorers program when he was 15 years old. Truth be known, he was probably driving a wrecker longer than that, even before he had a driver's license.

James had a total of 24 years in the fire service protecting the citizens of this great county. James was married to Wendy, and together they have two kids, Lexi and Kayden. James loved his family and wanted to spend as much time with them as possible.

If you ever met James during his sickness, you would never know he had cancer. He did not let it show, and he did not want any favors. James had a heart of gold. We could all learn a lesson from him to never give up. In December 2020, James received the Firefighter of the Year award from our department. Again, in December 2021, James was recognized by our membership as the 2021 Co-Firefighter of the Year, because we did not have an Officer of the Year award at that time. That same year, James was awarded the 2021 Officer of the Year award and the Lifesaving Award through the Gaston County Firefighters Association. It was such an honor for James to be recognized by his peers as the County Firefighter of the Year and for his family to be present to see him receive this award.

James always had a smile on his face. No matter the situation, James tried to make the best out of everything he did. If you met James, you would understand the type of personality he had, because it is contagious. Even during troubling times, James continued to be a positive role model for our membership and everyone he was around.

In 2021, James was nominated for and received the Order of the Towman, a prestigious national award for tow truck operators who consistently go above and beyond during their duties.

James lived life to the fullest for 2 ½ years after being diagnosed with cancer. There were many times that he was at the fire station even though he may not have felt good; he was still there with the guys, serving his community. Losing James, even though we all knew it was coming, was a very hard one. James is missed by Wendy, Lexi, and Kayden; his parents, Rebecca and Steve; and his fire department family.

James William Goudelock faithfully served his community as a volunteer firefighter and tow truck operator for 24 years before his passing.

Jeremy Klemm

Durham Fire Department – North Carolina ★ Career Driver/Engineer ★ September 18, 2021 ★ Age 45

Jeremy Michael Klemm was born October 22, 1975, in Bay City, Michigan. He attended and graduated from Garber High School from 1990-1994. After high school, Jeremy moved to Raleigh, North Carolina, and attended Wake Technology Community College for CAD design until he found his calling in a career of service as a firefighter.

Jeremy had dedicated 15 years to the department at the time of his passing on September 18, 2021. He truly loved serving the community. He was a man of compassion and empathy and would always be the one on scene comforting the victims and children. Although his career ended far too soon, he was a hero to many and will never be forgotten. Outside of the fire department, Jeremy continued with his charitable community service by donating his time to food drives, caring for disabled neighbors, and helping anyone who needed it.

Jeremy was a devoted and loving family man, leaving behind his mother, Debra White; two brothers, Jason Klemm and Nathan Moore; and his two sons, Jack Lukas and Dominic Klemm. He took great pride in spending as much time, as often as he could, with family and friends. Jeremy was everyone's "person." He was the shoulder everyone would lean on, and when you needed good life advice, he was the person asked because he wouldn't be afraid to tell you his opinion.

Jeremy loved the outdoors. He enjoyed hunting and fishing, ATV riding, and camping when he could. He was also a collector of many things—baseball cards, matchbox cars, NASCAR items, coins, wolves or firefighting pocketknives, and any other memorabilia from events he thought was important. Growing up in Michigan, he supported all the sports teams but was fond of the Detroit Redwings. We were a house divided, as he was a University of Michigan Football fan while his brother is a Michigan State University alumnus. Win or lose, he was a diehard fan who did not care what others thought of his teams and would defend them ferociously.

Jeremy's memory and legacy to this world will be cherished by a deeply grieving family and the many friends that miss him. He lived life to the fullest and inspired many to do the same. Life will never be the same, but we take solace in knowing he is watching over us.



Larry J. Kye

North Carolina Forest Service – North Carolina ★ Career Smokechaser/Crewman ★ March 8, 1989 ★ Age 22



Larry Joel Kye was born in Wilmington, North Carolina, on December 25, 1966, the son of Robert Lafayette and Marion Annette Caton Kye. He was also survived by his sister, Shelley Delane Kye; his paternal grandmother, Ruth Kye; and his maternal grandparents, Jack and Elouise Caton.

He was employed by the North Carolina Forestry Service and was a dedicated member of the Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department. Larry was also the District IV representative of the Brunswick County Fire and Rescue Association.

While traveling back from the NCFs District 8 Headquarters in Whiteville, North Carolina, he and his coworker were involved in a head-on collision. He died instantly, and his coworker suffered critical injuries.

In 1982, Larry became a junior firefighter with the department. He was hired by NC Forestry in 1985 and was in his fourth year as a crewman at the time of his death. His ultimate dream was to be a paid firefighter for the city of Wilmington and be a crewman on a western forest fire detail.

Larry grew up in the fire service, due to both parents' commitment to the Winnabow Volunteer Fire Department. Before he was able to drive, he would ride his bicycle to the station practically every day just to listen to the radio—doing odds and ends, waiting for a call to come in. His favorite duty was sweeping out the bays. He often left home in the morning, riding his bike the 2.5 miles and not returning until almost dark.

His passion was the fire service and serving his community. He often participated in the NC Fourth of July Firemen's Competition, sometimes

driving a truck in the parade. He volunteered to help in any way with community events such as Christmas in Winnabow, cleaning up after major storms, and barbecue fundraisers.

Even though he was only 22 years old when he died, he was highly respected by his peers throughout the fire service. He had dreams and visions for the future of the fire service in Brunswick County and Winnabow Fire. Anyone who would listen would hear him talk passionately about the need for a centralized dispatch center (911) and a countywide fire fee, which later became realities. One of his goals for the fire department was for them to purchase a new fire truck, and the department had taken possession of a new truck just days before his death. Larry departed this earth doing what he loved, serving his community.

Gregory Lee Bauer

Columbus Division of Fire – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ October 18, 2021 ★ Age 56

Gregory Lee Bauer was born on January 31, 1965, in Columbus, Ohio. His family moved to Groveport, Ohio, and that is where he spent his time growing up. He attended school at Groveport-Madison, where he graduated from high school in 1983.

Greg was active in the Boy Scouts of America for many years and achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. He attended Ohio State University and worked in the lawn care business for a few years before deciding that what he really wanted to do was to be a good firefighter.

In January of 1996, he graduated from the Columbus (Ohio) Fire Academy. He was a 25-year veteran at the time of his death. He spent his entire career at Station 21, where he was the primary driver of the engine, which he took pride in taking care of. He was the senior man at that firehouse and was sometimes respectfully referred to as “the mayor” for keeping the troops in line. He was particular about almost everything he did around the station. A mentor to young firefighters, he was always concerned for the welfare of the other firefighters. He was there for them for anything they would need, including consoling them if they had taken a beating, being up all night and feeling down.

Greg had an infectious smile and laugh, and it was always a pleasure to be in his presence. He dedicated his life to helping others on and off the job and was a good friend to all who were lucky enough to know him.

Greg became ill after an emergency medic run involving a patient sick with COVID-19. Unfortunately, he was unable to overcome his extended battle with COVID-19 and passed away on October 18, 2021. He left a loving family and numerous friends who continue to miss him dearly.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Seamus J. Culligan

Willoughby Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ February 15, 2022 ★ Age 44



Seamus Culligan died peacefully on February 15, 2022, with his family by his side. He was a five-year brain cancer survivor.

Seamus was born in Galway, Ireland, and moved to America to better his education. He met his soulmate, Cyndie, and they were inseparable from day one. Shortly after they were married, Seamus pursued his life's ambition to become a firefighter/paramedic.

While he was in school, he was a volunteer firefighter with Thompson Fire Department. In 2001, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Seamus went to Ground Zero to help. He was hired as a full-time member of the Mentor and Willoughby Fire Departments, and he served on the Lake County Hazardous Intervention Team. Seamus served the Willoughby Fire Department from 2002 to 2017. He was a member of the honor/color guard and was named Fire Fighter of the Year in 2010.

Many of his fellow firefighters proudly attended the swearing in ceremony as Seamus became a citizen of the United States. As they left the Federal Building in downtown Cleveland, members of the Irish American Club and the Black Sheep Pipe and Drum team greeted Seamus as he walked out, playing Irish songs.

Seamus was highly dedicated to his wife and children. He was a strong man, never gave up, never told a lie, was always there for a friend in need, and had a great sense of humor. He expressed himself with sarcasm that would normally make someone take offense, but with Seamus, it would only make them laugh. His love of music brought joy and spontaneous laughter to his family when watching his goofy dances in the kitchen late at night or his random beatboxing sessions.

Anywhere he saw a need, he just jumped in and took care of it—mowing someone's grass, snow blowing their driveway, or cutting a fallen tree. People have

said they wanted to lend him tools and machinery, because he returned it cleaner than when he borrowed it. That's just the type of guy he was.

When you met Seamus, you knew that he was genuinely interested in you, as he would pay attention to what you had to say. He beat to a different drum, and that drum was in his head, always coming out of his hands and feet tapping away. This is why he played in an Irish pipes and drum band.

Seamus is survived by his wife, Cyndie, and his three children who loved him dearly, Emily, Tadhg, and Gavin. He was the cherished son of Jim and Norma Culligan; fond brother to Evelyn and Laura Culligan, Joseph and Nicholas Preskar; and beloved by his extended family.

Seamus was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, in good standing, until the end. He was the bravest of all warriors!

Kevin A. Dailey

Middleport Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Safety Officer ★ January 24, 2023 ★ Age 72

Kevin A. Dailey was born in Gallipolis, Ohio, on August 9, 1950, to the late Howard and Roberta Dailey. He was a dedicated public servant. Kevin was proud of many accomplishments and affiliations in his life. He began firefighting in 1978 and retired as fire chief at Richland Township Fire Department. He was an instructor at Hocking College School of Public Safety Service, a trustee with American Sternwheeler Association, and a member of the Heart Research Team of Ohio State University. He was a lifetime member of Middleport Volunteer Fire Department, IFCA, OFCA, Fairfield County Fire Firefighters Association, and COAFA. Kevin was a 2012 Knights of Columbus Ohio Blue Coat Award winner. He was an incident safety officer for Fairfield County Fire/EMS and a member of Rushville Lions Club. He held many licenses and certifications such as, EMTP, FF1&11, HAZMAT, Communication & Dispatching with APCO, Drager Swede Flashover Simulator Fire Safety Officer, Fire Officer 1 and 2, driver training, and building and fire safety prevention and ordinance devices.

Kevin was preceded in death by his sweetheart and the love of his life, Pam Dailey. Kevin is greatly missed and remembered often and fondly by his sister and “brother,” Bron and Lee Williams; stepchildren, Clint (Jennifer) Donely, Kyle Donely, and Sarah (Ian) Nash; step-grandchildren, Fletcher Nash and Duncan Nash; niece, Chrissy (Aric) Patterson; nephew, Adam Williams; and several nieces and nephews who adored him; as well as many friends who he considered family, especially those brothers and sisters who he served with over the years.

Kevin spent his entire life doing what he loved, firefighting and teaching the next generation lessons (professional and personal) that each will carry with them for a lifetime. Kevin loved to joke and tease/aggravate those he loved the most! Kevin’s family and friends will never know the full magnitude of the lives he has touched in his precious 72 years of life and service. Kevin left this world as a hero to many!



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Charles E. Gossard Jr.

Springfield Township Fire Department – Ohio ★ Paid-on-Call Captain ★ March 16, 2022 ★ Age 54



Charles E. “Chuck” Gossard passed away on March 16, 2022, after a heroic battle with cancer, caused by carcinogenic exposure during his firefighting service.

Chuck was born on October 8, 1967, and was a lifelong resident of Petersburg, Ohio. After high school, he followed in his family’s footsteps and became a volunteer firefighter at the age of 21. He was a very active and incredibly proud fourth-generation member of the Springfield Township Fire Department Station 22 in Petersburg. Serving since 1988, Chuck rarely missed a fire call and was most proud when he was driving the fire truck with his son, Dan. Eagerly following in Chuck’s footsteps, Dan became a fifth-generation firefighter in his early years. Together they shared many memories of training and firefighting, as the father/son duo served on the same department for over a decade. At the time of his passing, Chuck had earned the rank of captain.

Chuck was a devoted husband and father and was happiest spending time at the fire station, camping by a fire, or with his wife and children. His sense of humor and witty jokes were unmatched, and he could put a smile on anyone’s face. He was hardworking and would help anyone in need, no matter the situation. He truly lit up every room and made you feel welcome the second you walked in.

In November 2021, Chuck was unexpectedly diagnosed with stage four cancer and lost his battle less than six months later. His death was approved by the Ohio Bureau of Workers’ Compensation as carcinogenic exposure from being a firefighter.

In his spare time, he enjoyed spending time with his daughter, camping throughout the summer months with his wife and family friends, working at the Canfield Fairgrounds each year, and taking family trips to Forbush’s Ice Cream for his favorite

treat, a vanilla milkshake. He was a lifetime member of Petersburg Presbyterian Church, where he previously was a trustee.

He left to cherish his memory a family who loves him and friends who will never forget him. This includes his devoted wife, Jodie; his mother, Nancy; son, Daniel (Angela) Gossard; daughter, Kayla Gossard; a granddaughter, his namesake who he was so excited to meet, Charlotte E. Gossard; and a grandson, the miracle he sent to our family, Case Daniel Gossard. He is also dearly missed by his firefighter brothers, as well as many other dear relatives and faithful friends.

With his heart of gold and immeasurable impact, Chuck touched the lives of so many. He is profoundly missed every day, more than words can express. He will be forever missed.

H. Matthew Hanenkrath

South Richland Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Chief ★ June 27, 2023 ★ Age 40

Hal Matthew “Matt” Hanenkrath was born August 4, 1982, to Hal and Lori Hanenkrath. He graduated from Ayersville Local Schools in Defiance County, Ohio, in 2001 and attended DeVry University in Columbus, Ohio. Prior to high school graduation, Matt began his EMT training. After graduation he was able to take the state test, get his EMT certification, and begin the next step to get his firefighter certification.

Public safety was a family tradition and a passion for Matt growing up. Both his parents were actively involved in the fire service as members of the Highland Township Volunteer Fire Department, where his father served as fire chief. Matt was a dedicated and involved member of the same fire department. Over the course of the next 20 years, Matt moved up the ranks within the department.

Matt was a devoted husband to his wife of 14 years, Ashley, and a devoted father to daughters, Haleigh and Brynn, and son, Bentley. He was very involved in his children’s lives, as well as their coach through many sporting activities. Matt is also survived by his mother, Lori, and brothers, Josh and Kurt Hanenkrath.

In 2005, Matt became a dispatcher with the Defiance County Sheriff’s Office, providing communications for all public safety entities throughout the county. In 2014, he moved up to become the 911 training coordinator in Lucas County, serving there for two years before returning to Defiance. Once back in Defiance, Matt was promoted to director of the 911 center. Matt played a big part in the day-to-day operations of the center but an even bigger part in promoting leadership amongst coworkers.

This drive for leadership led Matt to a position as a school board member for the Ayersville Local Schools, where he served as president. His children are now attending school there, and he was recently inducted into the Hall of Honor.

His leadership drive did not stop there. Matt went a step farther in filling an open vacancy as fire chief of the South Richland Fire Department in Defiance County. Matt loved the challenges that leadership presented. He held a positive attitude and the confidence that he could accomplish whatever task was put in front of him. It was in this position as fire chief that Matt answered his final call on June 27, 2023.

Matt’s love for his family, sense of humor, sincerity, and dedication to his community will never be forgotten. He has truly left a big impression on many people that he encountered and provided a great service to the citizens of Defiance County.



David Jarvis III

Columbus Division of Fire – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ December 9, 2021 ★ Age 55



David Jarvis III was born on August 10, 1966, in Columbus, Ohio. He grew up in the Linden neighborhood of Columbus, a community he would later serve for much of his career as a Columbus firefighter. He passed away on December 9, 2021.

David is survived by his loving wife of 17 years, Susan; children, Andrea (Patrick) Jarvis-Galvin, Emily Dunlevie, Brock Dunlevie, Carter (Payten) Dunlevie, and Jacob (Zoe) Dunlevie; grandchildren, JJ and Scout Galvin, Ella and Sawyer Dunlevie; parents, Marie Jarvis Mertz and David Jarvis Jr.; and siblings, Victor Jarvis and Linda Jarvis.

David had many roles—father, husband, grandpa, helper, soldier, firefighter, brother to many, and friend to all. He was famous for his quick-witted nature and mischievous grin. He was an accomplished craftsman, enjoying woodworking and home and vehicle repair. He was an avid reader with a special interest in history and a student of life. What David enjoyed most was storytelling; he was always happiest when regaling his audience with a story. And to know him was to have a story about him, often colorful, and always memorable. Above all, David was known and proven to be hardworking, dedicated, and motivated in everything he did; if David put his mind to it, there was nothing he couldn't do.

David began his career with Columbus Division of Fire in 1994. He first served as a firefighter, earned his paramedic certification in 1997, and became a rescue technician in 2001. He was a Tactical Emergency Medical Service (TEMS) paramedic, responding with the SWAT team since the program's inception in 2008. He was assigned to Station 7 for most of his career, serving the Linden area and The Ohio State University campus. Following his passing, his fellow firefighters memorialized him by arranging an Honor Flight in his name to send military veterans on a day trip to Washington, DC.

Beyond his career in the fire service, David served in the military for over 34 years, achieving the rank of master sergeant, and retiring from the U.S. Army Reserve in 2020. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1986. His service led him through many units and deployments for multiple overseas contingency operations. He participated in Operation Desert Shield/Storm, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Over the course of his career, David earned the Combat Infantryman Badge, Parachutist Badge, and Air Assault Badge, among others.

David Jarvis III is deeply missed but will never be forgotten. He was never known to say "goodbye," but instead quipped, "I'll see ya when I see ya."

Edward J. Long

Portsmouth Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ March 22, 2022 ★ Age 55

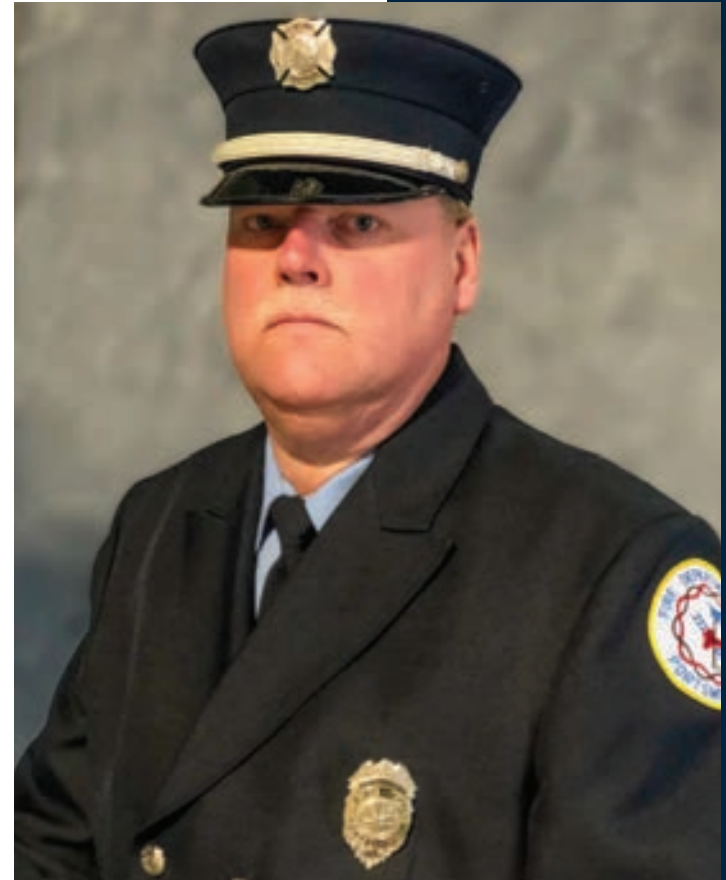
Edward Long responded to a request for assistance from a citizen for a vehicle lockout for a tractor trailer. After using a ladder to gain access to the vehicle and unlock the cab of the truck, he placed the ladder back on Engine 2 and cleared the scene. While en route back to the station, Firefighter/Engineer Long stopped at a stop sign and advised the officer in charge of the engine that he didn't feel well. After setting the parking brake on the engine, he became unresponsive. Crews from the station responded immediately. Firefighter/EMT Long was pronounced dead at the hospital a short time later due to sudden cardiac arrest.

Edward Jay Long was born in Cherry Point, North Carolina, to the late Paul and Jeanette Long on May 29, 1966. He was a proud United States Army veteran. He served as a special deputy with the Scioto County Ohio Sheriff's Office, having received his commission in July 1986. He joined the Portsmouth Fire Department on March 17, 1995, and served for 27 years as a firefighter/EMT. He served as deacon at St. John Lutheran Church. He was a 3rd Degree Mason at Western Sun Masonic Lodge and a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason. A very active Boy Scouts of America volunteer, Ed served as pack master and troop master of the former Troop 37, helping many young men attain the rank of Eagle Scout.

He attended Marshall University, where he was a member of the ROTC. He received associate degrees in math and science, as well as a bachelor's degree in English literature from Shawnee State University.

Ed was an excellent driver/engineer, and no one knew his truck as well as he did. Ed was known as quite the storyteller for the length of his stories and the enthusiasm with which he told them. His smile, laughter, and happiness always radiated, and joy always flowed around him. He was an asset to his community and department. His passing left a huge hole in the world.

A devoted and loving family man, Ed left behind his wife of 28 years, Lisa Nicole Long; sons, August Cole Long and Colin Jay Long; and daughter, Calista Faye Long. Ed loved and spoke often of his family. It was rare to see him out and about without one or all of his children in tow. Ed loved riding motorcycles, traveling, and planning family trips. He took pride in taking care of his family and is loved and missed more than they can ever express in words. Ed passed away doing something he loved passionately, serving and protecting his community, making a difference in lives every day. He gave the gift of life through organ and tissue donation. He is still making a difference in people's lives.



Dennis Lee McCollum

Kalida Volunteer Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 22, 2022 ★ Age 62



Dennis “Buckwheat” McCollum was born on February 6, 1960, and passed away unexpectedly, doing what he loved, on December 22, 2022. On October 16, 1982, Dennis married Marilyn, his high school sweetheart, who survives in Ohio. Together they have three boys, Dean, Doug, and Jason.

Dennis joined the Kalida Volunteer Fire Department in April of 1987, receiving his pin for 35 years of active service just prior to his death. His dedication to the department was evident, as he made the most runs in 2022. He was never seen without his pager on his hip and had a strong passion for heavy rescue, both department and countywide. He held various positions for the department, including captain, lieutenant, and heavy rescue board.

Buckwheat spent countless hours at the station making sure everything was in order for their next call and always tried to find ways to make things safer, easier, and more efficient for the department and community. While he viewed being a fireman as an honor and his civic duty, he also did it because he loved being a role model, father figure, and mentor to the young firemen.

Dennis was not only dedicated to the department but was also a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and friend to all. He celebrated 40 years of marriage with his wife and treasured spending time with their boys and families. He was often working on a project at his home or the home of one of his boys, and his grandchildren were the light of his life. He enjoyed going on family vacations, woodworking, tinkering in his shop, and fishing.

Everyone knew Buckwheat, and he would always help anyone when they asked. He was truly selfless and a friend to all. Dennis was a role model to all who knew him and is deeply missed.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Randy B. Miner

Mary Ann Township Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Chief ★ September 26, 2021 ★ Age 57

Randy B. Miner was born on February 1, 1964, to Fred and Maryanne Miner of Moundsville, West Virginia. He was a loving son, husband, son-in-law, brother, brother-in-law, uncle, great uncle, father figure, and friend. Randy was a dedicated public servant from the time he joined the Mary Ann Township Fire Department in 2002. He was the department's first full-time employee. He moved through the ranks and was the fire chief when he was called to his heavenly home on September 26, 2021.

Even before joining the fire department, he was the first to lend a hand. In addition to his role as a fire chief, Randy was a beacon of mentorship in the fire department. Recognized for his dedication to guiding his fellow firefighters, he was the essence of true leadership. Whether sharing valuable knowledge gained from years of experience or offering words of encouragement during challenging times, Chief Miner stood as a mentor. His ability to lead by example gave a sense of confidence among the department, fostering a culture of support within the firehouse. He invested time in the next generation, instilling the values of integrity and selflessness that defined his own career. He leaves behind a legacy that defies the boundaries of time.

As much as Chief Miner was a hero in the line of duty, he also embodied the essence of love in his personal life. To his beloved spouse, Patty, he was not just a husband, but a partner whose support formed the strength of their relationship for 28 years of marriage. Through the trials and triumphs of life, his devotion served as a guiding light in the journey. His friends, too, found in him a wealth of knowledge, advice, and humor. Whether celebrating wins or navigating challenges, Chief Miner was the glue that bound relationships together. His genuine kindness left a lasting mark on all who had the privilege of calling him friend, leader, and father figure.

Randy could often be found with his loyal companion, his black lab "Shadow." He enjoyed being outdoors, camping, cooking on a fire, fishing, listening to bluegrass music, and making memories with family and friends. He loved his Harley-Davidson and was proud to have visited 48 of the states, traveled to Sturgis, through the mountains and the Badlands. He was a successful business owner of R&M Bakery for 35 years. He took pride in his business being housed in an old firehouse that dated back to when the equipment was horse drawn. Randy loved history and was always telling stories and giving tours of the structure.

Randy was one of a kind, and his passing leaves a void in so many lives.



Ralph A. Nunley

Bloom Township Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Lieutenant ★ March 23, 2022 ★ Age 41



On the morning of March 23, 2022, Fire Lieutenant/Paramedic Ralph Andrew “Andy” Nunley passed away at home, surrounded by his family, following a brief but valiant battle with colorectal cancer attributed to his service as a fire lieutenant and paramedic.

Born to Ralph and Teresa Nunley on August 12, 1980, Andy graduated from Bloom Carroll High School in 1998 before attending Hocking College, where he received his degree in fire science. He met and married his loving wife, Gretchen, of 20 years, and raised three beautiful children, Hannah, Hayley, and Hank. Andy blessed his family as a wonderful father, husband, son, brother, uncle, and cousin.

Andy was a proud and beloved member of Bloom Township Fire Department, where he served for over 23 years and retired at the rank of lieutenant. Known for his infectious laugh and his one-of-a-kind sense of humor, Andy never stopped learning. He excelled in many things such as firefighting, mechanics, and welding, and he consistently shared his knowledge and skills with others. His life touched so many through deed and action, as he tirelessly gave of himself to his friends and community. Andy was an amazing mentor and a role model to so many in the fire service, with an impact that cannot be measured.

Outside of his career, Andy loved square body Chevy trucks, real country music, and spending time in the outdoors hiking, fishing, and riding dirt bikes. He especially treasured time spent traveling to beautiful places with his wife and children. Andy’s family was the true joy of his life.

Andy will be forever remembered and sorely missed as a man whose talents were endless, whose interests were boundless, whose love was limitless, and whose influence was immeasurable. His loss is deeply felt, but his spirit will continue to shine brightly, and his legacy will live forever in the hearts of all those who love him.

Kenneth J. Pettit

Allen-Clay Joint Fire District – Ohio ★ Part-Time-Paid Captain ★ November 13, 2022 ★ Age 60

Kenneth was born in Oregon, Ohio, to Joanne Pettit and John Pettit, on September 15, 1962. Kenneth was preceded in death by his parents and by his brother, Jeffrey Pettit.

Kenneth served on the Allen-Clay Joint Fire Department from 1995 to 2022. Kenneth loved his fire department and enjoyed encouraging the younger firefighters.

Kenneth was a loving husband to Lynne Pettit; father to Chad (Kait) Pettit and Abby (Meagan) Price; stepfather to Kile (Kim) Smith, Amanda (Adam) Hall, and Shelby Smith; and Papa to River Hall, Asher Hall, Paislee Price, and Dallas Price. He loved all of us greatly, but his greatest joy was being a Papa.

One of Kenneth's hobbies was collecting old postcards of Ohio towns and unique Ohio things. Kenneth enjoyed collecting fire collectables, magnets, challenge coins, and pins.

Kenneth loved finding unique places to go and to eat. He rode his motorcycle to 49 states at least one time, and he completely rode the lower 48 states twice. He researched to find a motorcycle that I could ride on my own. Kenneth lived life as if you don't know when your last day is. One of the unique places he visited was the tallest pistachio in the United States, and yes, he was on the motorcycle when we found it.

Kenneth was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic cancer in April 2022, and he fought a hard battle all the way until his last breath.

Kenneth John Pettit, you will never be forgotten. You are so very loved by many.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Matthew A. Reid

Fletcher Volunteer Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ October 18, 2021 ★ Age 48



Matt was born on May 22, 1973, to the late Gary Reid and Deborah (Ferguson) Reid of Fletcher, Ohio.

He graduated from Miami East High School in 1991 and was active in 4-H and FFA.

In December 1993, Matt married his wife, Julie, and together they raised three sons, Jacob(Amanda), Cody, and Levi(Jordan). He was known as Papaw Matt to his grandsons, Brian, Brantley, Braden, and Garrett.

Matt had a strong work ethic. After graduating from high school, he spent the next 27 years working long hours in the maintenance department at two separate local factories consecutively. In 2018, he was hired by the Miami County Engineers as a highway worker. This was his dream job. He had always wanted to be able to spend his days driving a dump truck.

When not working away from home, Matt enjoyed helping his father on the family farm. He loved Allis-Chalmers tractors and enjoyed collecting toy tractors.

Even though his father had been a member of the local fire department throughout Matt's childhood, it was not until his son Cody joined in 2015 that Matt decided to get involved. His other two sons, Jacob and Levi, joined soon after. Matt immediately found camaraderie with the members of the Fletcher Volunteer Fire Department. Rarely did he miss Tuesday night truck checks or monthly meetings. It didn't matter what he was doing when a call came in, he dropped everything and headed

that way. He was so proud that all three of his sons chose a career in fire service.

Matt was a kind-hearted family man who enjoyed a simple way of life. Losing Matt has forever changed our lives. We are forever grateful for his time here on earth and will always hold tight to our memories of him.

Charles D. Swank

Washington Township Fire Department – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/ Paramedic ★ December 8, 2022 ★ Age 39

Charles D. Swank was born on May 10, 1983, to the late Lee Swank and Pamela Swank of Bellville, Ohio. Charles was dedicated to living a life of service to his family, community, and county. On 9/11/2001, as a senior in high school, Charles made the decision to join the U.S. Army. After graduation in 2002, he started his military service and served four years as an infantryman with the 82nd Airborne Division in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He did tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. While in Iraq, he earned a Bronze Star with "V" device for valor after helping a wounded comrade in battle. After completing his time in the military in 2006, he began his education to become a career firefighter and paramedic.

Charles grew up in the fire service and knew from a young age that it would be his passion. His father was a fireman and passed away in a similar manner in 2002. Lee Swank is also recognized at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. Charles spent 15 years as a firefighter, serving on volunteer and full-time departments. At the time of his death, he was working full-time at Washington Township in Dublin, Ohio.

Charles left behind his wife of 18 years, Alaina, and their five children, Jaxon (17), Kasey (16), Haylee (15), Trey (11), and Troy (11). He was a devoted husband and father who spent his free time coaching every team of his children's that he possibly could. He most recently coached Little League football and baseball and was also coaching his oldest boys in baseball at his alma mater, Clear Fork High School.

If not at a sporting event, Charles could be found helping at the local American Legion or riding his Harley. Charles was the proud owner of a 2017 Harley-Davidson that was gifted to him after winning a contest through Adam Sandoval's MISSION: THANK YOU.

Charles was dearly loved by his wife and a hero to his daughter and four sons. The hole left behind to his family, friends, and community will never be filled. He will be forever missed.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

James E. Tansey

Wakeman Fire District – Ohio ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 24, 2021 ★ Age 72



James was born January 22, 1949, to James and Berneita Tansey. He moved to Wakeman from Vermilion in 1973, joining the Wakeman Fire Department in 1974. Jim worked for Sears for 51+ years as a repair technician. He served 24 years on the volunteer fire department, from 1974 to 2021, as a firefighter, captain, and chief.

Jim was an advanced EMT and instructor and helped bring Citizens Ambulance Service to the Wakeman area. He was active with Bowling Green Fire School, setting up the curriculum for continuing education, and with the NOVFA where he served as director, president, and vice president. Jim was a councilman for the village, a member of Friends of the Wakeman Library, and a member of Sandusky River Valley Beekeepers Association.

He loved playing waterball (water fights). He enjoyed drag racing, beekeeping, planting a vegetable garden, and wine making. We had our own Concord grape row. It seemed he could fix anything, and he loved the challenge.

Jim will be remembered for his smile, his large sense of humor, and his giving nature. He was always answering the call for someone in need. He is missed every day by so many friends

You are missed every day beyond what words can express. There is a hole in our hearts that cannot be filled. You were taken from our family too soon.

Your wife of 52 years, Mary; daughters, Linette and Julie; and stepson, Michael.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Sean R. Tyler

Tiffin Fire/Rescue Division – Ohio ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ June 20, 2022 ★ Age 37

Sean R. Tyler was born on July 6, 1984, and lost his courageous battle with occupational-related cancer on June 20, 2022. He was a fourth-generation firefighter, having followed in the footsteps of his maternal great-grandfather, maternal grandfather, father, and numerous uncles and cousins.

He received his associate degree in fire science and paramedic from Hocking College and a registered nursing license from Lorain County Community College. He was a member of Tiffin Firefighters Local 322 and was involved in the Responder Exposure Assistance and Care Team (REACT) program. On his days off from the Tiffin fire station, he served as a registered nurse in the emergency rooms at Mercy Health-Tiffin and Mercy Health-Willard hospitals. Sean loved children, and his favorite patients were infants and the elderly.

After his retirement, Sean volunteered to coach in the Norwalk Buckeye Youth Football Conference, served as classroom “mom” at his children’s school, and volunteered at the Norwalk-area food bank. He was proud to have earned his Eagle Scout

Family meant everything to Sean. He leaves behind his wife, Ashley, and three young children, Paxton, Oakley, and Hudson.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Brett J. Wilson

Columbia Township Fire Department – Ohio ★ Volunteer Firefighter/Paramedic
October 27, 2019 ★ Age 23



Brett Wilson. It's a name that, when you say it out loud, someone responds with, "Brett Wilson? I love him!" and proceeds to share a memory of him with a huge smile on their face. These memories are a testimony to his life and the lasting impact that he made on everyone who knew him. It's truly remarkable how many people one man can touch, and continue to touch, in his 23 years on this Earth. Brett was someone you were naturally drawn to, from his infectious laugh and witty sense of humor to his compassion and enthusiasm for life. Everywhere he went, he had an ability to turn strangers into friends.

Brett was a graduate of Olmsted Falls Class of 2016 and enlisted in the United States Army afterwards.

After being discharged, Brett took some time and decided to serve the public as a firefighter. He completed his Firefighter II and EMT certification from Tri-C Community College. The Columbia Township Fire Department hired Brett in 2018 at the age of 21. Brett continued his education and became a paramedic in 2019. During schooling, he stayed an active member of the department and worked to be an example for new firefighters joining the crew. Brett found a niche in the fire service for fire prevention. He went into the community and helped educate people, especially school-aged, during Fire Prevention Week. Two weeks after Brett's death, one of the students put these teachings to use and was able to save himself and his father from a gas fire. The American Red Cross awarded Brett a posthumous Hero Award for his role in this event. Lorain County Fire and EMS Service Memorial honored Brett by adding his name to the 'Personnel Lost in the

Line of Duty' wall, forever to be remembered in his community.

As a firefighter, Brett could not have been more in love with his job and the men and women he worked with. His eyes would light up when he talked about his day. You could tell that this job was more than just a job for him; this is what Brett was born to do. Words like "hardworking" and "passionate" are hardly strong enough to describe his love for his job, and that was evident to everyone around him.

Though the world lost his physical presence, the impact he has had and the memories he has made have proven to be a permanent testimony.

Robert L. “Bob” Wysong

Clinton-Warren Joint Fire and Rescue District – Ohio ★ Career Chief ★ December 26, 2023 ★ Age 70

Robert L. “Bob” Wysong was born on August 11, 1953, to James and Idella Wysong. He grew up playing with fire trucks in the Clarksville firehouse, next to his home. His father and brothers served on the Clarksville Volunteer Fire Department. As a teenager, Bob and his friends would join the department on runs after school. They would help in any way they could, including fighting fires and directing traffic.

Throughout high school, Bob enjoyed playing sports. He excelled in basketball and was inducted into the Clinton-Massie Hall of Fame. Upon graduation, he became a dedicated public servant, serving on the fire department for 50+ years and with the Warren County Career Center for 27 years.

In his 50+ years of service to the department, he served in various roles, most recently as the chief for 37 years. He had a vision to evolve the small-town fire department into what is now the Clinton-Warren Joint Fire and Rescue District. Chief Wysong was instrumental in developing the fire district that opened in October 2004. Safety was a priority for Chief Wysong, and he continued to expand his vision by leading a top-of-the-line training facility project that included a three-story burn tower, an in-house grain bin rescue prop, and a classroom for regional training and learning facilities. He was continually evolving the department and listening to his trusted team, always available to them. He loved to mow grass and integrated it into his duties. In his straw fire helmet branded “Fire Chief,” a Christmas gift from department members, he would groom the firehouse lawn to perfection on his Kubota tractor.

Chief Wysong was a dedicated and loving husband to his wife of 38 years, Cathy; a loving and supportive father to his son, Andrew; and a mentor/father figure to many other family and community members, including members of his department. He loved his dogs, Brody and Sammie, who were always excited to see him. Bob always spoiled them with lots of treats after they waited patiently for him to come home.

He was calm in the storm of life, never panicking and always patient. He had a way of making things better when things felt like they were falling apart. He welcomed everyone with a big hug or a pat on the back and always knew when you needed one. His hugs were the best part of your day and made everything better.

Chief Wysong is greatly missed, but his legacy will live on in his son, who was recently sworn in as the new chief of the Clinton-Warren Joint Fire and Rescue District. Bob would be so proud of Andrew!



Brian Edward Flowers

Gresham Fire Department – Oregon ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ November 19, 2023 ★ Age 48



Brian Edward Flowers was born in Portland, Oregon, on December 17, 1974. Brian's passion for serving his community led him to a fulfilling career as a firefighter, which he embarked on in 2008. Over 15 years of dedicated service with Gresham Fire, Brian became an integral part of the firefighting community, known for his selflessness and commitment. He was a proud member of the Water Rescue Team since 2013 and spent a decade based out of Station 75.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Brian's impact extended far beyond the firehouse. He was the embodiment of the phrase, "He would give you the shirt off his back." Brian's generosity was limitless, and he never hesitated to lend a helping hand to anyone in need. His family was the center of his universe, and he poured his heart into providing for them.

A true jack of all trades, Brian's skills knew no bounds. Whether it was building, fixing, or advising, he approached every task with a determination to excel. He was known to "overbuild" everything he touched, a testament to his commitment to excellence. This commitment was demonstrated in his achievement as a 2nd degree Black Belt in Kajukenbo Kung Fu and a titled Grand Champion in tournaments.

Firefighter Flowers passed away on November 19, 2023, from complications related to occupational acute myeloid leukemia. Brian was a devoted husband to Elsie for nearly 24 years, best friends for over 30 years. He leaves behind a legacy of love and knowledge, having diligently taught his children, Carina, Darian, and Anthony, the skills and values they need to become exceptional adults. His son Darian is following in his father's

footsteps, becoming a firefighter at the age of 19. Brian loved to take his kids fishing and hunting and always found a way to celebrate the things they enjoyed.

Brian Edward Flowers may have left this world too soon, but his spirit, laughter, and love will forever echo in the hearts of those who were fortunate enough to know him. May his legacy of love, laughter, and overbuild of everything live on in the hearts of those who were lucky enough to share a joke, a meal, or a moment with him. We love you, Brian! AKA: Babe, Dad, Papa Brian, Uncle Brian, Kuya B, Biscuit, White Buffalo, Cracka, Coach, Diggy Dog, and Best Buddy.

Brandon Norbury

Gresham Fire Department – Oregon ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ February 3, 2023 ★ Age 50

Firefighter Brandon Norbury dedicated his adult life to the service of others.

After graduating from Canon City High School in Canon City, Colorado, Brandon joined the U.S. Navy, ultimately becoming a member of the elite Navy Seal Team 2. He received his honorable discharge in 2000, after ten years of service to his country.

After his military service, Brandon received his Emergency Medical Technician-Paramedic certification in 2000 from Tidewater Community College in Virginia Beach, Virginia. After relocating to Oregon, he attended Portland Community College, taking classes in the fire sciences curriculum, finishing his associate degree in 2001. Since he was not immediately successful in landing a fire department career, he joined the Gresham Police Department in September of 2001. When asked why the change from fire to police, he replied that he had a family to support.

His quiet but intense demeanor and previous experience made him a good fit for the police department's tactical team. During his seven years with the Gresham Police Department, his duties included patrol officer, firearms instructor, SWAT team member, and he served as the department's armorer.

With seven years of experience with the police department, Brandon applied to be a Gresham firefighter, joining the Fire Recruit Academy in July 2008. With his certification from Virginia, he became a firefighter/paramedic, serving with the Gresham Fire Department for over 15 years.

His fearlessness and get-it-done attitude were quickly embraced by coworkers. He worked at most of the stations, spending most of his time at Station 31 and Station 76.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Shawn Giles

Fuller Hose Company No. 1 – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Fire Police Officer ★ August 20, 2023 ★ Age 53



Shawn Giles was born November 20, 1969, in Erie, Pennsylvania, to Edward Giles and the late Barbara (Ecker) Warner. Growing up in a small town, Shawn loved wrestling, playing football, and hanging out with his friends. He graduated from North East High School in 1989 and enlisted in the United States Army. He served from 1989-1993. He was stationed in Germany and planned to visit there again one day.

Shawn joined the volunteer company, Fuller Hose Company #1 in North East, in December 1999. While serving his probation period, he completed Essentials of Firefighting and Pumps 1 classes. In 2004, he earned his First Responder certification. He attended many other classes to help him improve his firefighting skills to serve the community. He was on the building committee, was a lieutenant, and performed countless other jobs to help the fire hall. Shawn resigned from Fuller in 2008, as he relocated to a nearby town, but was granted honorary status. He continued to help out with fundraising events such as the annual North East Fireman's Cherry Fest, held every July.

When Shawn moved back to his hometown of North East, he reapplied to Fuller Hose, serving as a firefighter/fire police. In November 2021, he received his certification as a Fire Police Officer for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Shawn was killed in the line of duty on Sunday, August 20, 2023, while directing traffic at a minor motor vehicle accident. Shawn was struck at a high rate of speed by an individual with prior driving infractions, throwing him into the air and killing him instantly. Shawn was the first volunteer firefighter killed in the line of duty since the inception of Fuller Hose Company #1 on December 31, 1885.

Shawn has been dubbed the gentle giant by his wife of only 11 years, Adele Burnett- Giles. According to Adele, "Shawn had a very soft-spoken quiet nature about him, but when he walked into a room you knew he was there because he was always lending a hand, doing more than his share." Shawn was a stepfather to Alyssa DiCarlo (Chris) and Alex Burnett (Ellen). He was also Papa to grandson, Lucas, who was just starting to say "Papa" when Shawn would walk into the room.

Shawn will be missed by all who knew him. His passing has left a hole in many hearts. His wife, stepchildren, grandson, siblings, father, friends, and coworkers continue to miss him and talk about him daily. He was a gentle giant that will not be forgotten. Shawn left this earthly world doing something that he was proud of and loved. May he be an angel watching over all first responders, keeping them safe from harm.

Timothy M. "TJ" Johnson

Pleasant Volunteer Fire Department – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Chief ★ October 17, 2023 ★ Age 56

Chief Timothy M. "TJ" Johnson, 56, of Warren, Pennsylvania, lost his life in the line of duty shortly after responding to an EMS call on Monday evening, October 16, 2023. He passed away early Tuesday morning, October 17, at Warren General Hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Tim was born in Warren on December 1, 1966, the son of the late Gary W. and Jane L. (Bertetto) Johnson. He was a graduate of Warren High School Class of 1985. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, with a bachelor's degree in computer science. He was employed by Whirley Industries for 34 years and most recently was the IT director.

Tim was a very active member at Pleasant Volunteer Fire Department for 37 years. At the time of his death, he was chief and trustee, as well an EMT for over 35 years. Tim had also served Pleasant VFD as a secretary, deputy chief, and assistant chief. He worked tirelessly to ensure the residents of Pleasant and Watson Townships had the best fire and EMS protection possible. Tim was instrumental in obtaining several grants over the years to purchase the "latest and greatest" equipment. He was the truck committee chairman for six of the seven apparatus at the fire station. Tim was meticulous and detail oriented in the design and specifications of each one.

Tim was an avid Buffalo Bills fan and enjoyed hunting and spending time with his family and friends. He also enjoyed traveling and vacationing with family. Tim was a member of St. John Lutheran Church, Pleasant Township, where on June 19, 1993, he married the former Kathryn (Kathy) McAulay. In addition to his wife, Kathryn, he is survived by two children, Michael A. Johnson, and companion, Amanda, of Waterloo, South Carolina, and Emily K. Jameson, and husband, Shane, of Warren, Pennsylvania; one grandson, Liam J. Jameson; and his brother, Richard W. Johnson, and companion, Wendy, of Warren. He was a girl-dog dad to Sierra, Indi, and Ziva, who will miss his scratches and endless supply of treats.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Robert D. Klinefelter

Bauerstown Volunteer Fire Department – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Firefighter/Fire Police Officer
December 30, 2020 ★ Age 82



Robert (Pop Pop) Klinefelter was born June 15, 1938, and was taken home on December 30, 2020, which was too soon.

In his early years, Bob served in the U.S. Army. During his service, he married Nancy Dunlap Klinefelter. After completing his military service, he relocated back to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, eventually settling in Shaler Township, Pennsylvania.

One day, his youngest child, a son, watched a presentation at his elementary school from the local fire department and asked him to become a fireman. That is how his career started with Bauerstown Volunteer Fire Department. Bob's dedication to the residents of Shaler Township lasted for 37 years, which earned him lifetime status.

While volunteering with the volunteer fire department, Bob was also a Scout Leader and later became an active part of the fire police. In addition to his volunteer work, he was employed with LTV Steel, Travel Leaders, United Parcel Service, and as a bus driver for the North Hills School District.

Bob was always dedicated to everything he did. He was a wonderful husband and a fantastic father, brother, uncle, and grandfather. His smile and laugh were contagious, and it was so easy to love him.

Bob was the treasurer for the Bauerstown VFD, Shaler Fire Police, and his Boy Scout troop, until he passed. The fire department filled a large part of his life, and he had great admiration and respect for all the men and women he served with.

Bob is survived by his five children, Patricia, Diana, Donna, Debra, and Darren, as well as his brothers and sisters, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and their families.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Brian Keith Martinez

Mont Alto Volunteer Fire Department – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 1, 2022 ★ Age 46

Brian Keith Martinez was born November 5, 1975, in Queens, New York, to Fernando and Valerie (Ford) Martinez. Brian grew up in the Gaithersburg-Germantown, Maryland area, graduating from Quince Orchard High School in June 1993. In November 1993, Brian entered the United States Navy, serving on the U.S.S. George Washington. He was released from active duty on September 20, 2001, and officially discharged from the Naval Reserves on September 1, 2018. For his service, he was the recipient of the National Defense Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (2nd), South-West Asia Medal with Bronze Star, Armed Forces Service Medal (2nd), Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, NATO Medal and Navy Unit Commendation, and Battle “E” Ribbon.

Brian married Theresa Daniels on April 11, 1998, and they moved to Mont Alto, Pennsylvania, in June 2008.

Brian was employed by Comcast Corporation in Frederick, Maryland, for 21 years, first as a cable technician and later as the fiber manager for Metro E. Brian was a lifelong fan of the New York Yankees and the Washington Redskins, so much so that he went to the Football Hall of Fame with his best friend Jeremy for several years. Brian enjoyed giving back to the community by running the concession trailer for the Waynesboro Stallions Football Team.

Brian joined the Mont Alto Volunteer Fire Department in 2014 as a volunteer firefighter and rescue technician. He took his duties as a volunteer firefighter very seriously by attending many training courses the department offered. During his tenure with MAVFD, he served as a trustee, sergeant, and lieutenant. On November 23, 2021, he discovered his neighbor’s house on fire. He called 911 and without hesitation or regard for his own safety, he entered the burning building to make sure no one was inside. He became ill two days later and entered the hospital on November 29, 2021. He fought hard to get better and came home to spend what turned out to be his last Christmas with his family. Brian ultimately succumbed to complications of COVID-19 and passed away at 5:05 p.m. on Saturday, January 1, 2022.

Brian loved his family deeply and enjoyed spending time with them. In addition to his parents, he is survived by his wife of 23 years, Theresa Daniels Martinez; his five children, Tina, Teri, Taylor, Trinity, and Andrew; sister, Melisa (Bryan); brother, Stuart Andrew (Martha); nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, cousins, and firehouse family. Brian’s memory will live on in those who knew and loved him.



Colin A. Reedy

West Whiteland Fire Company – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 20, 2023 ★ Age 25



Colin Alexander Reedy of Exton, Pennsylvania, formerly of Selkirk, New York, was born on December 27, 1997, in the Crimea Region, Ukraine. He was the son of Brian and Tracy Reedy; brother to sisters, Jordan and Addie; grandson to Richard and Jacqueline Haberstroh and William and Marjorie Reedy; and the partner of Emily Gindele, his great love of five years. Colin worked as a plumber for Done Right Today Plumbing in Wilmington, Delaware.

Colin longed from an early age to serve his community through civil service. While in high school, Colin was an Explorer through his local firehouse. Colin spoke for years about joining the fire department, which he did earlier in 2023, along with his partner, Emily. Colin loved it and was eager to learn and participate in as many trainings and calls as he could! He wanted to make a difference in this world, and the fire department was one avenue for this.

Colin approached life with an all-in mentality. He struggled with a learning disability and was determined to be an overcomer. Once he committed, he would work tirelessly to learn all he could and give 100% of his time and talents. This approach was the secret to his success so young in life. Colin's primary goals when asked, even as young as middle school, were to be a family man and to secure a successful job to provide for his family. He was on track for both.

Colin was a friend to all. No one was a stranger for long. He was just that guy. Always quick with a big smile and a joke, he was truly the funniest person you'd ever meet. Colin included everyone and wanted all around him to be happy. He continuously strived to help through big and small gestures. He was a man of integrity with a servant's heart, an exceptional and unique young man with the kindest soul, a huge heart, infectious energy, and a contagious laugh.

Described by all as respectful, generous, sacrificial, and hardworking, he was a beacon of positivity and brought a level of playfulness that just left people smiling. The outpouring from people sharing stories of how Colin touched their lives and how he brought a level of energy and light everywhere he went solidifies a legacy that transcends the grave.

He loved his family, Emily, and their dog, Chandler, more than anything! His passing leaves an absence that can never be filled. His family longs for the day of their heavenly reunion. Colin was a car enthusiast and enjoyed the outdoors, playing with his dog, and spending time with his family and friends. Colin left this earth doing what he loved next to the person he loved. We are one proud family! #YDM

Nicholas J. Sava

Oakmont Fire Company – Pennsylvania ★ Volunteer Assistant Chief ★ December 14, 2020 ★ Age 65

Nicholas James Sava was born on November 22, 1955, to Nicholas Sr. and Edith Sava. Nick was raised in Havertown, Pennsylvania. He served the community of Havertown for 47 years as a volunteer fireman for the Oakmont Fire Company, a place and role he held very close to his heart. He was extremely proud to serve alongside his fireman buddies. Nick is survived by his wife, Karen, and brother, Bob.

When asked how he became a fireman, Nick would always tell the story of hanging with his friends on the corner. One day, an acquaintance of the group said to them, “You guys are coming with me to the firehouse.” That was 1973, and the rest, as they say, is history. Nick was an active firefighter until his untimely death in 2020.

Nick rose through the ranks at the firehouse and held many positions, ultimately rising to the rank of deputy chief. He was a lifetime member and served on the firehouse’s board of directors. Nick was a valuable part of the Oakmont Fire Company. He formed many lifelong friendships and cherished each and every one of these relationships. They were friends for life, his “second family.” If you knew Nick, you felt as if you knew the Oakmont guys, too.

Nick was instrumental in many aspects of the firehouse. He organized countless functions and special projects, including the annual banquets, Santa Sunday, and the Oakmont Softball League. Whenever there were functions at the firehouse, you could always count on Nick to be there making memories with his friends.

Nick will always be remembered for his sense of humor and wit. He was an extraordinary storyteller and always made people smile and laugh. If you came for a visit, he would invariably invite you in for some beers, some laughs, and talk for hours. He made you feel at home.

Nick’s other love was the beach. He and Karen spent summers “down the shore” in Sea Isle City, New Jersey. He spent endless hours on the beach with family and friends and was dubbed “the unofficial mayor of Sea Isle.”

The Philadelphia Phillies were a huge part of Nick’s life. He organized a huge party for the Home Opener, and everyone remembers “Sava Tours.” They were legendary, and these memories will live in all our hearts as we watch our Phillies play!

Nick’s passing was very sudden and an awful time for family and friends. He is extremely missed, and there is now an enormous void that can never be filled. He was certainly one of a kind, bigger than life, and will never be forgotten.



Robert T. Gardner Jr.

Richmond-Carolina Fire District – Rhode Island ★ Volunteer Deputy Chief ★ January 26, 2023 ★ Age 55



Robert Thomas “Bob” Gardner Jr., 55, of Carolina, passed away unexpectedly in the line of duty as a firefighter for the Richmond-Carolina Fire District. He was the loving husband of Christine Ruth (Chalifoux) Gardner. Born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on February 20, 1967, he was the son of Elizabeth Ann (Hemond) Bray and Robert J. Bray. In addition to his wife and parents, he leaves his children, Derek O. Gardner (and wife Amanda), Adam T. Gardner, and Kevin R. Gardner (and wife Rayanne). He is also survived by his grandson, Dominic T. Gardner, his brothers and sisters, several nieces and nephews, and his beloved dog, Turbo.

Bob was a truck driver his whole life, even before he had his driver’s license. He worked at various trucking operations over the years, where he met many of his lifelong friends. Bob was dedicated to his volunteer work with the fire department. He taught members how to drive and was someone that every member could rely on, in and out of the fire station. From 2004-2010, he volunteered at the Charlestown Fire Department, where he attained the rank of captain. From 2008 until his death, he volunteered at the Richmond-Carolina Fire Department, where he had recently stepped down as deputy chief. Bob was very involved with the town of Richmond and took great pride in helping his community. Also, he was a dedicated member of the Carolina District Board.

Bob enjoyed classic movies like Smokey and the Bandit and listening to classic rock like Molly Hatchet. He was an avid car enthusiast who worked on anything with a motor, especially motorcycles. But most of all, Bob enjoyed spending time with his friends and family, especially over a

morning breakfast or a Sunday dinner at the fire station.

Bob will be greatly missed by his family, friends, and the community which he loved being part of. His family will be forever grateful and appreciative of all the love and support that has come our way. Words cannot describe how thankful we are for all the memories, laughs, and stories that have been shared with us about Bob.

James L. Varin Sr.

Providence Fire Department – Rhode Island ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ February 27, 2023 ★ Age 52

James L. “Jimmy” Varin Sr. was born on May 7, 1970, in Providence, Rhode Island. He was the devoted son of Robert “Pops” Varin and the late Liz (McKenna) Varin.

Following in his father’s footsteps, Jim joined the Providence Fire Department at an early age. During his 31 years in the department, Jim rose to the rank of captain, where he served on Ladder 3 at the Admiral Street station. This station held a special place in his heart, as it was located in the neighborhood where he grew up. He always said that being a firefighter was the greatest job in the world and that not many people could say that about their profession. He has been described by his peers as a great mentor and an even nicer person who would give you the shirt off his back.

Jim enjoyed basketball and spent many of his younger days shooting hoops and perfecting his jump shot on the courts around the city. While attending Our Lady of Providence, Jim was named the Rhode Island Gatorade Player of the Year for basketball during both his junior and senior years. Jim was also named First and Second Team All-State while at OLP. He continued playing in college and later alongside his fellow firefighters on the department’s team.

In early 2022, as he was preparing to take the steps required to become a battalion chief, Jim was diagnosed with an aggressive form of brain cancer. Throughout his battle, Jim continued to want to help other people as he always did. He reiterated that he wanted to do what he could to help patients and their families in similar situations, while simultaneously fighting this terrible disease. The James “Jimmy” Varin Memorial Scholarship Fund was created, and a partnership developed with the Rhode Island Brain and Spine Tumor Foundation to help raise money and awareness for brain cancer research and to provide resources to families of those suffering.

On Monday, February 27, 2023, Jim passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving and devoted family. He was the beloved husband of Paula (King) Varin.

Besides his wife and father, he is survived by his loving sons, James Varin Jr. and Tyler Varin, and his stepdaughters, Addison and Mackenzie Musto. He cheered on both his boys through countless ice hockey games and the girls from the soccer sidelines both near and far. He is also survived by his cherished siblings, Robert Varin (Donna), Michael Varin, Lisa Janbullat (Sam), Joe Varin, and Nicole Varin. Family time for Jim was paramount, and his presence at frequent family gatherings is deeply missed.



Joseph Kenneth Barr

Anderson County Fire Department – South Carolina ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ December 25, 2020 ★ Age 83



Ken Barr served his community faithfully for 56 years with the Powdersville Fire Department. He was a charter member of the fire department. Not only did he literally help build the department, he served as an officer at times during his tenure. He also served as the treasurer and on the board of directors. In 2012, he was awarded Firefighter of the Year for the station as well as for all of Anderson County, which has approximately 1,000 firefighters. He was posthumously inducted into the South Carolina Firefighters Hall of Fame in 2023.

Whether it was responding to a call or taking care of business at a higher level to benefit the department, he was always there. He helped found the first EMS provider in the community, serving as an EMT and treasurer. He will be forever missed.

Ken was preceded in death by the love of his life, Annette, in 2019. Ken left quite a legacy—one daughter and three sons who also served in the fire department, one of whom is still serving. He also left 15 grandchildren and great-grandchildren who are still increasing.

He was a deacon in his church, serving as chairman of the deacons and going on numerous trips across the world on missions to help others and spread the word of Christ Jesus.

If there was one word to describe him, it would be SERVANT. It was God, family, then community. He set the example for us to follow, and we will miss him here on earth until we are reunited with him.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Gary L. Burris II

Gaffney Fire Department – South Carolina ★ Career Lieutenant ★ August 31, 2021 ★ Age 50

Gary L Burris II was dedicated to the fire service. He spent the last 19 years of his life serving the Gaffney Fire Department in South Carolina. He also dedicated 20 years to the Grover Volunteer Fire Department and spent some time serving with Kings Mountain Fire Department. His love for the fire service was like no other. When I married Gary, I married the fire service.

Gary had a love and passion for training. He was so respected as a fire and rescue instructor, as he taught throughout North and South Carolina in emergency services, as well as the private sector. He wanted to be sure anyone going into that line of work was going in successful and knew how to do so in a safe manner. He was very hard on the trainees and rookies, but only because he was so passionate about the job.

Gary left behind a wife and young daughter. He also left behind his mother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, and the brotherhood. Gary loved his family so much. A perfect day was spending time together around the house, cooking out, and having bonfires. He loved to grill for everyone. He was the best cook! Gary was a jack of all trades. There wasn't much he couldn't do. If he couldn't do it, he would figure it out. He was also very creative and could build anything. Everything he built was built to last.

He was an avid hunter and fisherman. He loved working out at the hunting club alongside his best friend and daughter, prepping it for the big season. Gary loved hunting with his little girl. That was their bonding time. They both looked forward to hunting camp every year. There is nothing like a father-daughter bond.

Gary left behind a legacy. He will be forever loved, remembered, and missed.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

John R. Hodge

Inman Community Fire Department – South Carolina ★ Career Chief ★ October 1, 2021 ★ Age 57



John Revere Hodge, 57, died in the line of duty on October 1, 2021. He served as chief of the Inman Community Fire Department.

John was born in White Plains, New York, the son of the late Teresa (Flanigan) Hodge and Robert Hodge.

He was a member of Peoples Baptist Church in Greer, South Carolina.

He was survived by his wife, Pamela Kay (Clippard) Hodge; his two daughters, Christi Hodge and Beth Hodge; his son, Jay Hodge; stepchildren, Chrissy Halstead (Morgan), Matt Willis (Samantha), Caleb Linder, and Alaina Linder; a sister, Ruth Ann Epps; a brother, Robert Hodge Jr.; and eight grandchildren, Mykenzii Tucker, Sarah Willis, Andrew Willis, Brooklyn Moore, Ryan Dugat, Mason Willis, Hayden Dugat, and Penelope Hodge.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

James Michael Muller

Irmo Fire District – South Carolina ★ Career Firefighter ★ May 26, 2023 ★ Age 25

James Michael Muller, 25, was born November 18, 1997, in Columbia, South Carolina, and passed away on Friday, May 26, 2023. He was the son of Christopher Shawn Muller and Denise Morris Muller.

He preferred to be known as “J.” He was a devoted husband, father, brother, and son. J started his firefighting career as a cadet in a high school program, where his enthusiasm for life quickly earned the respect of his instructors. J graduated at the top of his class and was quickly hired by the Irmo Fire District. His passion for the craft and his thirst for growth quickly endeared him to his peers. J spent his off-duty time attending classes and conferences, constantly pushing himself to improve and learn.

J had a profound impact on the Irmo Fire District. His enthusiasm was infectious, not just for the job, but for everything. He influenced attitudes, behaviors, and performance by setting a great example of how to be a human being. He was positive, funny, and outstanding at everything he did. He was a selfless servant, always looking out for the other people in his life, and he always went the extra mile to serve the citizens of Irmo.

The Muller legacy extends well beyond Irmo. J was known to thousands of firefighters across the country through training events and conferences that he attended, because he made an impact everywhere he went. Many of the organizations that J trained with invited him to become an instructor with them. J’s message about the importance of the job, the importance of training, and the value of what we do touched a nerve with everybody who heard it. The people he left behind are committed to carry his message forward. We should all strive to remember that when we take our oath. “It’s an oath; it’s not a ceremonial high five. It’s a commitment, so live it.”

Although J was devoted to his career, he was even more devoted to his family. He loved spending time with his wife, Emma, his son, Cole, and the rest of his family. Family adventures were important to J and almost always involved a stop by one of the fire stations.



Kevin D. Simmons

City of Aiken Department of Public Safety – South Carolina ★ Career Public Safety Officer/Firefighter
August 15, 2021 ★ Age 43



Kevin Daniel Simmons was born on December 10, 1977, to Candace Phillips Simmons and the late Calvin Simmons. Kevin was a member of Fairview Presbyterian Church. He was part of the Local 150 Plumbers and Steamfitters Union of the CSRA.

Kevin was a diehard South Carolina Gamecock fan, win or lose. He loved playing golf, working out, and doing metal/woodworking in his free time. Kevin enjoyed spending time with his family whom he loved dearly. He was always that ray of sunshine that brightened up every room he entered. Kevin took great pride in taking care of his family, whether through support and encouragement or tough love that was needed on occasion. You could always count on Kevin to give you advice, even if it wasn't what you wanted to hear. He was never afraid to tell you his opinion or how he felt about a situation in hopes that it would be helpful.

Kevin was a volunteer firefighter with New Ellenton Fire Department from 2010-2016. He always knew that he wanted a career of service to give back to the community which led him to apply to Aiken Department of Public Safety.

Kevin joined the Aiken Department of Public Safety as a public safety officer/firefighter on May 10, 2021. He assisted with training for Hazmat Ops, Firefighter 1 and Auto Ex. On July 29, 2021, during the Firefighter 2 basic training class, Kevin was exposed to the COVID-19 virus. He tested positive for COVID-19 a few days later, and his symptoms worsened. Kevin was hospitalized on August 10, 2021, and passed away on August 15, 2021.

Kevin leaves behind to cherish his memory, his loving wife, Christi Presley Simmons; three children, Chaysen Simmons, Samantha Simmons Carter, and Danielle Simmons; his mom and stepdad, Candace and Steve Bigg; his siblings, Tracy Tucker, Kenneth Simmons, Rebecca Massie, and Calvin Simmons Jr.; two stepbrothers, Mickey and Tyler Bigg; two stepsisters, Sherridan and Cassidy Bigg; three grandchildren, Landon, Harley, and Bryson; and a number of aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Although Kevin's career ended far too soon, he was a hero to many and will never be forgotten. His greatest legacy was positively impacting the lives of others and unknowingly leaving footprints in the sand of time that will forever live on.

Fred Fedeler

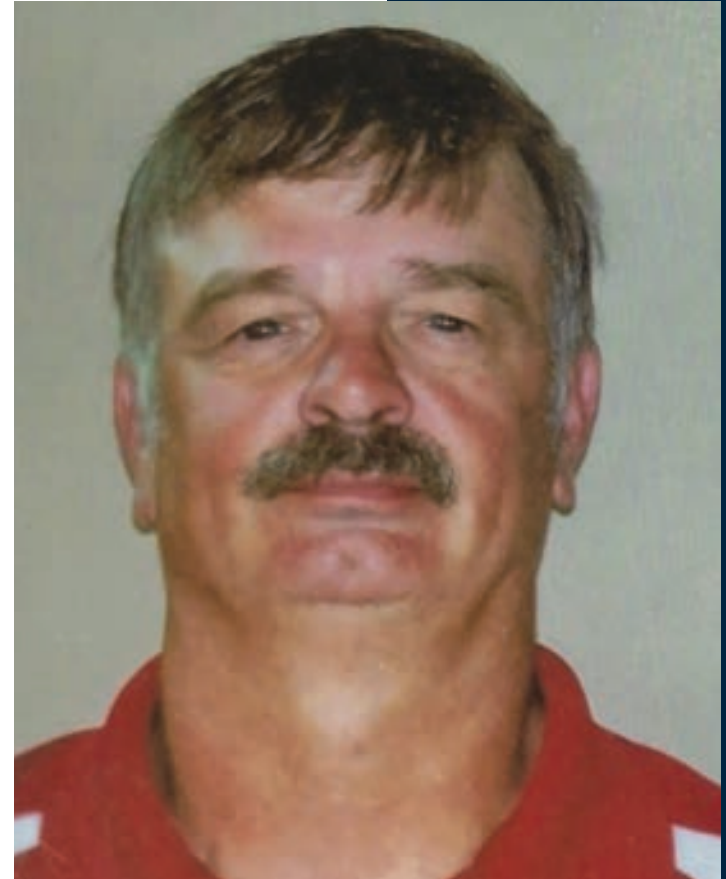
Chester Volunteer Fire Department – South Dakota ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ April 22, 2023 ★ Age 67

Fred Fedeler was born in Waverly, Iowa, to Norman and Wanda Fedeler, on May 12, 1955. A year later, they moved to South Dakota, where he grew up with his six siblings on the family farm near Colton. Fred graduated from Chester High School in 1973. He and his wife, Verna, moved to a farm outside of Chester, where they spent 45 years together. They raised four children, Jason, Karen, Adam, and Laura. Fred loved his family, but his six grandchildren were the light of his life. No matter what he was working on, he spent a lot of time showing them around the farm and teaching them everything he knew. Once the grandkids showed up, everything else could wait. Fred was also known to spoil them when the parents were not looking by sneaking them extra cake or candy whenever possible.

In March 2005, tragedy struck with a fire at the family home. After experiencing the support of the local fire department and community in battling the fire and putting the pieces together afterwards, Fred wanted to repay the service and joined the local volunteer department shortly after to give back. He proudly served as a volunteer firefighter for 17 years. Both of his sons served alongside him as volunteer firefighters in the local department. After his passing, Fred's oldest grandson, Frederick, joined in serving the local community as a volunteer firefighter, filling his shoes. Some of his nephews serve their local volunteer fire departments in surrounding communities of Chester.

Fred was a faithful Lutheran, proudly serving in many capacities for their congregation. He played an active role with the South Dakota Hand Corn Husking Contest, which included holding offices on both the state and national boards and hosting the contest many times. Fred was a supporter of local Steam Threshing Jamborees, participating in and leading many different projects. Fred especially enjoyed steam threshing, both at Prairie Village and the Humboldt threshing events. When not at one of those events or farming, he enjoyed sports, such as watching his grandkids play, Friday nights on the chain gang, and being the "ball boy" for the Madison Warriors when they played at U.S. Bank Stadium. He was especially proud to be able to play softball on the same team as both of his sons.

Fred was always busy, but with a quick phone call he would be there to help wherever he was needed. He would show up, complete the task, and leave quietly, never wanting any recognition. Fred's family greatly misses him but is comforted knowing that he departed serving others.



Joshua J. Kogel

Cavour Volunteer Fire Department – South Dakota ★ Volunteer Chief ★ September 4, 2023 ★ Age 48



Joshua J. Kogel was born on December 5, 1974, in Huron, South Dakota. Josh grew up on the family farm in Cavour.

After high school, Josh attended Mitchell Vo-Tech for linesman training. He returned to the family farm to help his family. He then started an excavating business, a job he was proud of. In 2023, he took over his family farm.

The job that Josh truly loved, however, was that of fireman. He had been a part of the Cavour Volunteer Fire Department since he was 18, with many years serving as the fire chief. Josh completed many projects to help the fire department, including filling out applications for grants and general maintenance on the trucks and equipment.

Josh had four children and two grandchildren.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Jeffrey S. Arick

Memphis Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Firefighter ★ August 8, 2020 ★ Age 45

Jeffrey Scott Arick was a special son, brother, husband, father, and uncle. His first grandson, Elijah Knox, was born April 17, 2023. Jeff had his faults, but we can't remember what they were. He was a kind and happy child and always had a smile on his face.

Jeff was an outstanding athlete. Soccer was his game. He played on his high school team and on a club team. His coach gave him the nickname "Scrap Iron" because of his hustle.

Jeff's dream was to have a family. That dream came true! He married a sweet girl named Stephanie, who had two children, Rayven and Garrett, and they had a third child, Mackenzie. They all loved their dad. He loved them back and made them laugh with his sense of humor. Rayven called Jeff her "bonus dad."

Jeff worked hard and loved his work. In his 17 years as a Memphis firefighter and paramedic, we never heard him complain about his job. We always worried about him and his fellow firefighters. If we heard of a fire somewhere, we would rush to the refrigerator where his schedule was posted to see if he was at work.

When he was not at work, it was family time. Regardless of how tired he was, if one of the kids wanted to kick soccer balls, pitch a baseball, go to the park, or just sit and talk, he was always there. He liked to hang around the pool and cook meals on the grill. He enjoyed attending the kids' events such as football, baseball, volleyball, soccer, and gymnastics. He loved playing with the family dogs, especially Mia, a dog he didn't want. He loved watching TV shows about cars. He probably fantasized about having a '57 Chevy. He loved Star Wars! Yoda was his favorite character. Jeff loved the beach. We went every summer as a family. He was the first up every morning and the last in. He loved getting up early and walking down the beach.

Jeff was a good cook and wanted to have a menu that everyone at the firehouse liked. His specialty was baked spaghetti. Sometimes for dessert he would ask his parents to make a banana pudding. He cooked on the last shift a week before his untimely death. The day before his death, we stopped by and picked up a clean banana pudding bowl. Oh, how we miss that!

2020 is a year we will never forget. In May of 2020, Jeff graduated from nursing school. His plan was to continue his firefighter career until retirement and then begin work as a nurse. In July of 2020, he and his family were on vacation with us at the beach. On August 8, 2020, he passed away from work-related causes.

We love you, Jeff, and will miss you every day!



Malcolm Wayne Arrington

Nashville Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Engineer ★ September 1, 2021 ★ Age 54



Malcolm Wayne “Mac” Arrington was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on December 12, 1966, to the late Jack and Faye Arrington, as their only child. Malcolm grew up and lived his entire life in Joelton, Tennessee, where he attended Morny Elementary, Joelton Middle, and Whites Creek High School, graduating in 1985. After graduation, he worked various jobs, including four years at UPS, until eventually he was hired by the Nashville Fire Department in March of 1990.

In 1990, Malcolm had a life-changing year. He not only began his career as a fireman, but he also married his high school sweetheart, Connie, in September. Two years later they welcomed a daughter, Abbie, into their lives while building their forever home. In 1994, their son Jason was born and completed the family. Malcolm was a loving husband to Connie for 31 years and a wonderful father to his children. In 2017, Malcolm welcomed a son-in-law, Colby, into the family. Though he was not here, in 2022 he gained a daughter-in-law, Kristen, and in 2023, twin grandsons, Beau and Mack.

Malcolm was meticulous in nature, striving for perfection in all he did. He was a simple and selfless man who would lend a helping hand to anyone in need. Malcolm loved working outdoors on warm, sunny days. When he wasn't at the firehall, he would spend his days mowing grass and building fences for customers. He was a huge lover of NASCAR and Tennessee Volunteer Football, attending many races and games throughout his life. Automobile restoration was a passion of his, handed down from his father. Together they restored a Chevrolet Nova and won best in show multiple times.

Malcolm was a dedicated member of the Nashville Fire Department for 31 years. He began as a firefighter/EMT and worked his way up to an engineer promotion in 2006. Malcolm loved being an engineer and referred to it as the best job in the department. Throughout his time with the department, Malcolm dedicated his life to the citizens of Davidson County and made lasting friendships with his fellow firemen. His colleagues will remember Malcolm for his sense of humor, work ethic, and genuine personality.

Malcolm went to be with our Lord on September 1, 2021. He leaves behind his family and friends who grieve him daily. Malcolm will be remembered as a hardworking man who always put others before himself. There will never be another soul like his. His family has faith that they will be reunited again on the other side.

William Michael Brooks

Nashville Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Captain ★ February 1, 2022 ★ Age 59

William Michael Brooks (Mike) was born in Nashville, Tennessee, on May 8, 1962. He attended Antioch High School and Vol State College. He was a dedicated member of the Nashville Fire Department for over 35 years, first as a firefighter/EMT, then as an engineer. He worked hard throughout the years and eventually became a captain, a position he took much pride in. He frequently said being on the fire department was the best job he had ever had.

He always aspired to be a firefighter. Mike's grandfather, who he never met, was a firefighter for Nashville/Davidson County and died in the line of duty in 1933. Mike's dream came true in 1987, when he and his wife were expecting their first child. As a matter of fact, the day he graduated from the academy, his wife and son were still in the hospital.

Mike always helped others. He never wanted credit for his good deeds. He would sometimes mow a neighbor's grass or buy small tokens of love and leave them for someone in need. It truly was a regular part of his life to do random acts of kindness. Many things he did for others went without any recognition, and that was on purpose. The recipient was completely unaware that the act of kindness was carried out by the man down the road.

Mike left this earth for his Heavenly home on February 1, 2022, to be with his Lord and to join his middle son, Matthew, who passed four years prior. He leaves behind many loved ones who grieve his loss daily, including his wife, Sherry; sons, Stephen and Mitchell; and mother, Shirley.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Roger Estes

South Claiborne Volunteer Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ July 4, 2022 ★ Age 77



Roger Estes was born December 11, 1944, in Derry, New Hampshire, to the late Albert and Gladys Estes. Roger was a dedicated public servant. At the age of 17, he joined and served in the Navy for four years. When he left the Navy, he worked for the Town of Derry Highway Department for ten years. During this time, he was also in the Naval Reserves as a Seabee from 1974 until 1979. In 1979, at the age of 34, he joined the Derry Fire Department, where he became a full-time firefighter/EMT- I. He served for 21 years before retiring and moving to New Tazewell, Tennessee. In 2001, he joined the South Claiborne Volunteer Fire Department, where he served for another 21 years.

Roger was a devoted and loving family man. He leaves behind his wife of 54 years, Rita Estes; his two daughters, Faith Grace (Jonothan) and Kristie Haynes (Jeffery); four grandchildren, Vanessa Squibb, Jonothan Grace Jr., Devin Estes, and Matthieu Caron; and eight great-grandchildren whom he loved dearly.

During Roger's life, he belonged to many different veteran organizations, where he helped his fellow veterans. He also served the community by volunteering his time. He organized gifts and food baskets for the needy during the holiday season, always willing to help anyone in need.

He loved antique cars, car shows, and long walks. His 42 years in the fire service were one of his greatest joys. He was always striving to better his education by attending different classes at the National Fire Academy. He was always available to go to meetings and talk to his fellow firefighter brothers.

Roger passed on July 4, 2022, while working traffic control for a fire department fundraiser. He is missed very much by his family, friends, and fire department brothers.

Travis Isabel

Memphis Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Lieutenant ★ September 14, 2021 ★ Age 52

Lt. Travis Isabel was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on June 29, 1969, and passed away on September 14, 2021.

He joined the United States Army after completing his GED.

After his time in the Army, he returned to Memphis and joined the Memphis Fire Department. He dedicated 20+ years to the Memphis Fire Department and his community. He absolutely loved being a firefighter.

He leaves behind two daughters, his loving mother, three siblings, one grandson, and a host of family and friends who became family.

He enjoyed deep sea fishing, spending time with family and friends, and traveling.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Richard D. Miller

Henderson County Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Firefighter/Driver
December 1, 2023 ★ Age 69



Richard Dean “Rick” Miller was a proud American who believed in helping people, especially those within his community. After working for ten years as a rigger in Pennsylvania, and then working in maintenance for 32 years in Ohio, he retired and moved to the place he fell in love with years before, Tennessee. After settling in, he was drawn to give back to his community. He joined the volunteer fire department, where he met his second family.

Rick enjoyed camping, riding his motorcycle, and watching drag racing and tractor pulling, many of which he did with his brother, Gary, and nephew, Jon.

Rick Miller was a devoted and loving family man. He was preceded in death by the love of his life, Debra M. Miller, his wife of 24 years. He left behind three daughters, Jen Miller, Steph (George) Norton, and Deb Randolph Miller (Keith Morrow). He also left behind his pride and joy, his grandchildren, Devon Randolph, Hayden Norton, Declan Norton, Breanna Norton, and Seamus Morrow; and his siblings, Gary Miller, Dennis Miller, and Diana (Jeff) VanCleve.

Even though Rick was a quiet man, you could always go to him if you needed advice on anything, whether it be something small or life changing. He was not afraid to let you know how he saw things and was also not afraid to give a little bit of tough love. He would say, “Don’t ask if you don’t want to know!”

Rick also loved his dogs. There was not an animal he met that did not become devoted to him and he to them. There is nothing that Rick could not make or fix. That was another joy in his life, tinkering. He was never without a project to do, whether it was to help someone out or just to keep busy. He said, “That is when you get old, when you stop moving.” He was a young 69 when he went to meet “the Spirit in the Sky.”

He loved his family, community, and country and will be dearly missed by everyone who was blessed enough to know him. He is loved beyond worlds and missed beyond measure but always and forever in our hearts.

Jeffrey Todd Norman

Memphis Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Career Lieutenant ★ July 19, 2023 ★ Age 51

On July 18, 2023, the Memphis Fire Department received a call of a resident fire. Lieutenant Jeffrey Norman and his team rushed to the scene, fully aware of the danger they were about to face. Upon arrival, fire companies were presented with heavy fire and thick, black smoke pushing out of the structure. Lieutenant Norman took on the responsibility of communicating with the truck company inside the garage, urging them to exit the compromised structure. As firefighting efforts ensued, the garage collapsed before they could get out, trapping four firefighters inside, including Lt. Norman. The trapped firefighters were rescued and rushed to the hospital for medical attention. Despite the best efforts of medical professionals, the injuries that Lt. Norman sustained during the collapse were severe, and in the early hours of July 19, Lt. Norman succumbed to his injuries.

Lt. Norman was a 20-year veteran of the Memphis Fire Department. Prior to that, he served with the 164th Aerial Port Squadron of the Tennessee Air National Guard for 28 years, earning the rank of master sergeant before retiring. He served multiple tours of duty overseas and in the United States, including two tours in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

In 2002, he joined the Memphis Fire Department, moving up the ranks from driver to lieutenant. He was known as “Dirty Red” to his coworkers, and he received the Life Saving Medal during his tenure.

In his free time, he loved watching sporting events, especially his Arkansas Razorbacks. He also enjoyed cooking, traveling, and running, but most of all, spending time with his family. He leaves behind his wife and son.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Darin D. Pasold

Hohenwald Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ November 27, 2021 ★ Age 52



Darin Dean Pasold was born August 7, 1969, in Chadron, Nebraska. He was raised in Crawford, Nebraska.

While in high school, he started his career as a volunteer firefighter. When he moved to Scottsbluff, Nebraska, he worked as a firefighter/EMT. He followed his dream as a wildland firefighter, working for the National Park Service in Hohenwald, Tennessee. He was a lieutenant for the Hohenwald/Lewis County Fire Department for 13 years.

Darin enjoyed storm chasing in Tornado Alley with his best friend, Troy Shoemaker. The love he had for Christmas cannot be described. And then there are the trains. Yes, trains! He loved trains of all sizes. He was proud of his HO-scale model train layout he built in his garage. He was a huge supporter of his son's Motocross racing. His love for the rodeo started at a young age to become a bullfighting rodeo clown.

Darin passed away on November 27, 2021.

He is survived by his wife, Kessta Pasold; his children, Briane Werner, Ansley Pasold, and Grant Pasold; his father, Dean Pasold; and his sister, Amber Pasold.

Joining him in heaven is his mother, Jean Pasold.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Roy Lee Sewell Jr.

North Tazewell Volunteer Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Captain ★ April 24, 2023 ★ Age 27

Roy Lee Sewell Jr. was a true example of what it means to live authentically. In his 27 years, he figured out what mattered and valued what it meant to be a true example of loyalty and love. Roy was involved in his community as a young boy by participating in the Boy Scouts, something he was proud of until he passed. As a teenager, he was involved in the Tri-State Youth Choir, where he would give his life to the Lord and meet his future wife.

He joined North Tazewell Volunteer Fire Department at 18, when his neighbor's house caught fire in the middle of the night. He felt that this was his duty to the community. He took his position as a first responder with pride. He went on to serve for almost ten years at North Tazewell VFD. Roy joked that maybe one day he would be chief. He would answer the call, day or night. This was how he lived his life, personally and professionally. If anyone needed him, he would be there as soon as he could.

Roy Lee was a proud family man. He was married to the love of his life for nearly five years, and they were together for twelve. Together, they have a beautiful three-year-old daughter who has the same spirit and zest for life that he did. He was proud of "his girls" and was extremely excited to welcome his baby boy into the world. His son decided to come into the world on Father's Day, a true honor to his dad. If Roy wasn't at work or at the fire department, you could guarantee that he was having a family day that would end with a steak from Texas Roadhouse and an ice cream cone. He made time for those he cared about, whether it was a quick game on the Xbox or a longer game of Wheel and Deal. Regardless of what he was doing or who he was with, he took the time to enjoy it.

Roy was known for singing everywhere he went, especially while working as a digital team lead at the local Walmart. He would often be loud enough to hear from aisles over. If you were lucky enough to run into him, he would likely spend the next 10-20 minutes talking to you, and an extra five minutes cheering you up if you were having a rough day. Rarely would you leave a conversation with Roy that you weren't smiling. After all, his goofy grin was contagious.

Roy is missed more than words could ever describe. Tennessee is a little quieter and a little less bright after he had his final call. However, his legacy lives through his kids, his family, those at North Tazewell, and anyone else who had the pleasure of meeting him.



Clifford Smelcer

Sunnyside Volunteer Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ September 17, 2020 ★ Age 69



Clifford W. Smelcer was born in Greene County, Tennessee. He was a dedicated servant and a proud United States Army veteran. He played a vital role in the Sunnyside Volunteer Fire Department as a lieutenant. He was a member of the Masons and a retired postal mechanic.

Clifford loved cars and racing. He was a member of multiple race teams, ranging from early NASCAR to late model, and the latest was truck driver for the ARCA series.

Clifford was a devoted family man. He left behind his wife, Elaine Smelcer; daughter, Michelle Badger; son, Chad Smelcer; stepdaughters, Heather Willett, Melissa Walton, and Martha Fleming; grandchildren, Katelin Willett, Rose Willett, Braxton Willett, Aaliyah Story, Chelsea Walton, and Hannah Walton.

Clifford loved traveling. He became a tour bus driver so he could do more of it. He also drove the bus for his local college team, TU.

Clifford was loved by many from his department, church, family, friends, even people that really didn't know him, but he helped. He will be missed by all.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Julian “Skill” Wilson

Fayette County Fire Department – Tennessee ★ Volunteer Captain ★ January 23, 2022 ★ Age 59

Julian Greaves “Skill” Wilson was born in Hot Springs, Arkansas, on June 8, 1962. As a boy, he moved with his family to Memphis, Tennessee, where he grew up and found a love for the city. Following in his father’s footsteps, Skill went into the military service and trained as part of the 82nd Airborne. He always joked, what better way to conquer his fear of heights than by jumping out of planes? He returned home early to care for his parents and began his career as a paramedic, working at Adventure River, as the county EMS service medic, and as an emergency room tech at the trauma center. In 1989, he found his true calling and joined the Memphis Fire Department. He was passionate about his career and quickly achieved rank as a P2, which later became the rank of EMS lieutenant.

Skill was a dedicated part of the Memphis Fire Department for just over 31 years, before retiring in 2020. Nearing the end of his career with Memphis, he found a renewed passion for EMS and the fire service after moving with his wife to his home in Somerville, Tennessee. He joined the Fayette County Fire Department as a volunteer, quickly earning the rank of captain with the District 15 Fire Department, becoming their medical training officer. He was awarded Officer of the Year in 2021. Skill’s true passion was EMS, which led him to also work for the Fayette County Ambulance Service until his passing. Skill loved helping others and touched so many lives throughout his career, both coworkers and patients.

Skill was a wonderful family man with an infectious laugh who loved to joke around. Everyone who had ever met him would say he was unforgettable. He loved to cook and always had a house full of family and friends, making sure they had a wonderful meal to enjoy. After moving to Somerville, he found a new hobby of living on a small farm, raising chickens and selling the eggs to a local restaurant. Skill took great pride in his family, making sure they were always taken care of, supported in everything they did, showing how much they were loved, and playing the occasional prank. He became a trap team coach in 2021 and jumped headfirst into his new trap family.

Skill passed away January 23, 2022, after complications from COVID, and is survived by his wife, Hollie; his children, Kelsi (Corey), Keegan, Greaves, and Hunter; and his new granddaughter, HattieLou.



Peter S. Avila

Brownsville Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 7, 2021 ★ Age 59



Peter S. Avila served his Brownsville Community for 21 years before his passing. He was a devoted serviceman for his fellow community and loved his profession. Peter was a proud part of the Airport Rescue Firefighter team.

Peter was part of a family history of firefighters. His father, Engineer Pete Avila, Jr.; brother, Lieutenant Richard Avila; brother, Engineer Daniel Avila; and sister-in-law, Engineer Cindy Puente; served the Brownsville Fire Department until each retired.

Peter was also a military veteran who served with the U.S. Navy for four years.

Peter always excelled in his accomplishments. He was a happy, joking person and was a well-liked firefighter among his peers.

He has been dearly missed by his peers and by his wife, Lupita Trevino Avila.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Evan Curtis Brown

Honey Grove Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ July 30, 2023 ★ Age 18

Evan Curtis Brown was born in Sherman, Texas, to Clint and Christie Brown, on October 24, 2004. He joined his local volunteer fire department several months before graduating from Honey Grove High School on May 19, 2023. Evan followed in the footsteps of his father, grandfather, and great-grandfather and became the first fourth-generation firefighter in Honey Grove, Texas. He was very proud of the legacy he chose to follow.

On Christmas night, while still a high school student, he eagerly joined several fire departments on scene of a tragic fire that consumed his family's business in Honey Grove, Texas. The next day he decided to take the steps to begin his future. He joined the volunteer fire department, enrolled in college to study as an emergency medical technician, and planned to attend the fire academy. He was awarded several scholarships to assist in his plans and stayed focused on the career path while training and learning alongside several veteran firefighters that were eager to pass their knowledge on to him.

Evan loved his parents, family, and friends unconditionally. His mother, Christie Brown, was the center of his world, and he looked out for her well-being without question. He was without a doubt his father, Clint Brown's, best friend and worked by his side in their family business that was established in 1943. Evan has a very large family that meant the world to him, which includes his five brothers and three sisters. On top of having a career planned out for himself Evan had future plans with his girlfriend, Rylei Mantooth. They looked forward to getting married and raising a family together.

The Honey Grove Fire Department members quickly became a second family to him. They welcomed him into their department and their lives with open arms. The brotherhood and comradery made Evan feel right at home inside the fire department, and he was honored to be a part of something so meaningful in his community.

On July 9, 2023, Evan and another volunteer firefighter were responding to an emergency call when they were involved in a wreck that resulted in severe injuries to Evan. He succumbed to those injuries twenty-one days later.

Evan entered this world into a family that loved him immensely and left surrounded by even more love. Even though the family, friends, and community he left behind will always mourn such a tragic loss, they all feel some comfort in knowing that he gave his life trying to save another.



Gregory L. Cocke

Fort Worth Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Engineer ★ March 14, 2009 ★ Age 41



Gregory L. Cocke was born on September 6, 1967, in Fort Worth, Texas, to the late Robert R. Cocke and Phyllis Cocke. He grew up in Azle, Texas, with his two sisters, Lisa and Jeanette, and his brother, Randall. The family attended Azle Church of Christ, where Greg was a dedicated member until his death. Greg attended school K-12 at Azle I.S.D. He was a pole vaulter on the track team and a fullback on the football team. Greg graduated from Azle High School in 1986. He received academic scholarships and attended Abilene Christian University. During his college years, Greg participated in many campus and community activities, including refereeing for local high school football teams. He graduated from A.C.U. in 1990 with a degree in engineering physics. In 1991, Greg married the love of his life, Teresa Moore, and together they started a close and loving family. Twins, Alissa and Robby, were born in 1996, and Cora was born in 1998.

In 2000, the family moved to Weatherford, Texas, where Greg and Teresa attended many of their children's school functions. Greg adored watching his daughters play various community league sports. His son, Robby, was diagnosed with autism in 1999. Greg was very dedicated to his son's needs and was a doting caregiver.

In his spare time, Greg enjoyed hunting, fishing, computer games, and visiting with family and friends. During the spring and summer, he spent many hours outside playing with his children and visiting with the neighbors. Some of our favorite memories are when he "silly danced" with the kids and joyously aggravated his sisters and brother.

He joined the Fort Worth Fire Department in 1993 and served with great pride until his death in 2009. Greg was an engineer at station 23, and he loved and

respected all those he served beside. They were his second family. He was also the fire house cook and was well known for making his favorite dish, fideo.

On March 14, 2009, Greg died as the result of a brain aneurysm that happened a few days earlier during a strenuous training exercise. Regrettably, Greg's dad, Battalion Chief Robert Cocke, also died in the line of duty, after suffering a heart attack during a high-rise training exercise on December 6, 1993.

We miss them both every day and cherish all our wonderful memories. The Cocke family is immensely grateful that Greg and his dad are being honored by the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Robert R. Cocke

Fort Worth Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Battalion Chief ★ December 6, 1993 ★ Age 54

Robert R. Cocke was born in Liberty Hill, Texas, to Bob and Aline Mitchell Cocke on October 14, 1939. Robert was drafted into the Army in March 1963. He served two years and was stationed in Aschaffenburg, Germany.

Robert married Phyllis Long Cocke on February 24, 1963. Their daughter, Lisa, was born in October 1964 in Frankfurt, Germany. After two years in the army, Robert, Phyllis, and Lisa returned home to Lake Worth, Texas. With his oldest brother, Robert worked as a bricklayer. This was during a recession, and times were difficult. At a church picnic, a family friend who was a Fort Worth Firefighter suggested to Robert that he apply to the Fort Worth Fire Department. Robert applied, was hired, and enjoyed the job, friendship, and loyalty of his firefighter family. He was mentored by many veteran firefighters and encouraged to study and pursue rank. Over the years, Robert diligently studied and steadily rose in rank to become a battalion chief.

A son, Greg, a daughter, Jeanette, and a son, Randall, were added to the family. Robert and Phyllis were active in their church and in the local youth association. Robert served as president, softball commissioner, umpire, softball coach, and Pee Wee football coach.

Robert and Phyllis maintained a large garden with the help of their children. They never missed any junior high or high school games their kids played. They also attended all the college softball and basketball games, watching their daughters play. Vacations, camping, and fishing trips were a fun part of family life. Robert was forward thinking and purchased a video camera and a desktop computer when they first appeared on the market.

Robert was most respected by all the firefighters with whom he worked. In turn, he mentored many young firefighters. Robert was participating in a high-rise rescue training when he had a heart attack that led to his death. Robert was a man of integrity and principles and passed on these traits to his children.

He died on December 6, 1993, after serving 27 years with the Fort Worth Fire Department. Robert's children honored his wishes and pursued college degrees. Greg, the oldest son, followed in his dad's footsteps and became a Fort Worth firefighter after college graduation. Sadly, Greg also died in the line of duty in 2009 after an accident at the Fort Worth Fire Training Center.

Robert is remembered as a loving husband, a devoted dad, a faithful Christian, an esteemed and fair officer, and a true friend. As a family, we are constantly comforted by these characteristics.



Richard Michael Hempel

Groesbeck Fire-Rescue – Texas ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ May 9, 2023 ★ Age 53



Richard Michael Hempel had a calling to serve his community from a young age, eventually becoming tri-certified as a first responder. At the age of 15, Rick became a member of the Lake Jackson Police Explorers Program. Soon after, following in his dad's footsteps, he joined the Lake Jackson Volunteer Fire Department and would help on EMS scenes, which naturally led to him obtaining his EMT.

After being medically discharged from the Air Force, Rick returned home to Texas. He still had the urge to help others. In 1991, Rick graduated from Alvin Police Academy, where he worked for Clute and Bay City Police Departments.

After leaving all aspects of first responding for a few years, Rick felt a heart tug and returned to first responding, where he was hired on with Freeport Fire Department as a full-time firefighter/EMT and earned his National Registry paramedic license.

After 30 plus years working in all aspects of fire, EMS, and law enforcement, Rick obtained several accolades and accreditations. These included awards for service during Hurricanes Andrew and Ike, Intermediate Marine Fire Fighting, Advanced Fire Fighter certificate, Level II Instructor, Certification Coordinator, Basic Arson Investigator, Advanced Peace Officer, Advanced SWAT Officer, and National Registry Paramedic.

Rick retired from Oyster Creek Police Department as captain in 2020. After working in a COVID Response Unit as a paramedic in 2021, he was hired at Limestone County EMS and volunteered with Groesbeck Fire Department, where he quickly moved to the rank of lieutenant. He loved his little

community of Limestone County, the patients and friends he made while on shift and on scenes. He loved continuing his education in fire and medicine, as it was always changing and gaining new technology. He knew he was getting too old to be in the fire, so he turned his attention to teaching the younger firefighters how to be safe on scene and get back home to their loved ones.

While his dedication to serving others meant time away from home and family, we knew what he was doing was so important. He leaves behind his adoring wife of almost 24 years, three incredible sons, three fantastic daughters-in-law, two amazing grandchildren, his mom, brother, sisters, and niece and nephews. We are proud of our very own personal hero.

Edward R. “Eddie” Hykel Jr.

West Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ March 28, 2023 ★ Age 60

Edward R. “Eddie” Hykel Jr. of West, Texas, passed away on March 28, 2023, while on call with the West Volunteer Fire Department.

Eddie was born November 7, 1962, in Waco, Texas, the son of Barbara (Hessel) and Edward Hykel Sr. He was a 1981 graduate of West High School. On September 13, 1986, he was united in marriage to Janet Gerick in Tours.

Eddie had worked in the public works department for the city of West since March 2007. Prior to that, he worked for Huck Manufacturing for 19 years. Eddie had been a very active member of the West Volunteer Fire Department since 2011. He was a member of the SPJST Lodge #6 in Cottonwood and St. Martin’s Catholic Church in Tours.

Eddie enjoyed restoring old tractors and trucks, painting anything he could get his hands on, working in his pasture, and messing with his cows. He was very outspoken, never met a stranger, and was always there to lend a helping hand. He loved spending time with his friends and family, especially his grandchildren.

Survivors include his beloved wife of 37 years, Janet Hykel; his mother, Barbara Jean Hykel; his children, Chris Hykel (Sammy Jo) and Ashley Mynarcik (Chad); his grandchildren, Raelynn Ward, Dylan Cassity, Luke Mynarcik, and Dannie Mynarcik; his brothers, Bobby Hykel (Kathy), Terry Hykel (Shanona Goodman), and Keith Hykel (Kelly); his sisters, Karen Holder (Selby) and Lanette Gerik (James); his sisters-in-law, Patricia Reasing (Robert), Bernice Gerik, and Jilji Gerik; and many nieces, nephews, other relatives, and friends.

Eddie was preceded in death by his father, Edward Hykel Sr.; parents-in-law, Leona and Eugene Gerik Sr.; and brother-in-law, Eugene Gerik Jr.

Eddie was a friend to many who made life better for those he knew. He was remembered as trustworthy and loyal, a good family man who was dedicated to family, community, and the fire department.



John P. Norris Jr.

Forest Bend Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Chief ★ November 25, 2023 ★ Age 55



Chief John P. Norris Jr. was dedicated to the service and protection of others. John joined the Houston Fire Department in April of 1990, where he served as a paramedic and airport rescue firefighter. He retired from the Houston Fire Department in July of 2022. Along with his wife, Wendy Norris, he joined the Forest Bend Fire Department in May of 2005, where he has served as a wildland firefighter, safety officer, assistant chief, and chief.

In the early morning hours of November 25, 2023, shortly after battling a mutual aid structure fire, Chief Norris collapsed and died.

John was more than just a firefighter. He was a mentor, a leader, and a source of inspiration to others. John was stoic and a deep thinker. That personality often came off, as we jokingly liked to say, as gruff. Sometimes it was hard to know whether he was serious about an issue or if he was joking. Through the gruff exterior, John was a deeply compassionate man who loved his fire family and absolutely adored his family, especially his daughter, Catherine. She was his greatest joy, and being a father was his favorite title.

In the face of tragedy, we are reminded of the incredible bravery and sacrifice exhibited by our first responders every day. John will forever remain a symbol of heroism, dedication, selflessness, and compassion. It was his hope that his daughter would forever see him as a loyal, fiercely protective, and loving father who was deeply proud of her and that his memory would continue to inspire future generations of firefighters to serve with the same unwavering dedication and courage.

John leaves behind a legacy of courage, dedication, and unwavering commitment that will remain in the hearts and minds of those who knew him. His memory will also be cherished by his firefighting family, the brave men and women who served alongside John, and the community he protected.

Nahit Atif Oral

Community Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter/EMT ★ March 9, 2023 ★ Age 49

Nahit Atif Oral, known as “Atif,” was born in Pazar, Turkey, on March 23, 1973, to the late Resat Ozdemir Oral and Ulker Surat.

Nahit moved to New York after he graduated from college in 1997 with a degree in mechanical engineering. Nahit met his wife, Marie Anisca-Oral, an Iraqi Army veteran, in Brooklyn, New York, where they got married in 2006. Nahit and Marie never had children, but they had a few animals that they loved dearly.

Nahit wore many hats throughout his life. After college, he worked as an engineer on a long-distance cargo vessel. He worked as a truck driver, a bus driver, and a superintendent.

Nahit also wanted to reflect his love and benevolence for people and animals into a profession. After moving to Texas in 2016, Nahit became a certified firefighter in 2020, and an EMT. He was assigned to Fire Station 93. He also received the Academic Excellence Award for Fire Academy Class 2020-Alpha.

He touched the lives of many people. He loved being a firefighter; therefore, he died doing what he loved.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Joe Parish

Diboll Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ September 1, 2023 ★ Age 67



Joe Parish, 67, a dedicated Christian, husband, father, brother, uncle, and firefighter, died on September 1, 2023, leaving behind a legacy of faith, service, and love. He is joined in heaven by his son, Jacob Ross Parish, and is survived by his wife of 42 years, Kathy Bryan Parish.

Everyone who knew Joe Parish could say they had a friend. If you knew Joe, then you loved Joe, although at some point you probably also wanted to throw something at him. He was a Godly man, hard-headed, with a goofy side he showed to those he cared for most.

Joe Parish was born on May 7, 1956, in Lufkin, Texas. For 45 years, he served his community as a firefighter for the Diboll Volunteer Fire Department. Joe was always willing to pick up a call to risk his life for strangers who needed help, while intensely loving his family and friends.

Joe was the type of man who would actually give you the shirt off his back. Once, while responding to an emergency, Joe used his own shirt as a tourniquet to save a man's life. But Joe didn't stop there. When the man Joe saved ended up losing his leg, Joe also built a ramp onto the man's house to accommodate a wheelchair. So, we can say that Joe is the type of man who will give you the shirt off his own back, save your life, and be by your side to lend a hand as you recover.

Joe was self-employed for most of his life, working as a welder, equipment operator, and mechanic. He would take on any job or task, regardless of how big or small or whether he knew what he was doing at the start. As a genuine jack of all trades, Joe would figure it out. Joe never met a stranger. Anytime and anyplace, he would talk for as long as someone would stand there and listen.

In his earlier days, Joe loved spending time at the deer lease with his son, Jacob, and two longtime family friends, Gary and Jonathon Jones. Later in his life, Joe was always up for an adventure with Kathy, whether it was going bay fishing, tending goats, or gardening. He was blessed with three bonus grandchildren, Shane, Abbey, and Allie, who he loved spending time with.

Joe had scars and pain from his time on earth, but to say that Joe was a good man is an understatement. Joe died doing what made him good and what makes him so missed by those who love him—responding as quickly as possible to a call for help, using his talents to make things better. In Diboll, Joe's legend will be spoken of as long as there are ears to hear.

Now, may Joe's legacy be a blessing for all of us still living, as we hope to see him again in heaven. Rest easy, brother. We'll take it from here.

Brandon T. Peterson

Lancaster Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Engineer ★ December 29, 2020 ★ Age 31

As a Lancaster firefighter/paramedic, Brandon Peterson was a true hero. He was a 10-year veteran of Lancaster Fire Department and served with compassion, honor, and loyalty to the citizens of Lancaster, until losing his battle with lung cancer resulting from his service. Brandon passed away on December 29, 2020.

Brandon was a wonderful caring father, husband, and son. His two beautiful daughters will always remember their awesome Daddy. He was proud to be a professional firefighter and is missed by many. His family has many happy memories of Brandon, how he lived his life, and how he loved his friends and family. They remember his many talents and the friendly attitude he presented to all he encountered. He never complained about anything and always put his family first.

Brandon was an avid Texas Rangers fan and a collector of many baseball player autographs, as well as famous celebrities. He enjoyed visiting Disney World with his family.

Friends and family take comfort in knowing his last act of kindness was to ensure others could enjoy the gift of sight after he was gone. From Brandon, and all the other generous cornea donors like him, the Gift of Sight lives on.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Keven Glen Teague

Fort Worth Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Captain ★ May 24, 2019 ★ Age 46



Keven Glen Teague was born May 16, 1973, in Fort Worth, Texas. He grew up in Lakeside and graduated from Lake Worth High School before joining the United States Navy and serving aboard the USS Guadalcanal out of Norfolk, Virginia. After an honorable discharge, Keven returned home to Texas and joined Training Class 49 of the Fort Worth Fire Department. He worked his way up the ranks and was a highly respected captain at the time of his passing, after serving the people of Fort Worth for over two decades.

Keven loved travel, the outdoors, hunting, and fishing. On his off days he could often be found grilling and listening to classic country music on the back porch. Most of all, he was a loving husband, father, and family man. His family took priority above all else, and he rarely missed a soccer game, dance recital, school program, or family gathering. He is survived by his wife, Deedra; son, Rhys; and daughter, Penelope.

In spring 2019, Keven began suffering from medical complications that were eventually attributed to cancer. His illness was highly aggressive, and he passed away May 24, 2019, within days of his diagnosis. Although Keven's passing has left an unfillable hole in the lives of his loved ones, the outpouring of love, support, and brotherhood from the Fort Worth Fire Department has been a great solace.

Keven served, assisted, and saved many lives in the short time he was given. He will forever be a hero.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Malcolm Sherrod Willis

Houston Fire Department – Texas ★ Career Firefighter ★ July 13, 2022 ★ Age 24

Malcolm Sherrod Willis, 24, of Houston departed this life July 13, 2022, at home. He was born on February 11, 1998, in Houston, Texas, to Michael and Alicia Willis. He was preceded in death by his grandparent, Richard Willis II.

Malcolm attended high school in the Spring Independent School District. He played on the varsity football team at Westfield High and graduated in the top ten percent of his class, maintaining his standings in the National Honor Society throughout high school. After graduation, Malcolm was accepted to Texas A&M in College Station, where he received his Bachelor of Science degree. While at Texas A&M, Malcolm pledged Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated, Nu Delta Delta Chapter, in the spring of 2019, on the 3 Sons of Chaos Line. Malcolm was the “Deuce” and took on the line name of “2 Icey” (part of which was his father’s nickname, “Ice”). Malcolm loved his fraternity and was most proud to be in an organization that embodied the many qualities and a creed that he lived by daily.

Malcolm joined the Houston Fire Department on November 16, 2020, and he loved serving and working as a firefighter. Malcolm worked tirelessly at many stations throughout the Houston area. He loved his second family (HFD) and his 48D brothers. He served faithfully.

Malcolm believed and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior at an early age. He loved volunteering at Fallbrook Church.

Malcolm leaves to cherish his memories, his loving parents, Michael and Alicia Willis; two siblings, Michael Willis II (DeAndrea) and Morgan Willis, both of Houston; two nephews, Chuvez Wynn-Autry and Ayden Brown, both of Houston; one niece, Zayna Willis of Houston; grandparents, William Thomas of Columbus, Georgia, Shirley Alfred of Houston, Peter Mosby of Chicago, Illinois, and Ilona Mosby of Houston; four special friend-brothers, Blane Cannon, Blake Cannon, Forrester “Trey” Goodrich, and Esra Bridon, all of Houston; his girlfriend, Ariel Seals, of Atascocita, Texas; and a host of loving relatives and friends. We cherish Malcolm’s smile, but most importantly the love he shared with us all.

What was, still is.



Horace “Dan” Wright

Abbott Volunteer Fire Department – Texas ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ April 14, 2023 ★ Age 71



Horace “Dan” Wright was born in Falfurris, Texas, and was the first of five children. He took his “job” as the oldest very seriously and made sure to text and/or call his siblings every week. He was the kindest, most soft-hearted man you would ever hope to meet. He was not afraid to cry, had no problem telling his friends and family how much he loved them, and went above and beyond as a husband, father, son-in-law, father-in-law, and grandfather. He spent many days with his mother-in-law, taking her to doctor’s appointments, out to eat at Dairy Queen (her favorite), and always followed lunch up with a Blizzard. He even took her to get her hair permed and waited patiently for her to get done. He loved and treated her as if she was his own mother.

Dan worked at Holt Caterpillar for almost 45 years, retiring in December 2021. He loved what he did and worked his way up from shop mechanic to technical communicator, where he was the liaison between Holt and Caterpillar. He was very dedicated and was their biggest cheerleader during his employment.

Dan was a volunteer firefighter for the city of Abbott, Texas. He volunteered at Northcrest Volunteer Fire Department when he was much younger and couldn’t wait to get back into volunteering when he and his wife moved back from the Dallas area after retiring. He served as a deacon at Bellmead Calvary Baptist Church for many years and loved all those he served there.

He loved his family with all his heart and was married for 48 years to the same bride he took when she was only 17 years old. He had one son, a wonderful daughter-in-law, and three precious grandchildren. He found his greatest pleasure in watching his grandchildren grow and explore new opportunities.

Dan’s main focus in life was to help make everyone happy; that is all he ever wanted. He truly was one of the good ones. He is missed every single day and could never be replaced. We know we will see him again one day and find peace in that.

Mario “Smiley” Smith

U.S. Virgin Islands Fire Service – U.S. Virgin Islands ★ Career Lieutenant ★ April 9, 1993 ★ Age 46

Mario “Smiley” Smith was born on October 30, 1946, to Ms. Ann Smith on the island of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

Mario was a quiet, unassuming man. He embodied courage, loyalty, compassion, and discipline. He was a well-respected, personable man and loving dad.

Mario served in Vietnam, where he received a Bronze Star Medal for Meritorious Achievement in Ground Operations Against Hostile Forces.

Mario was an avid, talented ball player and coach. Those who played ball with him learned the type of man he was on the ball field. There were some pitchers who were afraid to pitch to him because he could have hit anything.

In 1973, he joined the Virgin Islands Fire Department. Mario was known in the fire department for his no-nonsense personality, hard work, dedication, cooking skills, and firm, sturdy hand while taking charge. He touched the life of every firefighter that he came in touch with. He was well-liked by his friends and his coworkers. Mario was so dedicated to being a firefighter that he would even support his fellow firefighters when he was off duty or those outside of his district. Mario protected his fellow firefighters at the station and while out in the field protecting life and property.

Mario rose through the ranks of the Virgin Islands Fire Department, where he became a lieutenant before his untimely passing in 1993 at the tender age of 46.

Mario left behind five children, family, firefighter family, baseball family, friends, and loved ones that miss him dearly and daily.

Mario will forever be remembered for the bravery and courage he showed while fighting fires and his illness, always lending a helping hand and never feeling sorry for himself.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Merrill L. Bone

Unified Fire Authority – Utah ★ Career Captain ★ October 31, 2021 ★ Age 61



Merrill L. Bone was born May 26, 1960, to John and Beverly Jean Bone. He was the only son of John and Beverly and was the affectionate brother of Lisa, Shari, and Kim. Merrill began his family early in life and had five children, Travis, Maegan, Emily, Dallon, and Trevor. Merrill was married to Laurie Murphy and had three stepchildren, Mandy, Tonia, and Hardy. He had many grandchildren who affectionately nicknamed him “Black Papa,” for the black leather clothing he wore on his motorcycle.

Merrill was known and loved by both his family and fire family for his “Merrillisms” and quirky comments. He loved doing everything to the extreme, including bull riding and joining the Leatherheads motorcycle club.

Merrill found great passion in education and public service. He started his firefighting career with West Valley City Fire Department and Salt Lake City Fire Department. He held the ranks of firefighter and paramedic. He was a member of the Heavy Rescue Program and UTTF1. Merrill deployed many times with UTTF1, including to New York City following September 11, 2001. He retired after 20 years from Salt Lake City Fire Department and joined Unified Fire Authority in 2006. Merrill worked for UFA as a firefighter, paramedic, and finally held the rank of captain. He was also a member of USAR and was a wildland firefighter. He held more awards, certifications and accomplishments than can be listed.

Throughout his journey as a firefighter, Merrill also pursued education. He held multiple degrees and was a beloved instructor. Merrill worked

at the Utah Fire Rescue Academy as an instructor, instructed large animal rescue courses, and worked closely with FEMA. He collaborated and assisted in the creation of the Medical Specialist Operations Course (MSOC) for FEMA and spent multiple years teaching the course. His contribution to this course is now remembered with a scholarship named in his honor.

Merrill was deeply loved by everyone he came into contact with. The most important thing in Merrill’s life was his fire family and ensuring that he passed on all his knowledge to the next generation of firefighters. Merrill strived to engage and educate everyone he encountered and will forever be remembered in that way.

Robin Lee Pilcher

Unified Fire Authority – Utah ★ Career Captain ★ April 20, 2016 ★ Age 63

Captain Robin Lee Pilcher was a graduate of Bingham High School in Utah and served a full-time mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the Alaska British Columbia Mission. After his return, he married his sweetheart, Wendy Lou Davis, and was happily married to her for nearly 40 years.

Robin's love of service led him to a 35-year career as a professional firefighter for Salt Lake County, which later became Unified Fire Authority. He served as a paramedic, captain, and deputy fire marshal. He was also a member of Utah Task Force One, where he was deployed to Ground Zero and Hurricane Katrina.

His love of service did not end with his fire career. He served several full-time missions for his church, which included Heber Valley Girls Camp as well as an MLS Salt Lake South Missionary. For this, and many other reasons, he became our favorite hero!

Robin was a loving husband and father to four children. His final advice to his family and friends was, "Stay in the boat." He was a loyal friend and loved being around people. "Work hard, play hard," was how he lived his life. He loved camping, boating, and had a particular love for his red Harley-Davidson.

He will be remembered for his humor, his love of the outdoors, his work ethic, and for being the best grandpa in the world.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Ernest Nelson “Ernie” Cash

Monelison Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Chief ★ April 5, 2022 ★ Age 72



Ernest Nelson “Ernie” Cash was born to Ernest A. Cash (father) and Earle Loving Cash (mother) on March 10, 1950, in Lynchburg, Virginia.

Chief Cash began his fire department journey in 1971. This service to his community via the fire department evolved into his love, passion, and desire to assist those in need and save lives. He rose through the ranks, including serving as fire chief for over 20 years. Even upon his retirement as fire chief, Chief Cash continued his service to Amherst County and the department in many ways and served as a fire instructor.

Ernie developed a true passion for instructing, especially the new fresh recruits. He often shared his fire department journey, which included his firefighting experiences in Washington, DC in the 1970s, and his assignment with CAL Fire, Hollister Air Attack Base, for three years in the mid-2000s. The many awards and recognitions Ernie received made him proud, but he remained humble. He earned his fire science degree from Central Virginia Community College and completed a great deal of training throughout his active-duty fire service years.

Ernie’s love for cars and motorcycles was evidenced throughout his life, as he rebuilt his 1978 Broncos, Ford pickup trucks, and built his own bike. Later in life, Ernie and his wife, Tina, would ride Harleys, kayak the James River, and ride bicycles trails.

Ernie was employed for 30 years as a conveyor builder and installer.

Ernie is survived by his loving wife, Tina Cash; his children, Anthony (Jessica) and Jennifer (Darryl); his grandchildren, Kaleb, KK, and DJ; his brother, JT; in-laws, Bettie, Ronnie, Deborah, Ken, and Sandy; and a host of friends and firefighters.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Matthew R. Chiaverotti

Virginia Beach Fire Department – Virginia ★ Career Captain ★ April 17, 2023 ★ Age 44

Matthew Robert “Chevy” Chiaverotti was born in Austin, Texas, to Gary Chiaverotti and the late Lynn Chiaverotti on October 3, 1978. Matt was a loving and caring family man, leaving behind his wife of 15 years, Sara, and son, Gus.

Captain Chiaverotti was a 20-year decorated and beloved veteran of the Virginia Beach Fire Department. At the time of his passing, Matt’s position was captain of Engine 7, the “Busiest Engine” in the Vbfd. Matt was also a search team manager with FEMA Virginia Task Force 2 and had been with the team for 16 years. During his career, Matt had been to thousands of calls to help the citizens of Virginia Beach, including structure fires, hazardous materials incidents, and technical rescue incidents. Most notably, in April 2012, Chevy spent many hours searching for victims when an F-18 jet crashed into an apartment complex in Virginia Beach.

Chevy could be heard saying each day, “Live Life at A 10,” Which he so proudly did. He was passionate about serving our community, and he loved working alongside hard charging firefighters. Matt greatly enjoyed visiting our local elementary schools to share his love of the fire service. It was always his hope that sharing his knowledge and love of firefighting would inspire young people in our community to become firefighters.

During his career, Matt earned the Medal of Honor and Life Saving Award three times. He also earned a Commendation Award and Meritorious Conduct Award. Matt earned the Good Conduct Award four times, and Team Recognition Ribbons for his service on the FEMA team and the Technical Rescue Team.

Matt was on a call one night where a homeless man lost his tent and belongings due to a fire. Matt and his crew pulled up at our house in the fire truck shortly after the call. Matt went up into our attic and gathered a tent, a camping mattress, and clothing which he later gave to the man to replace the items that had been lost in the fire. Matt’s empathy and compassion for all humans was one of a kind.

Matt’s talents went above and beyond being a dutiful firefighter. He could construct and repair just about anything. If he wasn’t sure how to do something, he taught himself. Matt would jump at every opportunity to help friends, family, and colleagues build, repair, and replace just about anything.

Matt’s legacy lives on in our beautiful son who has so much love and energy to share with the world, just as his Daddy did.

All who loved Matt are deeply grieving him and miss him dearly. We continue to strive to make the world a better place just as Chevy did by Living Life at a 10.



Cameron Bentley Craig

Abingdon Fire Department – Virginia ★ Career Firefighter ★ October 19, 2023 ★ Age 20



Cameron was born on June 3, 2003, and brought a bright light to the lives of all who had the privilege of knowing him. He was a dedicated son, brother, and friend, with an unwavering passion for helping others and sharing his love for Christ with them.

Cameron loved his family very much. He and his dad were big NASCAR fans and would attend the races at Bristol Motor Speedway as often as they could. In his downtime, he would play online racing games where he was known as the Kingdom Racer. He enjoyed traveling and playing games with the family, especially with his sisters, brothers-in-law, nieces, nephews, aunts, uncles, and all of their animals.

He attended Trigg Street Christian Academy, where he graduated with honors and was the valedictorian. Cameron's love for math, science, and his fellow students allowed him to win several awards, including the Christian Character Award in his senior year. Cameron was always a willing helper with the younger children.

He was a part-time career firefighter at the Abingdon Fire Department, with hopes of making it his career. He was also employed by Richardson Ambulance Service, where he served as a driver. During his time in service, Cameron responded to countless emergencies, risking his life to protect and save the lives of others. His bravery and dedication to keeping our community safe was a testament to his Christian character. He will forever be remembered for his acts of heroism and his willingness to put the wellbeing of others above his own, as demonstrated on his last call on October 19, 2023.

In addition to being an extremely proud firefighter, he was a kind and compassionate young man, always ready to lend a helping hand and bring comfort to those in need. Cameron looked for opportunities to share his faith in Jesus online and in person. Just as his funeral service moved 30 individuals to give their lives to the Lord, he would want his memory to remind those who know Jesus that this earth is not our final home. And for those who have yet to answer that call, as you read this, today could be the day that you are guaranteed a space beside Locker 36 in Heaven.

Mia Ethridge

Louisa County Department of Fire and EMS – Virginia ★ Career Firefighter/EMT ★ September 1, 2023 ★ Age 20

Mia Ethridge, age 20, passed away after an eight-week battle in the hospital, as result of injuries incurred in the line of duty, while serving with Louisa County Fire & EMS in Virginia.

Mia grew up in Maryland and Virginia and was a 2021 homeschool graduate. She had a love for people and a big heart for helping them, which led her into service as a firefighter/EMT. Growing up, Mia enjoyed camping, hiking, going to amusement parks, swimming, participating in AWANA and church youth group, and hanging out with friends. From early on, it was clear Mia was energized being around people, fun-loving, caring, and had a powerful resolve to accomplish her goals.

Mia especially enjoyed the water. She started swimming as a toddler and continued taking lessons, training, and competing throughout her grade school years. She participated in summer swim teams, eventually becoming a swim coach. In high school, Mia started working as a lifeguard and swim instructor.

After high school, combined with a very outgoing personality, a strong internal drive, and a big heart, Mia was motivated and eager to expand her service to others. While continuing to work as a lifeguard and swim instructor, Mia started volunteering with Stafford County (Virginia) Fire and Rescue before accepting a full-time position with Louisa County Fire & EMS.

In the short time Mia was with the fire service, she made a big impact. She was not afraid to take the lead and was eager to learn everything she could. Mia was often the first one to engage new members of the team and help them get acclimated. She wasn't shy about coming up with something to liven up a group, like turning on the engine lights in the bay and having a dance party.

In the fire service, Mia found something she enjoyed and was passionate about. Her immediate goals were to become water rescue qualified, join the water rescue team, and become a paramedic.

Mia was a cheerful, friendly, caring young lady, with a great sense of humor, who was taken from us far too soon. As difficult as it has been to lose her, we trust in the sovereign plan and purpose of God and in His goodness, that this was the right time for her.

Mia leaves behind her parents, a younger brother, and a younger sister, who loved her and will greatly miss her.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
Isaiah 55:8-9



James Arness Foster

Rice Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 29, 2023 ★ Age 46



James Foster was born on March 21, 1976, to the late Brenda L. Foster. James attended Cumberland County Public School System. He later received a job for many years and met the love of his life. James was a devoted and loving husband for 25 years to his wife, Della Foster. Everyone he ever met knew how much he loved his wife.

James joined the Rice Volunteer Fire Department as a volunteer firefighter and later became a property sergeant with the department. He always appreciated the Rice Volunteer Fire Department and being a part of the team. James was always 100% invested in whatever he put his mind to. Nine years later, he remained a volunteer in the fire department.

James started his career at Schewels Furniture, where he was a delivery driver and shortly after was promoted to warehouse manager for many years. James met a lot of wonderful people and made many friends along the way.

He was also a great outdoorsman, He loved to go fishing and hunting. If it was a nice sunny day, James would go out on his boat to fish and relax with a friend or two. James loved the company. He also was a huge fan of the Dallas Cowboys and the L.A. Lakers.

James loved his family and friends, and his family and friends loved to be around him! He loved his stepchildren and grandkids, and we can't forget about his dog, Rex, who couldn't wait for him to get home and play. Something we loved so much about James was that he would just call everyone he knew and check up on you randomly. He was such a joyful soul who could make you laugh until you cry! There was never a dull moment when he was around.

James received his CDL certificate in June 2022.

James A. Foster passed away January 29, 2023, with his sudden illness, surrounded by the ones he loved. He is truly missed by all his family and friends, including his wife, stepchildren, grandkids, siblings, aunts, many nieces and nephews, and his dog, Rex.

We miss you every day! It's not the same without you in our lives. You are always loved, never forgotten, and forever missed! Until we meet again.

Thank you to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for also keeping his memory alive, and to the Rice Fire Department. James would be so touched and honored.

Brian R. Hricik

Alexandria Fire Department – Virginia ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ February 23, 2023 ★ Age 51

Brian Robert Hricik was born in Alexandria, Virginia, on August 14, 1971, to Robert and Kathleen Hricik. He grew up in Alexandria, Virginia, with his two sisters, Christine and Sabrina.

In August of 1996, Brian met Cindy Anne Mayne when her sister, Noelle, brought her along to Brian's 25th birthday celebration. Brian and Cindy quickly fell in love. They married on October 9, 1999, at the Vienna Presbyterian Church. They were blessed with three beautiful, intelligent, and spirited daughters, Madison, Kaitlyn, and Anna.

Brian lived his life deeply rooted in faith and family. He was an active and devoted member of Vienna Presbyterian Church for decades and was very proud to be a deacon in the church. He was devoted to his wife and daughters, as well as to his parents, sisters, and in-laws. Brian loved cheering on his daughters no matter the endeavor and instilled in them his radiant positivity and drive. He loved to travel, whether to the Outer Banks, the Caribbean, or to Lake Sacandaga in New York, which became an annual family event. He also enjoyed watching his beloved Washington Capitals, win or lose.

His friends, family, and colleagues remember him as being kind, loving, humble, dedicated, smart, strong, giving, and passionate. He shared those same values with everyone he met.

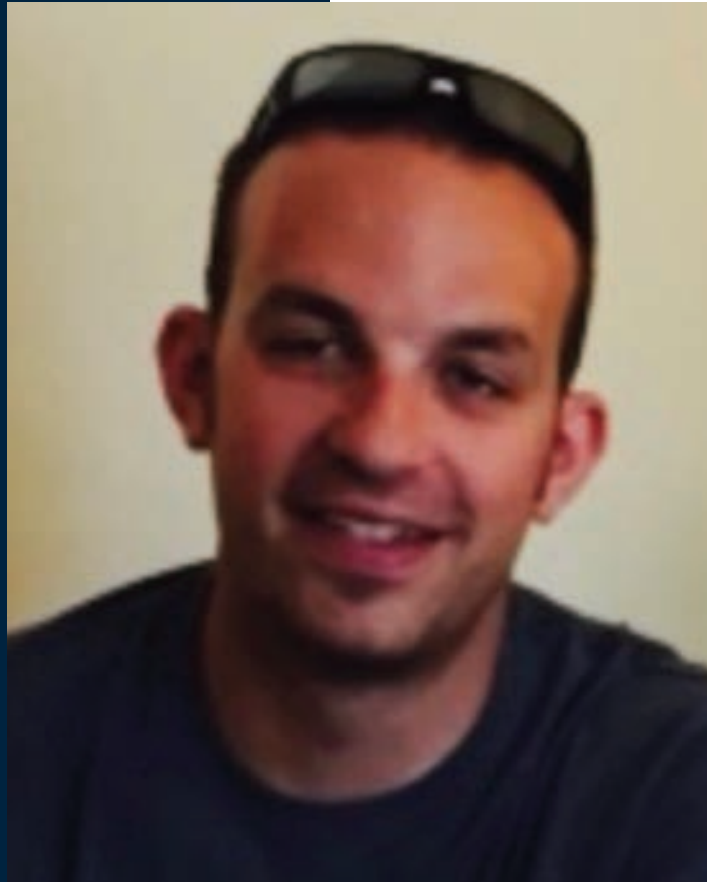
As a young man, Brian became interested in emergency medical services after watching the American drama series "Emergency" on television. Brian began volunteering at the Buckhall Volunteer Fire Department in Prince William County in 1989, earning his Emergency Medical Technician certification. He later became a cardiac technician and was employed as an emergency room technician at Alexandria Hospital and later at Prince William Hospital. Brian began his EMS career with the Alexandria Fire Department in 1997, eventually rising to the rank of medical services deputy chief.

Brian had a long and impactful career with AFD and served in many leadership roles. Throughout his career, he was an advocate for his colleagues and for an EMS system that prioritized high-quality patient care. He was dedicated to his profession and worked diligently to train others and serve as a role model. He even worked hard to complete his bachelor's degree this year. He served continuously as a friend and a mentor to too many people to count. He was well respected by all who knew him, and his impact on the EMS profession will continue to resonate beyond the city of Alexandria.



John Laronda

Altavista Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Captain ★ June 6, 2017 ★ Age 28



John Ross Laronda was a graduate of the American Firefighters Academy and served with Freetown Fire Department in Freetown, Massachusetts from 2010-2013. John was a third-generation manager of his family's automotive business, John's Auto Body and Towing, in Freetown, until 2013, when he relocated to Altavista, Virginia. In Altavista, he managed the family-owned Perkins Twin Tire as the self-proclaimed "Top Man" and quickly found acceptance by the local community.

John became a volunteer firefighter for the Altavista Fire Company and rose to the rank of captain. He found an extended family in the Altavista Fire Company and was quick to share his fire and rescue knowledge with his comrades. Even though he liked working in automotive repair, his passion was being a firefighter/EMT, and he had dreams of becoming a full-time firefighter.

John's family has felt an outpouring of support from the communities that he served, and it is clear that he made a lasting impact. He was eager to help others without expectation of praise or compensation. John made people smile, often with his witty personality and small acts of kindness. He enjoyed spending time with his rescue dogs. Just as in life, he continued to help others after death, as seven recipients were saved by his donated organs.

John has even left us with words of encouragement that summarize his strong faith, with a tattoo he got shortly before his death that read, "God gives His toughest battles to His strongest soldiers." John is an inspiration to many and will be forever in the hearts of his parents, sisters, twin brother,

friends, and comrades of the Freetown and Altavista fire departments.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Chester T. Lauck

Frederick County Fire and Rescue Department – Virginia ★ Career Deputy Chief ★ April 23, 2023 ★ Age 66

Chester Taylor Lauck was born in Winchester, Virginia, on December 21, 1956. Chester was introduced to the fire department by his mother's friend from church. In 1972, Chester became a member of the Rouss Fire Department located in Winchester. In the fall of 1979, he joined the Sarah Zane Fire Company. While at Sarah Zane, he held the title of deputy chief. Chester worked for the city of Winchester for a short time. While serving at the 167th Airlift Wing from January 28, 1978, to September 5, 1994, he obtained his Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) certification and training. He left the Air Force Reserves, holding the rank of technical sergeant. He later pursued his firefighting career as a fireman at the Quantico Marine Corps base.

He transferred to the Washington Airports Authority, which is now known as the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority. During his 22 years of service to the airport, he was an ALS provider, a fireman, and a chief officer. Chester formed the HAZMAT team at MWAA, which is still in operation today. As the battalion chief of Special Operations, Chester was directly involved in many large projects, including the terminal shuttle tunnels. Chester responded to the terrorist attack at the Pentagon on 9-11-2001. He retired from MWAA in 2007. He later held a part-time position with Frederick County (Virginia) Fire and Rescue and oversaw the emergency management needs of the community. He was later appointed to a full-time position as the deputy chief of Emergency Management.

Being a career fireman didn't slow Chester down. He continued to be involved in his local volunteer departments. Chester was instrumental in writing and obtaining various grants, some of which were used to replace an ALS transport unit, aging hydraulic rescue tools, turnout gear, SCBA, and a station cascade system. He could also be found wearing his yellow Nomex shirt and green pants on a wildfire anywhere in the county. Chester helped create a part-time crew in the late 1980s to respond to wildfires in Virginia. He was able to assist with wildfire needs in various states after he retired from MWAA.

Chester wasn't just a fireman. He was a beloved husband to Becky Lauck; they married on February 27, 1979. Chester became a father to twin boys. While his sons were growing up, he became a coach and mentor and could often be found running the chuck wagon at the local county fair. Later in life, Chester became a grandfather of three girls, whom he loved dearly.



Mark A. McCowan

Clinchco Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer First Lieutenant ★ October 3, 2022 ★ Age 50



Mark Allen McCowan was born on December 7, 1971, to Marlene McCowan and the late Philmore McCowan of Clinchco, Virginia.

Mark has two sisters, Mary McCowan and Kim Dotson, and two daughters, Tori and Savannah McCowan. He is also survived by many other loving extended family members and friends.

Mark touched a lot of lives. He loved those around him unconditionally and is loved and will be missed by all his family and friends.

The fire department was a big part of his family. When he got a call, he was ready to go, no matter the time. He loved working for and giving back to his community. His 35 years of service as a volunteer firefighter was proof of that.

Mark's greatest achievement was accepting Jesus as his Savior before he passed. We find comfort in knowing we will see him again one day soon.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Eric P. Newman

Franklin County Public Safety – Virginia ★ Career Firefighter/Paramedic ★ August 4, 2021 ★ Age 59

Eric was born on January 6, 1962, and passed on August 4, 2021.

Eric was a kind and gentle person. He was always helping someone. He became a junior member of Bassett Rescue Squad at the age of 14. He worked his way up and became a paramedic. He was a lifetime member of Bassett Rescue Squad for 40 years.

Eric began his career at RJ Reynolds Patrick County Memorial Hospital in Stuart, Virginia, in August 1991. It's where he met his loving wife, Shannon. They began dating December 31, 1993, and married on December 31, 1995. The hospital where they worked struggled and filed bankruptcy several times.

Eric went to work at Franklin County Public Safety in the early 2000s. Two years later he became the instructor for the EMT program for the local high school. The students meant the world to him, and he stayed late three days a week and held tutoring sessions to ensure the students passed his class and passed the EMT National Certification. This class became very popular with the students, and the pass rate for National Certification was in the high 90%. Eric loved teaching high school students and was never embarrassed by the questions high school students would ask.

Eric meant the world to me, and I miss him and his wonderful stories about the good old days at the rescue squad. We were married for 25 years—over half of my life—when I lost him.

Thank you for honoring the fallen heroes.



FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Ian Thomas Strickler

Frederick County Fire and Rescue Department – Virginia ★ **Career Firefighter Recruit**
July 5, 2023 ★ **Age 35**



Ian Thomas Strickler was born August 7, 1987, in Ranson, West Virginia. He was raised by his mom, Alice, and surrounded by his grandparents, Margaret and Bill; his aunt and uncle, Barbara and Jay; and his cousins, Adam, Aaron, and Ethan. He moved to Luray, Virginia, in 1992, and was adopted by his dad, David, in 1994. He grew up on the family farm with his parents, his sister, Samantha; grandparents, Franklin and Francis; aunts and uncles, James and Kim, Philip and Lynn; and cousins, Jason, Jami, Sarah, and Joseph. He spent his early years playing video games, participating in baseball and marching band, and riding around the farm on the 4-wheeler. Ian graduated from Luray High School in 2005.

Ian attended James Madison University, majoring in criminal justice. His love for the marching band transferred over to college, and he thrived as a Marching Royal Duke. He played the tuba and trombone. It was here that he met his best friends, Andrew, Bob, Alex, and Chris. This group of friends created some special memories in college—cake eating contests, Saturday football tailgating (Go Dukes!), and hotel shenanigans during away games. Ian was part of the fraternity Phi Mu Alpha. He graduated from JMU in 2011.

After college, Ian moved to Boston, where he worked in police and security for many companies. He eventually landed at Massachusetts General Hospital, where he worked as a special state police officer. It is here that he met and fell in love with his future wife, Stephanie, who works as an ER nurse. After growing their relationship and getting married on June 4, 2022, in Fryeburg, Maine, they took the plunge and moved back to Virginia in May 2023 to be closer to his family.

Craving camaraderie, brotherhood, and family, Ian took the leap and switched professions to become a firefighter. He had seen the joy it brought to his uncle, Jay, and cousin, Aaron. Ian was devoted to being a public servant. He always believed in a cause greater than his own. As a recruit firefighter in Class 14 at FCFR, he was asked to be the class leader, and his fellow recruits quickly dubbed him “Boston.”

Ian was an avid sports fan, supporting his Boston Red Sox and his Roll Tide. You could also catch him watching F1 on the weekends. Having moved back to Virginia, Ian loved trying out new breweries and restaurants with his wife and parents and catching up on all the county fairs he grew up loving.

His death has left a hole in the hearts of everyone who had the privilege of knowing him. We will continue to cherish the memories we have of him in the days to come.

John E. Tucker

Altavista Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Chief ★ April 8, 2023 ★ Age 53

John E. Tucker was born in Altavista, Virginia, on November 26, 1969, to Malcolm Tucker and the late Mary Humphreys. John was a Christian, a devoted family man, and a volunteer firefighter. He made his career as a financial advisor for more than 30 years.

Evident by a large extended family of relations and friends from across the globe and from every walk of life, John never knew a stranger. He was a visionary whose passion for serving his community was boundless. His heart of service was evident in his 31 years of dedicated volunteer service and leadership with the Altavista Fire Company, where he first served as treasurer and then as chief of the department for 18 years. His service extended far beyond his hometown and county in his years of work through deployment as a national first responder with the Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Team.

John and his wife, Denise, spent 35 years building their home, their life, and their family together. To say he was a dedicated father to his daughter, Faith Mari', would be a huge understatement. She was his heart, his sidekick, and he loved her beyond measure. He found great joy in being a girl dad, a dance dad, a youth group dad, and a nurse dad. His son-in-law, Casey, was valued and loved as his own and was one of his best fishing buddies. The latest blessing was his grandson, Cooper, who he described as the sunshine in his days and the joy in his soul. John wore many hats, but his roles as husband, Dad, and Papaw were clearly his most cherished.

He found peace and solace in the great outdoors. He was a farmer, an avid hunter, a fisherman, and loved spending time outdoors with family and friends solving the problems of this world, laughing, sharing stories of days gone by and of dreams for the future.

His antics were legendary and those who knew him have their own stories to tell. He was a man of unwavering faith and conviction. He was nothing if not honest. He said what he meant, and he meant what he said. His body of this world may have struggled, but his spirit was stubbornly strong.

John lived graciously and courageously with cancer until the very end. He did not lose the battle. By inspiring and teaching us, he won the battle in many very important ways. Though the struggle was real, he remained a faithful warrior and servant through it all, forever reminding us to make a difference when and where we can.

Knowing him, loving him, and being loved by him has truly been a gift. While we cannot imagine this world without him in it, we look forward to being together again, joyfully, on the other side.



Michael Wayne Webb

Callaway Volunteer Fire Department – Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ November 13, 2021 ★ Age 53



Michael Wayne “Mike” Webb, of Rocky Mount, was born October 9, 1968. On Saturday, November 13, 2021, at the age of 53, he went to be with his Lord.

He was preceded in death by his grandparents, Odell and Maggie Webb and EK and Frances Shumate, and his father-in-law, Ralph Prillaman.

Michael was a faithful servant to his Callaway community as a member of the Callaway Volunteer Fire Department and Rescue Squad for 35 years and served as a deacon of Piedmont Presbyterian Church. He never met a stranger. Whether grabbing a bite to eat, delivering oil for Davenport Energy, or driving a bus for Franklin County Public Schools, Mike always took the time to have a conversation with a neighbor.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife, Lori Ann; children, Chelsea (Tyler) and Evan; and his grandchildren and joy, Everett, Clay, and Quinn. Also surviving are his parents, Johnny Mack and Dorothy; sister, Vicki (Chris) Craighead; brother-in-law, Brian (Melissa) Prillaman; sister-in-law, Karen Prillaman; mother-in-law, Janice Prillaman; his beloved nieces and nephews, Cody, Christa (Chinmay), Isaiah (Maggie), Mary Kendall, and Matthew; great nieces, Kenleigh, Skyler, and Isla; and all his Callaway Fire Department family.

Rest in peace, dear Mike. You will be missed, but your spirit, your love, and your light will forever shine bright in our hearts.

As long as we live, they too will live; for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Stephen D. Whitson

Henrico County Division of Fire – Virginia ★ Career Firefighter ★ April 6, 2023 ★ Age 57

Stephen Davis Whitson lived a life of service for others. He was born in Norfolk, Virginia, on September 24, 1965, to parents Hunter and Kathryn Whitson. Stephen graduated from Norfolk Catholic High School in 1983 and later received a B.S. in Education at Old Dominion University. With Outward Bound, he worked with at-risk youth, living in the wilderness, camping, and teaching leadership skills. In 1986, he enlisted in the Army National Guard and Army Reserves as a military police officer for 18 years. As a sergeant, those he led looked up to him. He was deployed to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and Germany and received numerous medals.

He continued to serve his community and worked 16 years as deputy sheriff for Henrico County Sheriff's Department serving the courts. He moved on to join Henrico County Fire Department as a firefighter/EMT for another 17 years. As a certified diver, swift water boat operator, and successful completion in marine firefighting for the land-based firefighter, he served on the Search and Rescue Dive Team as well as the Burn Team until his passing on April 6, 2023. Among many certificates he earned to further his training and expertise, he received a unit citation award for a burning boat with citizens in the water. He loved his job and said many times that it was the best job ever. He exemplified leadership, professionalism, integrity, dedication, and enthusiasm in whatever capacity he took. He could be counted on and took his oath to heart.

So many words describe Steve as a person. He loved his family and always thought of others. He loved to shop and would come home with little things for his wife that he knew she would like. He loved his cats and spending time with them. He enjoyed amateur radio, woodworking, and chatting with friends. He knew a little something about everything and could have a conversation with anyone he talked to. He was there if you needed him or someone to just bend an ear with. He was quick to drop what he was doing to help others. Steve was a gentle, loving, giving, goofy, thoughtful husband (and cat dad) who is sorely missed beyond words.

He leaves behind a grieving wife, five cats, mom, and brother, as well as many close friends. It will never be the same without him. A day doesn't go by without shedding tears, thinking of special memories. A hole was left in our hearts, but there's comfort in knowing he is with our Father in Heaven and someday we will join him for all eternity with never a tear again.

God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes with no more death, sorrow, or crying. Revelation 21:4



Rocky S. Wood

Virginia Department of Forestry – Virginia ★ Career Forest Technician ★ March 9, 2023 ★ Age 53



Rocky Wood was a forest technician and wildland firefighter with the Virginia Department of Forestry, where he made many significant contributions to the community that he served. He was a resident of Dickenson County, Virginia, and was influential in the lives of so many friends, neighbors, coworkers, and all of those that he came in contact with.

Rocky was a 1987 graduate of Haysi High School, vice mayor of Haysi, chief of the Haysi Volunteer Fire Department, chairman of the Building Code Committee of Dickenson County, owner and operator of Wood Construction Company, and a member of the Grace Fellowship Baptist Church.

Rocky's commitment to the fire service began at a very young age, joining the Department of Forestry's local Keep Virginia Green (KVG) wildland firefighting crew at the age of 16. Rocky went on to serve as a part-time DOF firefighter for more than a decade before he became the local DOF forest technician for Dickenson and Buchanan County. Rocky was a member of the DOF Honor Guard, was a noted instructor in wildland fire investigation and suppression, and was best noted for his leadership and mentorship ability with the agency's newest employees.

Rocky was cherished by his wife and family, a leader in his local community, and a special coworker to everyone in the DOF.

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Charles Thomas “Chad” Cate II

Clallam County Fire District #3 – Washington ★ Career Captain ★ January 12, 2023 ★ Age 46

Charles Thomas “Chad” Cate II was born February 5, 1976, to Katherine “Brandy” Cate and the late Charles Thomas Cate Sr. in Kanab, Utah. Soon after, the family migrated to Washington State. The Cate family settled in Sequim, Washington, where Chad attended Sequim High School. His favorite pastime was wrestling. Chad wrestled throughout his high school career and was very competitive. While still in high school, Chad joined the Fire Explorer program with Clallam County Fire District #3.

In the spring of 1996, at just 20 years old, Chad tested and was hired as a career firefighter/EMT. Shortly after, while maintaining his work schedule, Chad enrolled in a paramedic program and became a paramedic. Chad loved and lived the fire service; he was a very passionate paramedic and a very knowledgeable firefighter.

Chad also had a passion for firefighter survival and firefighter self-rescue; he taught those techniques to his coworkers because it was so important to him. It was not long before Chad would test to become an officer; he became a lieutenant and later a captain. He was a very approachable officer. Many of his coworkers said that Chad had a very relaxed, mellow, and levelheaded personality which made him easy to talk to and a great mentor. Young future firefighters would seek Chad out for advice, and he was always gracious in spending his time with them.

Besides firefighting, Chad’s other passion was wrestling. He became a wrestling referee for the local high schools, and when there was an opening, Chad became the head coach for the Sequim High School wrestling team. Chad’s team loved him as their coach; he spent countless hours in his off time working on building a winning team.

All this came to a tragic end when, in the early morning of January 12, 2023, Charles T. Cate II answered his last alarm.

Chad left behind his beloved wife, Renee; a three-year-old boy, Charles T. Cate III; two adult children, Ashleigh and Harrison, both of whom are serving in the military; and his six siblings. Chad was a devout family man. He loved his family so much, and he will be forever missed. His family and his friends were his everything, and none of us will ever be the same.

Chad was a very smart, compassionate man. The hole he has left in the hearts of his family, his fire brothers and sisters, and his wrestlers can never be filled. He is gone but not forgotten.



Dean Allan Crosswhite

Whatcom County Fire District 7 – Washington ★ Career Assistant Chief ★ April 6, 2022 ★ Age 52



Dean Allan Crosswhite, beloved assistant fire chief of Whatcom County Fire District #7, dedicated his life to serving his community and honoring the memory of the fallen. His commitment to the 9/11 memorial and his annual efforts to bring first responders from Ground Zero to Washington State exemplified his selflessness and compassion. Dean's open-door policy and unwavering support for his fellow firefighters defined his leadership, earning their trust and respect.

With his infectious smile and kind spirit, Dean was a peacemaker who saw the best in everyone. In his personal life, he found joy in a good game of cornhole, enjoying a good beer with friends, and was passionate about traveling the world. One of his favorite adventures was trekking Machu Picchu with his son, Spencer, while he and his wife, Luciana, cherished the Florida Keys and the memories made there. Dean had dreamed of selling it all and exploring the world with Luciana upon retirement, yet he passed away six months before this awaited milestone.

His legacy lives on in the hearts of all who knew him. He was loved by all and will be deeply missed but never forgotten.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

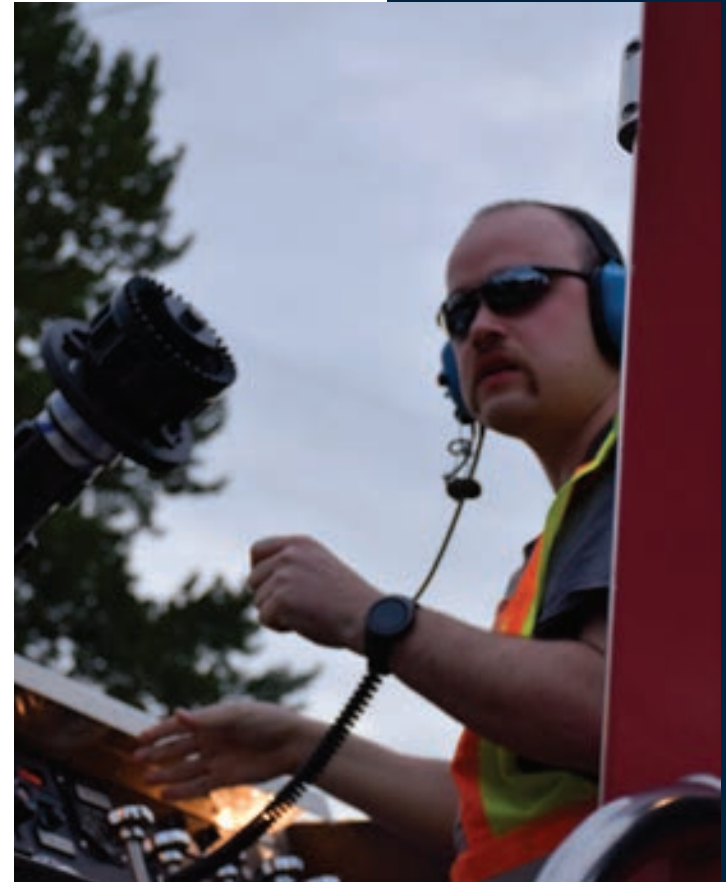
Matthew D. Riggsby

City of Buckley Fire Department – Washington ★ Volunteer Lieutenant ★ June 20, 2021 ★ Age 37

Matthew David Riggsby was born 12 October 1983, the firstborn son to his parents, Angela and David Riggsby, followed by brothers, Michael and Jonathon, and sisters, Caitlin and Mariah. Matthew was a bright, mischievous, and busy child. Family, church, sports, Boy Scouts, and community service were influential in his teen years. He earned the rank of Eagle Scout and graduated from high school with a college degree in computer science. He was a huge football fan and loved sharing one of his Seahawks season tickets with family. He looked forward to the annual NASCAR trip to Vegas with friends. While never one to be center stage, he found himself in a pipes and drums rock band. He was a drummer, roadie, sound guy, and keeper of the playlist. He had a skill for online gaming development and made connections all over the world. His career was in IT work. He was instrumental in the development of a portable, off-grid communications tower which has been deployed to shipping ports all over the country. He was an innovator, inventor, fixer, leader, and go-to-guy.

He followed family members into the fire service in January '08 and served with the City of Buckley Fire Department, promoting to lieutenant, until his death. From his fire chief: *Matthew was a shy, quiet, and humble servant. He mastered his craft in both Fire and EMS for the right reasons, not for recognition, but the personal satisfaction of a job well done to make things better for others. He was the first to take on the difficult tasks or those no one else was capable or willing to do. He had a knack for trying to break processes needing to be broken to improve them. Often this created an efficiency, best practice, or safer model for us to operate under. He would drop what he was doing to serve his fellow man, whether a community member, habitual caller, or a fellow firefighter. Everyone was equal in his eyes, and everyone knew where they stood with him. He had a towering (literally) Command presence. He did this with calm humility and composed leadership that promoted followership.*

Throughout his life, Matthew saw a problem and worked out a solution before most knew there was a question. It was common to hear, "Ask Matthew." Few realized how much he did silently, behind the scenes, until he wasn't there anymore. He was a wicked competitor on game night, had a contagious belly laugh, was a keeper of random knowledge, and loved unconditionally. This son, brother, uncle, leader, servant, and friend left behind a hole which cannot be filled. Be valiant in your heavenly assignment. We have it from here.



Ronald A. Roy

Wenatchee Valley Fire Department – Washington ★ Volunteer Division Chief ★ July 31, 2023 ★ Age 68



Ronald A. Roy, 68, passed away on July 31, 2023, after a 16-month-long unwavering and courageous fight against leukemia. He was born on September 7, 1954, and spent his life living in the Wenatchee (Washington) Valley.

In 1980, Ron began his career at the Chelan County PUD, retiring after 39 years as a senior electrical system operator in 2019. He taught a class he wrote on firefighter safety around a car vs pole/transformer accident or wire on the ground scenario, sharing his paid-career knowledge.

One of Ron's favorite stories had him walking through the local county fair in 1973 at 19 years of age. He passed the local firefighter's booth, where a volunteer asked, "Hey, kid, have you ever thought about being a volunteer firefighter?" Well, no, but Ron decided to contact his local district, where he began his lifelong journey in the volunteer fire service.

He joined Chelan County Fire District #1 in 1973 and proudly turned it into a 50-year career. He also volunteered at Douglas County #2, which recently became part of Wenatchee Valley Fire Department, where he represented the volunteers as a division chief until his death. He was passionate about and always advocating for the volunteer firefighter, whether it was for presumptive cancer benefits, retirement benefits, reduced property taxes, free hunting and fishing licenses, or any other rights he felt the volunteer deserved. He joined the Washington State Fire Fighters Association (WSFFA) in 2000, served as president from 2002-2004, served as benefits coordinator, and was a past board member. He was awarded Firefighter of the Year in 1990, 1999, and 2001. He was honorably awarded Inspirational Firefighter of the Year in 1995, 1996, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002.

He was an active member of the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), where he chaired the wildland committee. He served as a Washington State director, attending meetings with state representatives, senators, and others in Washington, D.C., and around the country at the national level. He helped create and taught the Wildland Fire Assessment Program. At the state level, Ron worked closely with the Washington State Fire Marshal's office on training and certification testing for firefighters

Ron was a kind, passionate, compassionate, and patient man. He lived by the motto, "All you have to do is treat people right." He was very proud of the slogans everyone saw at the bottom of his emails — *Voluntarius Fastu, Honoris, et Humilitate* (Volunteer with Pride, Honor and Humility) and "Doin' it for free since 73."

Robert “Bo” Schiemer

Tacoma Fire Department – Washington ★ Career Driver/Engineer ★ January 29, 2023 ★ Age 46

Robert “Bo” Schiemer was born December 29, 1976. He was a mirthful child, forging lifelong friendships with neighbors and schoolmates. Growing up, he helped raise pigs and was passionate about hunting, fishing, and spending time in the woods. Bo played football, showed talent in wrestling, and joined the orchestra. He enjoyed learning, excelled in math, and immersed himself in auto shop. He was involved in Boy Scouts and Search and Rescue. After graduation he attended the Universal Technical Institute, mastering the skills needed for the mechanics trade and metalwork.

He returned to his hometown and followed paternal footsteps by accepting a position where his grandfather, father, and younger brother made their living. Bo worked as a field mechanic for several years before transitioning to shop management. In 2000, he purchased property, becoming the third owner of a 1927 farmhouse minutes away from his childhood home. Just two years later, his first son, William, was born, followed by the arrival of Jacob “Jeep” in ‘06. The dual impact of his role in management and as a father spurred him to assess his personal passions. After securing a ride along on a fire engine, he began pursuing the necessary steps to become a career firefighter.

In ‘11, one year after summiting Mt. Rainier, he became a probationary firefighter for Tacoma Fire Department. The incredible joy and purpose he found in the department offered him an unparalleled opportunity to unite his passions and realize many of his dreams. He was able to attain knowledge, impart it through camaraderie, and utilize it to support the community. His eternal optimism, genuine concern for others, easy sense of humor, and get-it-done attitude led him to reap the best from his calling. He was the humble recipient of the Al Nejmah Award (‘20), Firefighter of the Year, and the Chief’s Spirit of Excellence (‘22).

In 2012, he was able to begin earnest renovations and improvements to his homestead. His DIY spirit and ingenuity flourished as he created memories with his family. A third son, Finlay, arrived in ‘13 and a daughter, Elloise, in ‘16. He taught them to laugh, fish, crab, ride motorcycles, raise animals, hunt, camp, cook, preserve, care for others, and believe in themselves.

In August of ‘21, Bo was diagnosed with stomach/esophageal cancer and bravely began treatment. In July of ‘22, the diagnosis of lung/pleural cancer was terminal. He passed a month after his 46th birthday at home with his wife and children. Bo was an extraordinary father - human. He leaves a lasting impression of tenacity and a legacy of love.



Michele J. Williams

Seattle Fire Department – Washington ★ Career Firefighter ★ December 21, 2022 ★ Age 61



Michele was born in Seattle on January 31, 1961, and grew up in the Central District. She participated in the voluntary busing program and attended several North Seattle schools. Michele graduated from Nathan Hale, where she played basketball, softball, and ran track. She was the manager of the school's radio station KNHC FM, an honor student, and a National Merit Commended Scholar.

She attended Washington State University, where she ran track, played field hockey, and fenced.

After graduation in 1983, Michele was hired by the Seattle Fire Department and started drill school in January 1984. She was one of the few women and one of three African American women working as firefighters at that time. Most of her career was spent at Ladder 7, the technical rescue station, with the last few years spent at Station 6 in the Central District where she grew up. After 34 years of service, she retired in March of 2018.

Michele was kind, thoughtful, and generous to a fault. She was also smart, clever, and witty, with the ability and confidence to master whatever she chose to do. She was a problem solver who would always come up with a practical solution and a perfectionist in the good sense of the word. You always knew that anything Michele was doing was going to be done right.

Michele was a strong and fiercely independent person. She would seldom ask for help but would gladly give assistance if needed. Always responsible and dependable, she could be counted on to take care of whatever needed attention, making sure everything was as it should be.

Being adventurous and athletic, Michele tried and excelled at multiple activities. She liked camping and being outdoors. Working with her hands, building and repairing things were two of her favorite pastimes. She loved animals. Growing up, she was always bringing some stray or injured animal home, including a snake and a white rat. She also enjoyed taking care of her plants and the chickens in her "Sideyard Farms" chicken coop.

Michele made it her mission to make sure her mother had the best life possible. At 7 or 8 years old, she started calling herself her mother's "Favorite Daughter," an ongoing joke because she was an only child. Michele was so special she would have easily been the favorite, even if she had siblings.

Michele's passing leaves a huge hole in the hearts of her family and her devoted friends, but her spirit and the impact she had on their lives will be with them forever.

Cody John Mullens

West Virginia Division of Forestry – West Virginia ★ Career Forester/Wildland Firefighter ★ April 13, 2023 ★ Age 28

Cody John Mullens was born in Summersville, West Virginia, to John and Debbie Mullens. Cody was dedicated to his job as a forester and was heard by many people saying, “It was the best job I ever had.” He made it his mission to protect the forests and wildlife and to educate everyone on their importance.

In 2019, he was a first-generation college graduate with two degrees from Glenville State College. He obtained an Associate of Science in forestry and a Bachelor of Science degree. Shortly after college, he attained his goal of having a job he loved. Being in the forest, educating others, and being Smokey Bear put a big smile on his face every day. Traveling all the way to California with his buddies to fight wildfires was a dream come true for him.

Cody loved his family. To his dad, his mamma, and his little sister, Emily, he was deeply loved back. Cody was a loving and devoted family man. He was building a life with his fiancée, Brittany, and little girl, Hazel. There were so many good things yet to happen in Cody’s life.

Cody loved to hunt and fish. He caught a record-making trout and had a smile for weeks. He had a love for Transformers since he was a little boy and had a big collection. Cody is remembered for his massive hugs by all. He never left a family gathering without everyone getting one. He had a great sense of humor, and that little smile would light up the world.

For Cody’s family, being proud of him was never hard. Missing him every day breaks our hearts. We grieve because we love. We were so very lucky to have experienced that love with our Cody.



FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

Ronald Maurice “Ron” Strosnider

Capon Valley Volunteer Fire Department – West Virginia ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ October 20, 2023 ★ Age 75



Ronald Maurice “Ron” Strosnider of Wardensville, West Virginia, was born on December 21, 1947, in Winchester, Virginia. He was the son of Wilbur Joseph and Nevaline Vincent Strosnider. He attended James Wood High School in Winchester, Virginia; Nashville Auto Diesel College in Nashville, Tennessee; and James Rumsey Vocational Technical School in Martinsburg, West Virginia.

He was an auto/diesel and small engine mechanic all his life, and there wasn’t anything he believed he could not repair. Ron owned and operated “Ron’s Chevron” in Wardensville, West Virginia, for several years. At the time, he provided the only full-service gas station in the area, plus working on vehicles and performing small engine repair.

Ron had a love for hunting, fishing, football, softball, and NASCAR. He shared his favorite pastimes with his family, including his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He enjoyed taking them hunting and fishing and loved watching them play sports.

His greatest joy was spending time with the love of his life, Pam. Ron married Pamela “Pam” Strosnider on May 13, 1978. This began a longtime partnership as inseparable best friends. They had three children, Lisa, Ginger, and Joseph “Joey.”

Ron was a very patient and caring man to his family, friends, and anyone he met. He enjoyed visiting with everyone in the community and was a jokester who always enjoyed a good laugh. He was a humble, quiet person who had a strong love of the Lord. He always had a smile on his face and was ready and willing to help those in need, no matter the age or situation. He strongly loved children of all ages and was always passing out candy to everyone young and old.

In 1986, Ronald “Ron” Maurice Strosnider made the decision to join the Capon Valley Volunteer Fire Company in Wardensville, West Virginia. For 37 dedicated years, he served the Wardensville community and surrounding areas of Hardy County, West Virginia. He was always willing and able to work annual community events and fundraisers for the fire company, where he enjoyed socializing with his friends and the people in the community.

Ron’s last alarm was on October 20, 2023. He passed away from cardiac arrest after responding to a residence to assist with a medical emergency. Ron leaves behind a loving family and many friends who miss him dearly and will cherish all their memories of him. The family grieves a lot for him, but they know he enjoyed his life and was very proud of being a firefighter.

We will never forget you and will always remember, “As long as we have memories, yesterday remains.”

Raymond Joseph Samson

Dale Fire Rescue – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Firefighter ★ January 22, 2022 ★ Age 55

Raymond “Ray” Samson was born May 7, 1966, to the late Hugh and Judy Samson. He grew up near the small town of Bear Creek and attended school in Clintonville. He began dating his wife, Chris, while in high school. Ray and Chris were married in 1985 and shared a life of love, many blessings, and adventures with great friends. Motorcycle trips, snowmobiling, and traveling in the motorhome are cherished memories, snowmobiling being his favorite. Ray lived for speed! This led to years of motorcycle drag racing on his beloved Harley-Davidson V-Rod Destroyer. Ray loved the beauty of a colorful sunset or sunrise. He was very patriotic and had many American flags displayed around our home.

Ray always had goals and dreams that we worked very hard to achieve. He wanted to own his own business one day, live in a small town, and be a member of a close, tightknit community, maybe even join the local fire department. Never short on courage or ambition, every dream became reality. At the time of his passing, he and his wife owned not one, but three businesses—Ray’s Cycle motorcycle shop established in 2000, Jimmer’s Bar in 2003, and Perk’s Supper Club in 2009 (then Route 96 Bar & Grill). Building his own home someday would be the next goal, knowing he never wanted to leave the area and he would stay forever. This, too, was achieved in 2016.

It was important to Ray to give back to the community that he loved so much. He was proud to be a firefighter for the Dale Fire Department for 16 years and was also a first responder for some time. He was an active member of our local snowmobile club, marking trails, gaining permission from landowners, and putting miles on those trails. He loved to help others, whether plowing snow from a neighbor’s driveway, mowing someone’s lawn, or just listening to someone’s problems. He was so kind, thoughtful, and always had the best advice if that was all that was needed. Ray had a sense of humor like no one else and could always make me laugh! Things were never dull if Ray was around.

Ray became ill and was hospitalized on January 2, 2022. Sadly, Ray went to heaven on January 22, 2022, surrounded by the love of his wife, Chris, and his sister, Trina. Ray’s funeral service was a beautiful tribute to the wonderful man, husband, brother, uncle, and friend that meant so much to so many. The attendance was incredible, and we are all eternally grateful for the outpouring of love and support from everyone, especially the members of the Dale Fire Department and all the other fire departments that attended to pay respect. Firefighters are great!



Frank Castro Sanchez Jr.

Nekimi Volunteer Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Chief ★ May 26, 2021 ★ Age 61



Frank C. Sanchez Jr. was born on November 11, 1959, to Frank and Mary Sanchez Sr. in San Antonio, Texas. After the family moved to Wisconsin, he went to school in the Omro Public School District. Frank graduated from Omro High School in 1979 and joined the United States Army, where he served until 1982. Frank continued his service in the National Guard for an additional four years.

In 1980, Frank married his high school sweetheart, Shari Thums. Frank and Shari created a family with the addition of Randall (deceased), Christina, and Andrew. Frank and Shari were blessed with two grandchildren from Andrew and Crystal, Mackenzie and Camden, Christina and Johnny had a son, Johnathan, that Frank unfortunately did not get to meet before his untimely passing.

Frank loved music so much that he started his own DJ service called "The Rhythm of the Night." Frank provided music for weddings, birthdays, family get-togethers, and sometimes for bonfires in the backyard.

Frank had a heart for helping people—family, friends, and people he did not even know. He was always willing to give a helping hand. Frank's service did not have a punch clock. Day or night, you could count on him. In his 23 years with the Nekimi Fire Department, Frank quickly moved up the ranks to chief.

Frank always had a wonderful smile that everyone knew and loved, Frank is greatly missed by his family and friends.

FOREVER
IN OUR HEARTS

Stephen M. Smith

Vandenbroek-Kaukauna Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Volunteer Captain ★ December 20, 2021 ★ Age 54

Steve was born on July 13, 1967, to David P. and Marianne (Acker) Smith in Appleton Wisconsin. On December 8, 2018, he was united in marriage to Mary Bloy. Steve was a family man with all the love in the world to give.

He has left behind his two daughters, Samantha (Jacob) Waldschmidt and Brianna “Bear” (significant other Mason Guild) Smith, along with two stepchildren, Nicole (Dan) Wilk and Ashley (Adam) Linsmeyer; grandchildren, Brynn, Gemma, Rylie, and Nolan Linsmeyer and Kylie and Colton Wilk.

Steve valued his time with relatives and friends alike. He had the uncanny ability to sit next to a total stranger and carry on a conversation for hours, with plenty of laughs and an infinite number of bad “dad jokes” at his disposal. Steve was an avid hunter and fisherman. With plenty of trophies over the years, what he valued most were the stories and friendships made during any of his outdoors activities and his volunteer work.

A true asset to his family and community, Steve had a passion for volunteering and serving others. Whether it was lending his trailer to a friend or dedicating many days and nights to the Vandenbroek-Kaukauna Fire Department, the Walleyes for Tomorrow Club, the Musky Club, or numerous other organizations, Steve took great pride in the ability to help others. He had so much more to give and so many more adventures to undertake.

Steve had a favorite story that he loved to share about being on the fire department. After just finishing up with grocery shopping, the fire department was paged out on a fire call, so Steve immediately went right to the call and was the first to arrive. It was a car engine fire. Steve, with his creative thinking, ran back to his car and grabbed the two gallons of milk that he had just bought at the grocery store, lifted the hood of the car, and proceeded to put out the fire. Once the fire was out, the fire trucks pulled up, and Steve told them he had it all under control. It is a story that is still told to this day. Steve absolutely loved his firefighting family!



Todd J. Yandre

Lake Mills Fire Department – Wisconsin ★ Career Chief ★ February 15, 2023 ★ Age 61



Todd J. Yandre, 61, died unexpectedly on Wednesday, February 15, 2023, following an apparent heart attack at the end of his shift. Todd was a cherished husband of nearly 40 years to Monica; devoted father to Jordan Yandre and Catherine (Peter) Schmitt; loving “Papa” to Cora, Bryn, and Zoey Schmitt; caring brother to Mark Yandre and Tammie (Eric) Garman; and loyal friend to many fellow firefighters and extended family of the community.

Todd was an active member of the Lake Mills Fire Department since 1981, transitioning to full-time firefighter in 1995. He became chief of the department in 2019. Todd was a strong leader in the fire service and earned the respect of those who had the pleasure of working with him. A lifelong learner, Todd was passionate about continuing education. Todd took any and all training made available to him.

He eventually earned a degree in emergency management, with an emphasis in fire safety, from Lakeshore Technical College. Todd’s belief in continued education was also evident in his career as an instructor in the fire service field at Madison College for over 20 years. Additionally, Todd served on the Madison College’s Fire Advisory Board for 22 years. He was an active supporter when the college created their new facility for fire training. Todd touched countless students, training them to be excellent firefighters and human beings.

Chief Yandre lived by the words of Hunter S. Thompson, “Anything worth doing, is worth doing right.” His passion for the well-being of his firefighters, their families, and the fire service will never be forgotten.

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