

Educational Assistance

If you are looking for general information on financial aid and scholarships, a member of our Fire Service Survivors Network is available to talk with you. Erin Melody, daughter of Martin "Butch" Melody (1982-CT), works as a college counselor and is happy to talk with fire

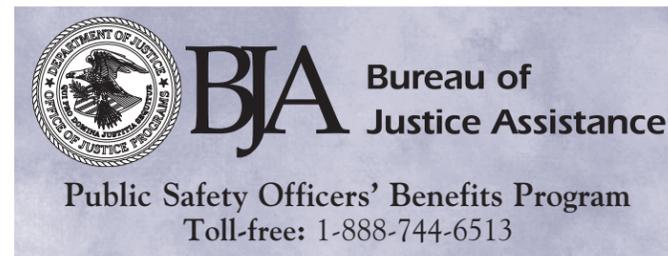
service survivors. You can contact Erin at erin_melody@yahoo.com. If you do not have access to e-mail, please contact Linda Hurley at the Foundation, and she can put you in touch with Erin.

Many thanks to Erin for this generous offer!

Did you know?

On April 1 - 2, 2008, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Office partnered with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to participate in NFFF's 3rd Annual Survivors Conference. The first day of the event included remarks by the Bureau of Justice Assistance Director Domingo S. Herraiz, followed by training for NFFF Local Assistance State Teams (LAST) assisting survivors and agencies filing for PSOB benefits. A roundtable discussion with LAST members on April 2 not only provided vital input on the complex issues members can face in these efforts, but also highlighted the successes teams have already experienced that directly and positively support survivors of America's fallen officers.

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the program. The PSOB benefit for eligible deaths occurring in FY 2008 is \$303,064. PSOB partners with key national public safety organizations, including the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide information and support to survivors and surviving agencies of America's fallen officers.



We want to hear from you...

Most months we post a topic here and ask for people to write to that topic. But we only do that because we know sometimes people need help getting started or they feel shy about sharing their thoughts. If there is something you want to share about the love or loss or healing you have experienced, please just send it in.

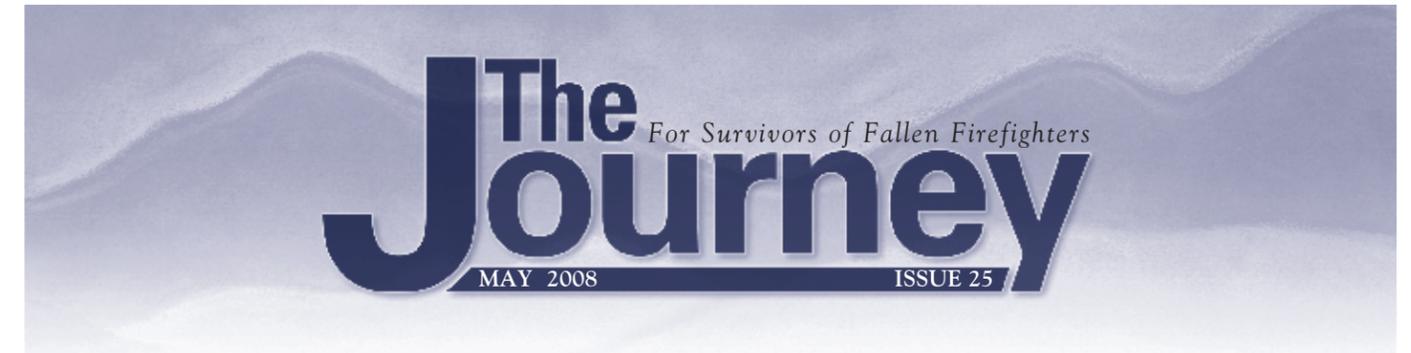


Do you worry that you're not a "real writer" or that your spelling or writing is not good enough? Do you wonder if anyone will really be interested in what you have to say? Please, put those worries out of your head, and just send it in. We will work with you. We also welcome pieces written by children of any age. We need written permission from a parent or guardian to print them in *The Journey*.

If you want to share some thoughts about your experiences, 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 a typed or neatly handwritten copy to:

The Journey • National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
P.O. Drawer 498, Emmitsburg, MD 21727
(301) 447-1365 firehero@firehero.org

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When someone dies, our thoughts naturally go to those closest to that person - the spouse or partner, children, parents, siblings. We know that their day-to-day lives are forever changed. But when condolence cards arrive from cousins, classmates, childhood friends, neighbors, we begin to realize just how many people are affected by the loss of a single person.

If we imagine a death as a stone dropped into still water, we can see that ripples go out from that center. The circles get wider, fainter, and farther away, but even in those outer rings, people feel the loss. It is another reminder that we never know when our life has left its mark on another.

In this issue, extended family members and friends talk about loss from those outer circles.

Dennis Reep

Friend and coworker of Donald Dean Myrick (2001-IL)

I lost a friend today, a good friend. He was on his way to help someone, probably a stranger, possibly not. He would never know. After his pager alerted him at 5 a.m. to an accident, he was out the door. His truck rolled over as he was responding. Twenty-one years of service ended this morning.



Don Myrick

Tears and smiles come and go as I recall the times working together. Hot days, soaked in sweat; cold nights, covered in ice; and pleasant days, when he should have been planting or harvesting. He personified the volunteer firefighter--Drop what you're doing; someone needs help.

Many times we shared a couple of Big Oranges after a meeting, playing cards or solving our small problems or the world's big ones. He had a sharp mind, a caring heart, and a gentle spirit. His leadership and versatility earned the respect of all. His tales of triumph and mishap garnered the ears of all.

If you live in or around Ludlow, Illinois, you will miss Don Myrick, whether you knew him or not. His dedication and hard work were unending, his gift to his neighbors. I have no qualms speaking for the entire department. We are proud to have served beside him.

When it came time to help, he gave all he had.

Tammy Baker

Cousin of Charles Edgar (2005-TX)

28 March 2005

Dearest Charles:

I will forgo the formalities, for I know that you are well, and it is I who am not faring so well. I thought that perhaps by now the pain of your departure would have lessened, but I find the opposite to be true. Over the past week it has intensified until I find myself in tears at the most inopportune moments. Now, please do not

chuckle at me. It isn't funny! You always find humor in the oddest of situations. You know I have always thought that those are the things most uncomfortable for you. Now, that I have you at a more serious moment, listen to me. I know that you are patting my head and telling me that you aren't worth it; your usual spiel.

continued inside

Tammy Baker *(continued)*

I knew there would be a time of separation, but never had I imagined one so permanent.

These past weeks have given to my spending time with those who also are puzzled by your departure. At first they pat your back and say, "I'm sorry." I think they truly mean it. I also think that they believe that once it is over, it is over, and after all goodbyes are said, backs patted, you should be okay, all right. If at that point you are not all right, then obviously you have a problem. If you are teary eyed, heads quickly advert, and retreat is made posthaste. I want you to know I am working hard at being okay, and I know that I will be; just not today.



Charles Edgar and his dog, Zac

Don't laugh at all the silly things I have done or said. You know that I just wanted so badly to keep you close. At the moment, it seemed all the small things I could touch and feel would keep you with me. I do realize that there are no things that will keep you with me. I will have to remember the butterfly, won't I? I held you out there on my palm, and you soared; you are free.

Two nights ago you were in my dreams, as you have so often been in the last several years. This time I was walking and talking with you, your mom and dad. It was so peaceful and pleasant. Thank you for letting me accompany you.

With much love,
Tammy

Jennifer Frayne

Sister-in-law of Kenneth J. Frayne (2001-IL)

Wonderful, caring, compassionate, patient, forgiving, hard-working, brave, clumsy, proud, intelligent, funny, handsome, annoying at times, dedicated and young. Way too young.

Kenny owned a construction company and was extremely hard-working. His work day started at 4 a.m. or so and went to 11 or 12 at night. There was one thing that

Kenny loved besides his family and his business— firefighting. He was a volunteer at Channahon (IL) Fire Department. I remember wondering why he loved that so much, when he had so much else to do in his long busy day. Well, I knew when

we watched Kenny one evening doing paperwork and looking as if he were going to fall asleep. He heard his pager go off, called in to the station, and was off with a smile on his face. In what seemed like only a few minutes, we heard the truck roll past his house, and he waved to us and blew the horn. He was meant to do that.



Ed, Kenny, & Jennifer Frayne

I remember the last time I spoke to Kenny. It was the night before. Kenny always called too early in the morning or too late at night. This time was at 10 p.m. or so. I answered the phone and was really annoyed as usual. "Hey, Jen, is Eddie there?" I can still hear his voice. I wish I had been nicer, told him how much he meant to me, that he was the best brother-in-law I could ever ask for, or that I loved him. But you don't ever know when someone is going to get taken from you.

Oct 13, 2001...I remember that day like it was yesterday. When I really think about it, I feel the feeling I felt that day. No words can describe it. I went to work like any other day. Late morning, I received a call from my husband, Ed. "Kenny's missing." I didn't understand. I had forgotten that Kenny was doing his dive training. Ed said that he went down and never came back up. I was in a panic, working as fast as I could to get out of work. I called Ed to let him know that I was going to stop at home and then hurry out there. When I arrived at Kenny's house, I found out that he was already gone.

Jennifer Frayne *(continued)*

I have never felt so honored to have known someone until I saw the honor Kenny was shown. I was proud to stand there as part of his family. Hundreds of firefighters came from all around to pay their respects to the firefighter they had never met. The police and fire trucks escorted the fire truck that held Kenny's casket and took him for one last drive through Channahon. The children came out of the schools to wave flags as we passed. People lined the streets waving in thanks. None of this made the pain and hurt go away, but it did help comfort us.

We know that he is still with us everywhere we go. And

that makes life easier. When we do something stupid, we laugh because we can still remember the face he would make. We still ask him to look after us. We ask him for his strength when we have trouble in our lives. We miss him every Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, Independence Day, and every day of every year that goes by without him. We live each day hoping that we are making Kenny proud of us.

We now have a son, Kenneth Edward Frayne, named after the uncle he will never meet. We hope he follows in his uncle's footsteps.

Anne Slack

Cousin of Christopher M. Bopp (1998-NY)

Christopher was a four-year veteran of the FDNY and a member of Ladder 170 in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn. He began his tour of duty with the FDNY at Ladder 170 and returned there in October 1998, shortly before his death. He was well-liked and well-loved by those he'd served with. He was 27 years old when he gave his life in the line of duty, along with fellow firefighters James Bohan and Lt. Joseph Cavalieri. As all good firefighting brothers do, his brothers from Ladder 170 continue to look after Christopher's family, a true tribute to the brotherhood of the FDNY.

Christopher left behind his wife, Cori, who was pregnant with their only child. Carli Bopp was born on July 26, 1999, seven months after her father's death. She recently made her First Communion. Christopher was one of the happiest people one could have had the pleasure of knowing. He was a wonderful brother and son and would have made a phenomenal father.

My own very personal memories of Christopher involve his joining forces with my older brother, Michael, to torture me-- all in good fun of course. One time in particular, he and my brother told me they would pay me \$1 if I would dance for both of our mothers. I danced to the hits of The Village People, but never received my dollar. Years later, a few years before he was taken from

us, I sent Christopher an invoice with daily-compounded interest. I'm sure he still believes I won't collect the thousands he owes me when we meet again.

I believe that Christopher is still with us in some way. In December 2006, I visited his grave. On my drive home I became lost, something that NEVER happens to me.



Christopher & Anne

I drove around for more than an hour, too proud to ask for help or directions. Just as I was about to have a mental breakdown, I looked to my left, and there I was, across the street from Christopher's firehouse. Christopher gave me a sign that day, one I will never forget or question. I know that he sees us and he is at peace.

Christmas is never going to be the same, nor will any other special event he should be a part of. The world is not the same without him. I am passionate about letting all who will listen know what a great loss the world has suffered, but while he was here, what a wonderful addition to the world Christopher truly was. Not a day goes by that I don't think of him, miss him, wish he could be with his wife and daughter, parents and brother.

My sincere wish is that Christopher's memory, life, bravery, love of family and friends will go on and that he will be remembered always. He is my much-loved and missed cousin, Christopher Michael Bopp.