

A Flag Waves at Weber In Tribute to a Hero

By Andrea Martone

Six months have passed since the tragic death of Lieutenant Robert Dayton, a firefighter for the Port Washington Volunteer Fire Department, yet, his memory is very much alive in both the fire department and the community.

Students at Weber Jr. High spent the last few months raising over \$3,000 to pay for a flagpole and landscaping dedicated to the fireman's memory. In an emotional outdoor ceremony on Friday, May 19, members of the fire department, Weber teachers and students, school administration, community members and the family of the late Robert Dayton gathered to pay tribute to a Port hero, who was an alumnus of Weber while growing up in Port Washington.

"We can be given an opportunity to grow as a result of our loss," Bob Kayser, a Weber teacher who had Bobby as a student and a volunteer firefighter himself for 15 years in Port Washington, said in a speech. "The flagpole, which we dedicate today in Bobby's name, is proof of this. Even though most of you never knew him, you worked hard to make this day a reality. That is a tribute to your growth as human beings and as caring members of our community," He continued.

Several readings of prose and poetry were given by Weber students, followed by the chorus singing *Amazing Grace*. Brian Birch, president of the Weber Student Council, spoke about feeling pain through the loss of a loved one. Brian's father, Harol, a Weber teacher, died several years ago after a long bat-

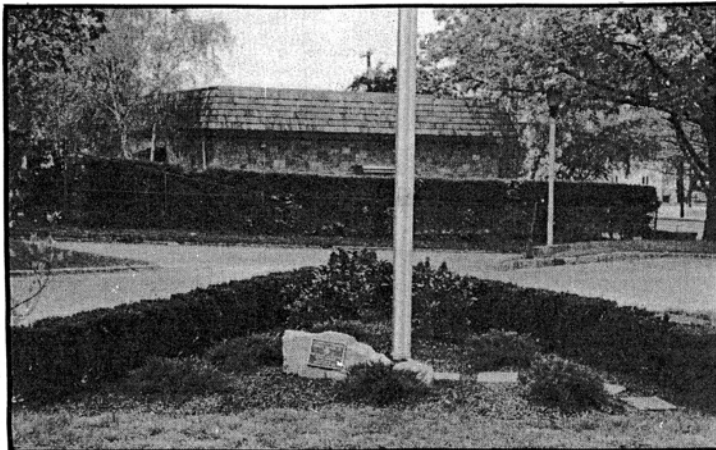


tle with cancer.

According to Weber Principal Faith Cleary, "We all take pride in this joint school and community accomplishment." The major part of the \$3,000 was raised through a project organized by the Student Council, in which students sold costume jewelry suitable for Valentine's Day and Mother's Day gifts. Other funds were raised by a Book Fair run by the students in the Secondary Extended Learning Program by students in the Home and Careers classes, who held food sales and by the Latin Club, which held a bake sale.



Weber Student Brian Birch speaks to the faculty and students at the flag dedication to Robert Dayton Jr.



A View of the New Weber Flagpole and landscaping as seen from a second floor window of the building.

Photo by Rick Adams



Standing in front of the new flagpole that was dedicated to the memory of Robert Dayton, Jr. is Pamela Dayton and her daughter, Kaitlyn, Mr. and Mrs. Dayton, fire chiefs Jeffrey Coles (l) and Peter Zwerlein. At far right is Weber Principal Faith Cleary.

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Fire companies of Port Washington donated money to purchase trees, railroad ties to create small garden areas and commemorative plaques. Some of the funds came from a grant from Residents for a More Beautiful Port Washington and a contribution from the Weber PTA. Weber teachers Steve Shackel and Rick Adams created the landscape design, supervised the installation of the pole and the landscaping of the gardens and also did a great deal of the work themselves to have everything ready for the ceremony. Faculty advisor to the Student Council, Carolyn Helfant, was a major contributor to the success of the ceremony.

"Your most important monument to Bobby will be in the manner in which you live your lives and in the compassion with which you treat your fellow man and which you someday teach to your children," are the words of Bob Kayser's speech. "The, even though the time may come when no one will remember why this flagpole exists, there will be people who are a living testament to Bobby and the ideals in which he believed."



Robert Kayser, Weber social studies teacher and volunteer firefighter for 14 years in Port Washington made a moving speech about his fellow comrade, and former student, Robert Dayton Jr.

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