



The Journey

For Survivors of Fallen Firefighters

MAY 2007 ISSUE 19

Tell their stories. Say their names. We don't want anyone to ever forget that they lived.

Survivors often tell us how important it is to keep the memories of their fire heroes alive. One way we have tried to do this is by giving survivors many opportunities to tell their firefighters' stories in their own words. Through *The Journey*, the Speakers' Bureau, and during the Memorial Weekend, survivors share the stories of their firefighters.

On the Foundation's Web site, there is a tribute page for every firefighter honored at the National Memorial since 1981. Families, departments, and friends are invited to post pictures and biographies so others can read the story of their special firefighter. It is another way to share the stories with the world.

If your loved one will be honored at the Memorial Weekend in October 2007, you should have received an invitation package with details about sending a bio and

photo. If you have not already, and even if you do not plan to attend the Memorial Weekend, please send us that information. Survivors who have attended recent Memorial Weekends tell us it meant so much to them to see their firefighter's name and picture in a slide show and in a special keepsake book given to families during the Weekend. If you aren't sure you can write the bio yourself, please let us know, and we will work with you.

If your firefighter was honored at the Memorial in a previous year and you did not have the opportunity to send a bio and picture, we encourage you to do so now. You can submit the information using an interactive form at the Foundation's Web site or, if you prefer, you can mail or e-mail it to us.

This issue of *The Journey* features just a few of the many inspirational stories that are posted in the Fire Heroes section of our Web site. You can read more at www.firehero.org.

By Tom Haupenthal

Inspired by Victor DeLellis (1994-WI)

Victor DeLellis sustained a severe spinal injury while responding to an emergency call in 1979. He remained quadriplegic until his death.

I was 8 years old at the time Vic was involved in the accident, but it had a profound impact on my life. My dad joined the Town of Waukesha volunteer fire department after reading about the accident in the paper. A year later my mom joined as an emergency medical technician. So I literally grew up around the fire department.

In 1989, I joined the department as well. In 1993, I became a Lieutenant, and in 1995, I was promoted to Captain. I retired from the department in 1998 because I needed to spend more time at home with my wife and

family, but I still love the department and visit as often as possible. My mom left the department in 1990, but dad served until he passed away in 2002. I now work full time as a service technician for a fire equipment distributor.

Vic didn't know it at the time of the accident, but he touched many lives. That accident was like someone threw a stone into a calm lake, and the effects of it still ripple today. I know there are a couple of people alive today because of things my dad, my mom and I did throughout our time with the department. We would never have been there to help them if it weren't for Vic and his sacrifice. If Vic had not been involved in the accident that eventually took him from us, I would not be the man I am today.

By Linda Kramer

Mother of Karl "Klif" Kramer (2005-FL)

I know how difficult it was to write this tribute when Klif died—something that no one wants to have to do. But I also know how many times I have gone back and read that and smiled and felt so very proud of my son. I would encourage everyone to do the same. As I read other tributes that were written, it made it easier to write mine. It also made me realize what a wonderful, special group of men and women they all were - one that Klif would be proud to stand with.

To have an impact on one life is remarkable - To touch many is a miracle! Klif did just that!

Karl "Klif" Kramer died of a heat stroke on May 28, 2005, after collapsing during a training run. At 6' 4", a gentle giant of a man, Klif was the friend that you could always count on. He was proud of becoming a member of the Jacksonville Fire Rescue Department and being able to follow in his father's footsteps. He used to spend hours with his Dad, planning the next steps in his career and discussing the different options in firefighting. He was on the road to achieving a lifelong dream.

Klif lived life to the fullest. He loved playing sports, but

playing softball was his favorite, especially when playing with his dad and cousins. He was a member of several church, fire department and city teams. When not playing ball, he was playing cards or visiting friends. He just loved being with others. Klif had a sense of humor and a unique ability to know just when to use it. At Halloween, he will always be remembered as "Shrek" and how closely he resembled the character's personality - not to mention the costume he made each year.

Klif was the son that any mother and father would be proud to have. He was idolized by his little brothers and loved by his friends. We were truly blessed to have a son like Klif and so very proud of all he accomplished in such a short time. Our world is a better place because of him, and we miss him dearly.



Karl "Klif" Kramer
Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department, Florida

Classification: Career
Rank: Firefighter Recruit
Date of Death: May 28, 2005
Age: 22

Communication

Several of you have let us know recently that you have not been getting a Remembrance Card on the anniversary of your firefighter's death. We are undergoing a major change in the Foundation's main database, so it is possible that some glitches have occurred. We apologize if we missed you! Please let us know so we can fix it.

Also, if other members of your family would like to be added to the Foundation's mailing list, please let us know. We often have contact information only for the firefighter's immediate family, but we are happy to add extended family members and friends. Please send us their information!

Remembering...

By Barbara Pierce and Elizabeth Davi

Wife and daughter of William W. Pierce (2005-NJ)

Bill was with Ogdensburg for 25 years and served as Chief in 2003-2004. He was with Hardyston for 15 years, serving as Chief in 1996-1997. He received the Firefighter of the Year Award in 1997 from The Knights of Columbus. He was an instructor at the Sussex County Fire Academy for a number of years and a Fire Inspector for the Borough of Ogdensburg. Bill gained many certificates in different fields and areas of firematics. He suffered a fatal heart attack after fighting a mobile home fire.

Bill is survived by his wife of 18 years, his parents, two sons, five stepchildren, and twelve grandchildren. He met his wife, Barbara, when she was a single parent of five children. He immediately accepted all six into his life, as Barbara and her children accepted him and his two children with open arms. Barbara and her children consider Bill to have been the mender of their once broken road. He will be missed terribly.

Bill worked in the sheet metal fabrication industry for 30



William W. Pierce
Ogdensburg Fire Department,
New Jersey

Classification: Volunteer
Rank: Firefighter
Date of Death: February 10, 2005
Age: 53

years. During many of those years he was self employed under the company name of Bill Pierce & Sons. He worked for Local #7, a Tile and Marble Union, for the five years prior to his death.

Bill took firefighting very seriously and was known as a firefighter's firefighter. Even though he served on two volunteer departments, he took them as seriously as though he was being paid. He never failed to respond to a call that he was able to make, and the fact that he was exempt for numerous years didn't reduce his level of duty in the least.

He loved to take trips to Atlantic City, NJ, to gamble and play craps. Most of the local convenience stores knew him well due to his love to play the New Jersey Lottery on a regular basis. After his death, one store owner said that Bill was a wonderful person and that he

learned something new each time Bill came into his store. He had a contagious enthusiasm that could be felt anywhere he was.

Bill will be forever missed by his family and friends and will never be forgotten.

You can read more about these firefighters in the Fallen Heroes section at www.firehero.org.

State Connections

Would you like to connect with other fire service survivors in your state? Perhaps you cannot travel to the Memorial Weekend each year but would like to get to know people who live closer to you. You might also want a way to share information about local events and news in the fire service.

In response to requests from many of you, we are looking

for ways to put you in touch with one another. If you are interested in this, please e-mail Linda Hurley at lhurley@firehero.org with the following information: your name, e-mail address, phone, address, name of your firefighter, relationship to the firefighter (wife, father, etc.), and year of the firefighter's death. Also, let us know if you are willing to be a coordinator or point of contact within your state.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS' BENEFITS PROGRAM

Did You Know...

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program provides benefits including death, education assistance, and disability to those eligible for the program. The PSOB Office at the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice is responsible for implementing the PSOB Program. Under the PSOB Act, benefits are available to the survivors of public safety officers found to have died as the direct and proximate result of a personal injury, as well as certain eligible heart attacks and strokes, sustained in the line of duty. As defined by Congress, a public safety officer is an individual serving a public agency in an official capacity, with or without compensation, as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or member of a rescue squad or ambulance crew. The PSOB

benefit for eligible deaths and disabilities occurring in FY 2007 is \$295,194. In addition to reviewing and processing cases, the PSOB Office works with national public safety groups, educating agencies regarding the PSOB initiative and offering support to families and colleagues of America's fallen firefighters.



*If I am to wear this mourning cloak, let it be made
of the fabric of love, woven by the fine thread of memory.*

Molly Fumia (from Safe Passage)

*Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.*

William Shakespeare (from Macbeth)

We want to hear from you...



"Laughter is the best medicine." Do you believe it? When you tell us about your firefighters, you often share a funny story or say what a character he or she was. Clearly, one of the things you treasure and miss most is the laughter your loved one brought to your life. Tell us the funniest story you can remember, the one that still makes you laugh (and maybe cry a little, depending on the day) when you think of it today.

Please send your story as a Word document, or in the body of an e-mail, to jwoodall@firehero.org. Or, if you don't do computers, send it to:

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