



Robert E. Neely

October 9, 1950 - November 4, 2011

Robert Edward Neely, 61, of Ardmore, PA and Beesleys Point, NJ, died on Nov. 4. He will be honored with a Fireman's Funeral, having devoted more than four decades of his life to the volunteer fire service with Penn Wynne Fire Company and Union Fire Association.

He is survived by his wife of 25 years, Kathleen O'Loughlin Neely; daughters Tatiana Regina and Valentina Maria; brothers Warren (Veronica) Neely of Penn Wynne and John (Marilyn) Neely of Arkansas; sisters Helen Cirrito of West Chester and Nancy Fielden of Wayne; many nieces and nephews and mother-in-law Carol O'Loughlin.

A viewing will be conducted at Chadwick & McKinney Funeral Home, 30 E. Athens Avenue, Ardmore on Wed., Nov. 9 from 6 to 9 p.m. and on Thurs., Nov. 10 from 11 a.m. to noon. A memorial service will follow at the funeral home. His casket will ride atop a Penn Wynne fire truck and pass under the crossed aerial ladders of fire engines from Union Fire Association and Gladwyne Fire Company as he makes his way to his burial at the West Laurel Hill Cemetery in Bala Cynwyd. He will be laid to rest in the Neely family plot where he will join his parents, Richard Winston and Hannah Maxwell Neely and brothers Richard and William.

After suffering a massive stroke Oct. 29, Robert, known to family and friends as Bobby, valiantly tried to fight his way back to his family, but died six days later. The last words he ever spoke before slipping into unconsciousness just hours after the stroke were to his wife. "Take care of our daughters," he said.

To honor his last wishes, an educational trust fund has been established for his daughters, Tatiana who is a high school freshman and Valentina, who is in seventh grade. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Neely Children's Education Trust Fund c/o John Decker, Trustee, Radnor Financial Center, 555 E. Lancaster Avenue, Suite 540, Radnor, PA 19087.

The tradition and dedication of the volunteer fire service was a lifelong thread in his life. "I know being honored with a Fireman's Funeral would have meant so much to Bobby to see how well respected he was by his fellow firefighters and for him to know his two daughters will see him honored as the hero all firefighters are," said his wife Kathy.

A lifelong resident of Lower Merion Township, he was born on October 9, 1950 at the family home in Bala Cynwyd, the sixth of seven children. He graduated from Bala Cynwyd Junior High and Lower Merion High School. He earned an associates degree at Montgomery County Community College and a teaching degree at East Stroudsburg State College. He worked toward a master's degree at St. Joseph's University.

Bob taught in the Lower Merion School District for several years and had been a codes enforcement officer for Lower Merion Township for more than 25 years.

Volunteerism in the fire service and ambulance corps has been a family tradition for the Neelys. Six of his brothers and sisters have volunteered with the Narberth Ambulance Medical Corps, with Bob rising through the ranks from a 17-year-old volunteer to attaining the honor of being president of the board of directors. He was among the members of the ambulance crew that traveled to Dade County in Florida following Hurricane Andrew.

His true calling though was as a firefighter, serving for more than four decades in the Lower Merion Township Fire Service, just as his older brothers Dick and John had done. By his side through his fire career has been his brother Warren, a past chief of the Penn Wynne Fire Company. Following in their footsteps have been his niece Chrissy Neely and nephews Will Neely and George Fielden. The youngest and newest member of the family to follow in

the tradition is his 14-year-old nephew Cody Cirrito, grandson of his sister Helen..

"The only thing he loved more than the fire service were his two daughters, Tatiana 15 and Valentina, 13, who were adopted from Bryansk, Russia. We went straight from the airport after arriving home from Russia to the annual Christmas party at the Penn Wynne Fire Company where they made their grand debut, dressed in their matching red Christmas outfits with a dalmatian sitting next to a Christmas tree. The girls were just one and three years old and Bobby was so proud carrying them around and introducing everyone to his new family. His two greatest loves had now be brought together. Our daughters loved to go to the firehouse with him and sit on the fire trucks and often would walk around the house wearing his fire helmet and his boots that reached up to their chest," remembered his wife Kathy who said the couple actually first met at a fire scene when he was there as a firefighter for Union Fire Association and she was there as a reporter for the Main Line Times. The couple arrived at their wedding reception at the Merion Tribute House not in a limousine, but riding on the back of a Penn Wynne fire truck.

He served as a lieutenant, a captain and an assistant chief at Penn Wynne Fire Company and was also on the fire company's Board of Directors. In the Union Fire Association he attained the ranks of lieutenant and captain.

Even after his life has ended, Bob continues his spirit of community service since he signed a donor card. "He saved lives as a firefighter and an EMT and he is still saving lives even in death by donating his organs. It is such a generous and selfless act and one that can bring great comfort to the family. To know that when our family was making heart wrenching phone calls to share the terrible news of his passing, other families were also making phone calls, but theirs were ones of joy and excitement. Someone else's daughters will now be able to have more time with their loved ones. I urge everyone to sign a donor card in his honor. I have already signed mine," said his wife. For more information, visit Gift of Life Donor Program at www.donors1.org.

Tribute Wall



“ Check that off the list of things I was confused about.##imported-begin##Kalie##imported-end##

January 12, 2012 at 06:55 AM



“ Our sympathy to you and your family. We were neighbors of the NEELY family on Richters Ferry Rd.. in the 50's. We remember Bob as a very nice and caring young boy, especially when I would see him at the Acme store. Our prayers are with you at this most difficult time. Sincerely, The Garrity's##imported-begin##Garrity Family##imported-end##

November 14, 2011 at 08:45 PM



“ To the Neely Family:
Please know that you are in my prayers at this very difficult time. Bobby and I go back a long way first working together at the ACME, volunteer firefighters together and then again at Lower Merion Township as colleagues. Bob was a good man and going to be missed by many. Take care buddy, I'll miss you.##imported-begin##Chas McGarvey##imported-end##

November 09, 2011 at 05:36 PM



“ Hello Kathleen,

I worked with Bob for several years at LM Township. He was a pleasure to work with!

My sincere condolences to you and your family and may God Bless all of you during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Diana L. Kozak##imported-begin##Diana Kozak##imported-end##

November 09, 2011 at 10:37 AM



“ Our thoughts and prayers are with the entire Neely family at the loss of this true gentleman. We had the pleasure of knowing Bob, when my parents, Marge and Patsy, lived next door on Grandview Road. He was a good guy and a great dad and will be truly missed.##imported-begin##Donna (Patrick) Elberson##imported-end##

November 08, 2011 at 08:59 PM



“ God bless Robert.##imported-begin##Barak Obama##imported-end##

November 08, 2011 at 08:25 PM



“ I grew up on Righters Ferry Road near the Neely Family. Helen was my best friend growing up through elementary school. Of course, if you knew one member of the family you knew them all. Bobby was a year younger than me and went to school with my sister Cathy, and my sister Jacque went to school with Warren.

I'm saddened to learn of Bobby's passing. I can see from this extremely beautiful and very moving obituary, that he had a full and rewarding life. He was a "giver" and when you "give" you also receive. Serving in the Fire Company was a "family affair" that has passed from generation to generation. What a wonderful legacy he leaves.

My deepest sympathy to all of his family.##imported-begin##Rosalie Stinger Ott##imported-end##

November 08, 2011 at 01:55 PM



“ To the Neely Family. We regret that we could not pay our respects in person. Please accept our sincerest condolences for your loss. Bobby was there when I joined the fire company and helped me get on my feet as a junior. I will never forget him. God bless the Neely Family.##imported-begin##Jeffrey Fallon / Jaime Fallon##imported-end##

November 07, 2011 at 10:17 PM