

Port Washington NEWS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER FOR THE INCORPORATED VILLAGES OF SANDS PT. • BAXTER ESTATES • PT WASHINGTON NORTH • FLOWER HILL • MANORHAVEN

Vol. 91 No. 37 Port Washington, N.Y. - Thursday, December 8, 1988 35¢ per copy © 1988 Anton Community Newspapers of Long Island All Rights Reserved. Central Office Phone: 747-8282

Fireman's Death Caused by Arson

By Andrea Martone

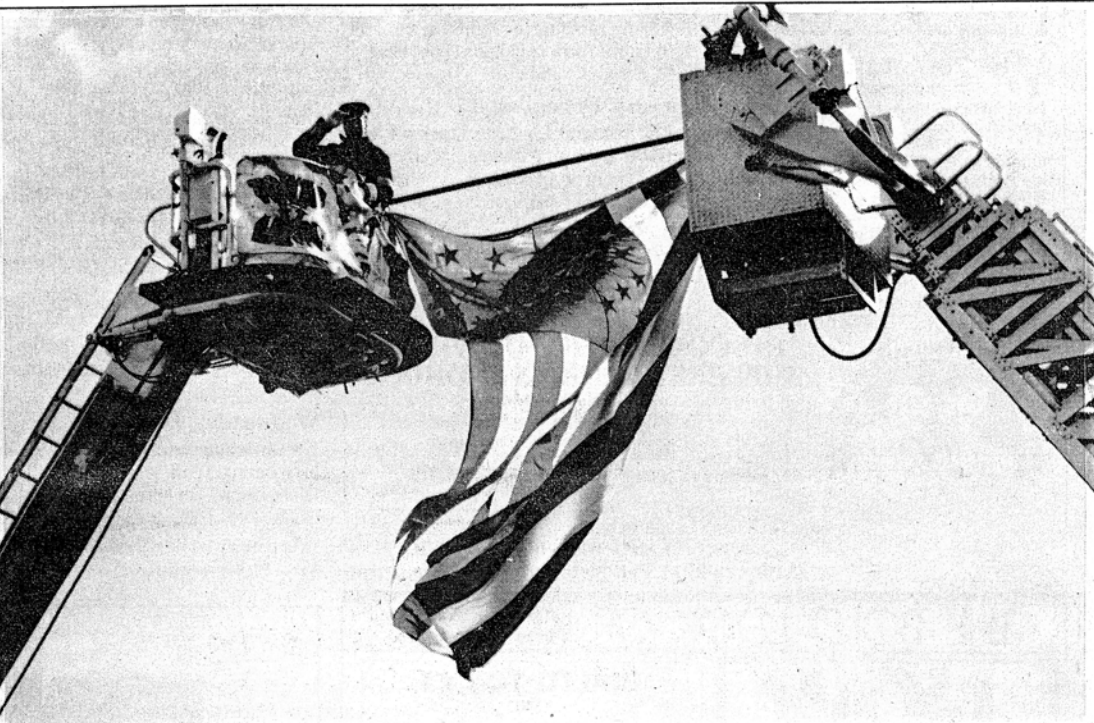
Investigators at the Nassau County homicide squad and firemarshal's office have confirmed that the fire in last Saturday's blaze, claiming the life of fireman Robert H. Dayton was deliberately set.

According to Robert Doran, assistant firemarshal for Nassau County, "the fire originated in the rear of the Cat Lady Anti-

ques in a work area involving flammable liquid. Accidental causes have been ruled out." The result of Saturday's blaze has made Robert Dayton's tragic death a felony murder, although at this time the homicide squad has no suspects or motive. An intensive investigation is being conducted and any person who may have information pertaining to the fire or leading to the arrest of the arsonist are urg-

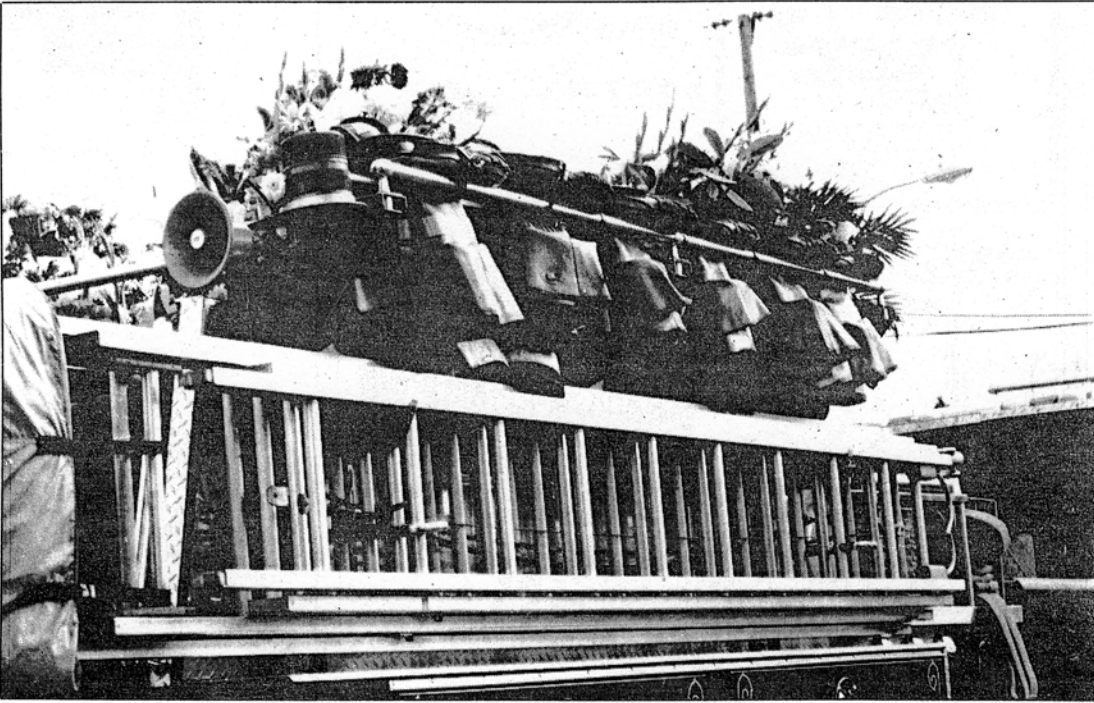
ed to come forward.

A special memorial fund has been set up for the wife and child of Robert Dayton, a professional New York City firefighter and a volunteer for Flower Hill Hose Company on Haven Ave. Checks, made payable to the Robert H. Dayton Memorial Fund, may be sent to 423 Port Washington Boulevard, Port Washington, NY 11050.



FIRETRUCKS on either side of Port Blvd. form an arch with fire ladders with the american flag hung in-between.

photo by Mike Gross, Port Photo



ONE OF THE Firetrucks in the Funeral Procession of Robert Dayton carrying fire gear.

Thousands Attend Lt. Dayton's Funeral

By Mike Barry

Lt. Robert H. Dayton, Jr. was buried last week following a funeral service and procession that drew thousands. The 28-year-old New York City fireman, who was also a 10-year veteran of the Port Washington Fire Department, died in the line of duty Nov. 26 while fighting a blaze at a Main Street retail store.

Almost all of Port Washington's 350 volunteer firefighters from the hundreds of professional and volunteer firefighters from the metropolitan area gathered in front of Flower Hill Hose Company Number One on Haven Avenue to hear a 20-minute eulogy by Rev. Robert Reed, associate minister of the North Shore Unitarian Universalist Society in Plandome. The firefighters were joined by friends of the Dayton family, dozens of elected officials including Nassau County Executive Thomas Gulotta, Nassau County Comptroller Peter King, and North Hempstead Supervisor John Kiernan and hundreds

of Port residents, many of whom stood in the train station's westernmost parking lot, which was closed for the day. Trains did not run for the duration of the service, which was held on Tuesday, Nov. 29.

"He died too soon. Too soon, at the age of 28," Rev. Reed said, in a eulogy that touched on Mr. Dayton's close relationship with his family and his commitment to firefighting.

"Our beloved Bobby is gone from us. Taken in the fire," Rev. Reed continued, as his voice carried over a microphone from inside the firehouse onto Haven Avenue.

Mr. Dayton's casket was placed onto the top of the Flower Hill Fire truck that he had been assigned to. His boots and fire helmet were placed on its back step. A bugler played "Taps" and then the funeral cortege, with a Port Washington police motorcycle escort leading the way, moved north on Haven Avenue and then east on Main Street.

Signs reading "We Love You, Bobby" were

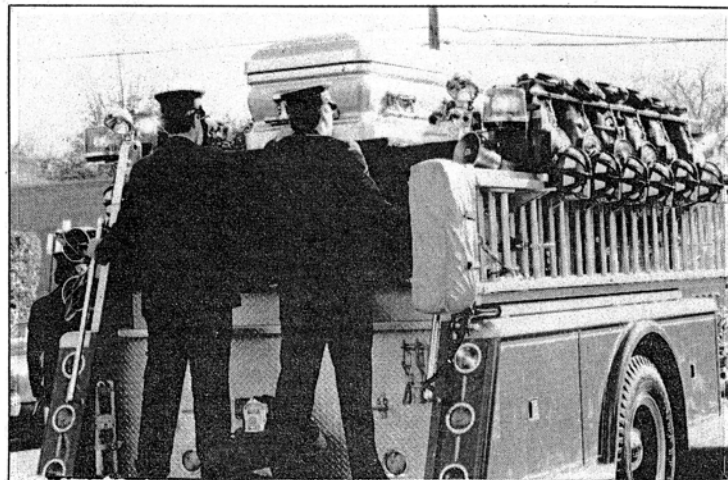
affixed to almost every telephone pole lining the procession route, which continued onto North Bayles Avenue, past the Dayton home, and onto Delaware Avenue, and then Port Washington Boulevard. Port Boulevard was closed to traffic for almost two hours. It was lined primarily by out-of-town fire departments' equipment and saluting personnel, Schreiber High School and Weber Junior High School students, and Boulevard merchants. For almost 30 minutes, it seemed as though Port Washington came to a standstill as the casket was carried to Nassau Knolls Cemetery.

The New York City Fire Department's Corps of bagpipers led the fire truck that carried Mr. Dayton's casket. Port's volunteer firefighters and Port Washington's police commissioners Frank Scobbo, Steve Zacherio and James Costello were followed by the black limousines carrying the Dayton family. Extended fire ladders formed a

funeral arch at the intersection of Port Washington Boulevard and Main Street.

More than 60 Port Washington firefighters responded to the early morning blaze on Saturday, Nov. 26 at The Cat Lady, a Main Street antique store where the fire reportedly began. The emotional scars that Mr. Dayton's death has left on department members and their families is something that only time and in some instances, professional counseling can help heal.

The Port Washington Fire Department has retained the services of a professional counselor to help department members that were at the scene or those who knew Mr. Dayton well cope with their grief, according to Peter Zwerlein, a department spokesman. The program, which is optional, is being administered under the auspices of the Nassau County Fire Department, Mr. Zwerlein said. The first counseling sessions were held on the weekend of Dec. 3-4.



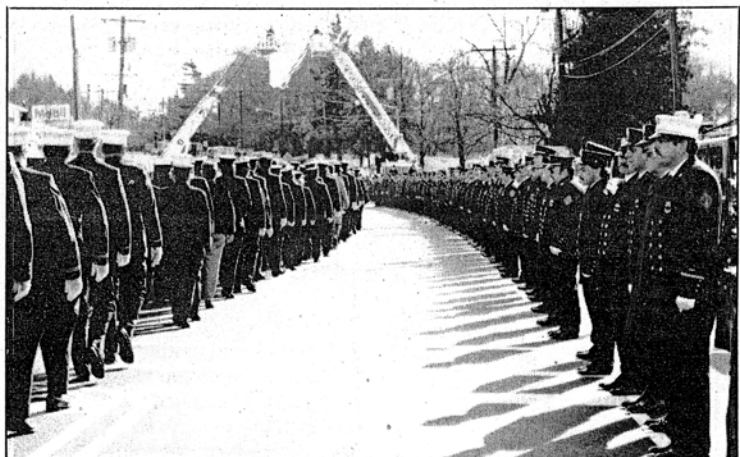
TWO PORT FIREMEN stand on the back of the fire truck bearing Lieutenant Robert Dayton's coffin. His fireman's hat rests on the platform beneath.



A FOUR FOOT FIREMAN'S HELMET placed on a podium made of red carnations, and red mini-carnations was donated by Falconer Florists. Volunteer Fireman, Dennis Smaid, an employee at Falconers, designed the helmet in tribute to Lieutenant Dayton.



THE FAMILY OF LIEUTENANT DAYTON are escorted by limousine into KNOLL'S CEMETERY where he will be put in his final resting place.



FIREMEN march in a processional down Port Washington Blvd.

All photos by Mike Gross of Port Photo

Community Donates To Fire Victims

The community's response to the tragic Main St. fire that took the life of Robert Dayton and left families homeless has been overwhelming. This office has been made aware of donations by the Lewis Foundation (started by an heir from the original family that began Lewis Oil Company decades ago) who contributed \$1000 to the widow of Robert Dayton. In addition, the Tibbits Fund of the Masonic Lodge contributed \$750 to both Mrs. Dayton and Mrs. Rosemary Slavinsky and her son, occupants of one of the apartments that were destroyed by the fire, leaving them destitute. A new beauty salon, Nicholis Alexander, has offered the proceeds of their haircuts for two days to go to both the widow of Mr. Dayton and those made homeless.



A MEMBER OF FLOWER HILL HOSE CO. plays TAPS as the coffin is lifted onto the firetruck that will lead the processional.

Photo by Mike Barry

Dayton Memorial Fund Formed

Robert H. Dayton Memorial Fund

The Port Washington Fire Department has announced the formation of the Robert H. Dayton Memorial Fund.

Mr. Dayton, a New York City firefighter for the last three years and a volunteer fireman with the Flower Hill Hose Company for the past 10 years, died on Saturday, November 26, while fighting a blaze at a Main Street antique store. He resided on North Bayles Avenue with his wife, Pamela, and their 11-month-old daughter, Kaitlin.

Checks, made payable to the Robert H. Dayton Memorial Fund, may be sent to 423 Port Washington Boulevard, Port Washington, NY 11050.

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Founded Nineteen Hundred and Three

Official Newspaper for the incorporated villages of BAXTER ESTATES, FLOWER HILL, MANORHAVEN, PORT WASHINGTON NORTH, and SANDS POINT

12/8/88
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Cary Seaman and Sheila Ferrari Page Designers

Local Office 270 Main Street, Port Washington, NY 11050 516 PO7-0035
Published every Thursday by Anton Community Newspapers
132 East Second Street, Mineola, N.Y. 11501
516-747-8282

Note From The Editor

It goes without question that the entire community was affected by the untimely passing of fireman Robert Dayton in the tragic fire on Dec. 26. The office of *The Port Washington News* was inundated with phone calls and letters from caring residents and organizations who wanted to know, "how can I help?" The genuine display of sorrow and concern that was expressed throughout this community demonstrates that when a crisis or tragedy strikes within our town, everybody rallies around with great distinction to show their support and love. In my opinion, it is the essence of a true community. The signs that were posted throughout the town expressing, "We Love Ya, Bobby", was a statement that reflected the feelings of all, not just the firemen who knew Robert Dayton personally.

In the aftermath of tragedy, grief put behind us, we try to the best of our abilities to resume our everyday lives. Volunteer firemen respond to more fires, the firehouses set up their Christmas decorations in anticipation of the upcoming holidays, and collectively we look to a brighter tomorrow, rewarded and privileged to be a part of this small, tight-knit community, though one with an enormous heart, called Port Washington.

No Place for Kids in Port to "Hang Out"

To The Editor:

I think that it is unfair that kids are always getting kicked out of the places where they hang out. Often the Port Washington P.D. kicks us off the premises for no apparent reason. The unfair part of this is that when they tell us to leave we have no place to go. Well, what are we supposed to do?

If we are not allowed to hang out at a place, we should have another place to go. Usually when we hang out at these places we are there as a meeting place. These places are Burger King, the movie theater, and the shopping centers. I know that this happens all over, but I am concerned with Port Washington. Anyway, when we hang out at these places we bring them business. Also, if we are their customers, then we have the right to stay there.

As a solution, I think that there should be something built for us to spend time at or "hang out".

Jason Garfield

Animals Must Be Tested For Diseases

To The Editor:

It is very important for the North Shore Animal League to examine animals for diseases. By examining animals for diseases, we can separate the healthy from the not so healthy animals.

Animals that have diseases are not easily adopted, because the animal would die early and it costs more to keep a sick animal. The owner also would not get the full enjoyment from a pet that is not healthy.

Also, the North Shore Animal League should not let animals suffer, because it causes great pain to the animal. The animal will not be able to do things that it used to or that other healthy animals can do.

It would not cost the North Shore Animal League much for the examination, because they have their own vets, and it is easily administered.

New Search and Rescue Training for Firemen

To The Editor:

Although we didn't know Fireman Robert Dayton, my wife and I were hurt and saddened by his death. We were further jolted when we read that Fireman Dayton had died when his air supply ran out while he was searching for tenants in a maze-like building.

By coincidence our guests that Saturday were my wife's cousin, a young lieutenant with the Westport, Connecticut fire department, and his family. Just that week he had participated in a new search and rescue training exercise. His company used a specially constructed trailer that contains a maze with the kinds of traps and obstacles firefighters might encounter in a burning building. In full gear, in the dark, they had to crawl through, feeling their way. The maze can be configured in hundreds of different ways to provide various levels of difficulty and practice with specific hazards. Apparently, the apparatus is shared by several Connecticut fire departments and is trucked from one to the next.

As part of the same training session, the firefighters also worked on techniques to conserve their air supplies. They bled their air-packs down to the low air warning signal, nominally five minutes of air. But using more efficient breathing techniques they managed to nurse the air along for at least 20 minutes, the rated duration of a full pack. Individual firefighters were able to make their five minutes of air last as long as 38 minutes.

I wonder if Port Washington's bravest have access to similar equipment and training. If these are truly effective and our firefighters don't have them, we must make sure they do in the future. We need to support firefighters not only with our admiration, and in this terrible case our sympathy, but also with the best tools and training attainable.

Ora S. Frutkin

Tragedies Unite Communities

To The Editor:

I am a young person in this community and I wish to express and share with you the grief I felt for the loss of a gallant member of this community.

I did not personally know Mr. Robert Dayton but I wish that I had. The members of the community should, as I am, be grateful to Mr. Dayton, as well as all members of the volunteer fire department. If it was not for him or any of the other members of the fire department giving of their time and of themselves to help us in our time of need, we would be a very troublesome community. These young men and women do not do their voluntary duty for only themselves and their families but for the well being of each and every member of the community. We have many reasons to be eternally indebted to them.

When Mr. Dayton re-entered that building Saturday, November 26, 1988, he was not thinking of himself but of others. That is now engraved upon my memory. There was a sense of peace, though, in my mind as I witnessed the unity of firefighters from all over the Metropolitan area joining together to comfort his family and close friends. It is a shame that the world and this community can not have this peace at all times. Does it have to take a tragedy such as this to unite all people as one? So please I ask each member of this community to look into themselves and help make this world a better place for

me. I would like to thank Mr. Dayton and all firefighters everywhere for everything they have ever done. I hope someday to give of myself, as Mr. Dayton and all others have given of themselves.

Jacqueline DeMeo, age 16
St. Mary's Girls High School

Thanks To All Who Helped With Wake

To The Editor:

Please print the following letter in your December 8, 1988 edition of the paper, thanking those wives, girl friends, and other community residents who helped the department during the tragic ordeal we experienced on Saturday, November 26, 1988:

Dear Members, Wives, Girl Friends, and Friends of Protection Engine Company No. 1, The Company wishes to express its heart felt thanks to all those who helped out with the preparation, set up, the operation of the wake held for our departed brother firefighter, Lt. Robert H. Dayton, Jr. at the fire house on Tuesday, November 29, 1988.

Protection Engine Company No. 1, as well as the other Companies of the Port Washington Fire Department, was asked to serve as host to the thousands of people who came to pay their respects to Lt. Dayton.

Without your concern, help, understanding, and caring, this monumental task could not have been accomplished. We all seemed to bond together in a spirit of respect and cooperation that made a difficult and painful experience more bearable.

Although we can never bring Fireman Dayton back with us; we can certainly take pride in our actions and deeds this past Tuesday.

Thank you; and God bless each and every one of you for the love and concern you have shown.

Ira Chudd,
Secretary for the Officers and
Members of Protection Engine
Company No. 1

God Bless Hero Dayton

To The Editor:

Although I did not know him personally, the death of Robert Dayton touched me deeply.

Being raised in a family of Firefighters my father and brother both being N.Y.C. Firefighters I have seen the challenges these men face daily. There is a job that requires great courage and dedication. It is a thankless job but it is a job that offers great reward to the men that wear the uniform. Much time is spent maintaining the equipment and the house but when the bell rings, day or night, each man places his life in his hands and faces a challenge most of us take for granted, the protection of our lives and property.

Robert Dayton died a hero's death. To his family, I say, God bless you and guide you in this time of sorrow. To his colleagues both volunteer and professional, I say, thank you, and God be with you.

John D. Moro, Jr.

Help Make Dayton Family Future Secure

To The Editor:

As you know, on Saturday, November 26, a tragedy occurred in Port Washington. A fire took the life of one of our volunteer firemen, Bobby Dayton.

Bobby lived in Port Washington all of his life and was a gentle, kind human being who would go out of his way to help anyone in distress. He lunged into the building on Main Street because he feared someone might be trapped in the apartments above. Three years ago, he did the same and saved a four year old child who was thought to have already perished. He always carried a picture of that boy in his wallet. This time he was caught by falling debris and died a tragic death. Bobby leaves a young baby 11 months old and a lovely wife, Pam.

I am writing to you because I think it is our obligation to make sure that both Pam and Bobby's daughter, Kaitlin are taken care of by the citizens of Port Washington. This was a volunteer mission that he was on, for which he received

distress.

While this particular fire occurred in a building on Main Street, it could have just as easily happened in your home or mine and Bobby would have been there in a flash to help save our families. I hope you feel the same obligation to his family as I do and will be good enough to make a generous contribution to the family so that the future of Kaitlin and Pam is secure. We owe it to Bobby. Please make your checks payable to the Robert H. Dayton Memorial Fund, c/o Flower Hill Hose Co., Haven Avenue, Port Washington, N.Y. 11050.

Manny Korman Hilldale Lane

Resource Recovery Plant

To The Editor:

In a recent letter to the editor, written by Irmgard Carras, a number of inaccurate and misleading statements were made concerning North Hempstead's Solid Waste Management Plan.

To begin with, comparing a Resource Recovery Plant to a Nuclear Power Plant is akin to comparing a nuclear submarine to a sailboat. While they are both boats, that's about as far as the similarities go.

Ms. Carras is correct concerning Hempstead's RDF plant. What she failed to mention is that the plant was shut down, scrapped and eventually demolished in March, 1987. Since that time a new Resource Recovery plant has been under construction on the same site. The new plant, which will utilize the same technology as the planned North Hempstead plant, will go into operation shortly after the first of the year. This new facility will have, as will North Hempstead's, the latest emission control devices designed to reduce particulate and gaseous emissions to Federal and State standards.

Her letter also stated that comments made at public hearings concerning the Draft Site and Technology Specific Impact Addendum to the Generic Environmental Impact Statement . . . issued in February 1987, were not addressed. This is simply not true. In June, 1987, a Response to the Public Comment and Modifications to the Draft Site and Technology Specific Impact Addendum to the GEIS was published. This document has been available, for viewing, at the Town Clerks office or at any public Library in the Town.

The "Response Document" is only one part of the two and one half year environmental review process undertaken in conjunction with this project. A review process, it should be noted, unparalleled on Long Island or anywhere else. And one that has determined that the plant would be safe.

Add to this the dismissal of numerous legal challenges to the environmental review process and it becomes clear that the effort put forth by the Town was responsive to the public and the environmental laws of New York State.

In conclusion, the Town's solid waste management strategy to reduce, recycle, and construct an environmentally safe and efficient resource recovery plant and landfilling, as the law allows, is not an instantaneous solution. It is a plan that allows us to meet the garbage disposal needs of our Town into the 1990's and beyond. It is a realistic plan that is based on proven methods. It is a strategy that assures the continuance of the quality of life North Hempstead residents enjoy.

Thank you.

Rand A. Burgner
Deputy Executive Director
North Hempstead Solid Waste
Management Authority

"Know of any interesting human interest or news worthy stories in our community that would be of public interest? Call the *Port Washington News* at 767-0035. We'd love to hear from you!"