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Family, friends recall WTC victims with love

Heroes among dead

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DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITERS

A fire captain who wrote unabashed love letters to his wife and a firefighter who raced to the World Trade Center despite being on sick leave were memorialized yesterday for the heroism they showed following the Sept. 11 terror attacks.

Capt. Joseph Farrelly and Firefighter John Tipping 2nd are among the 343 FDNY members lost in the terrorist attack.

Services also were held in Newark for Fred V. Morrone, the Port Authority's 63-year-old police chief who was last seen climbing to the 50th floor of 1 World Trade Center.

In Woodside, Queens, services were held for Claribel Hernandez, who leaves two children and a husband.

In Christian-Jewish services on Staten Island, 23-year veteran Farrelly was remembered for his dedication and the love notes he left for his wife, Stacey, before beginning his tour of duty.

Before starting his final 24-hour shift, Farrelly wrote his wife: "I can't begin to tell you how much I love you. Words are inadequate. Already I can't wait to get home."

On Sept. 11, Farrelly led the men of Engine 4 from their posts at the South Street Seaport in a brave attempt to evacuate workers from the World Trade Center.

The Rev. John Delendick and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Fire Department chaplains, led services at the Music Hall of Snug Harbor attended by hundreds of uniformed officers and dignitaries, including Mayor Giuliani and Lt. Gov. Mary Donohue.

Farrelly, 47, was a big Bruce Springsteen fan and several selections from the Boss were played, including "My Hometown" and "Born in the U.S.A." On Sunday, Springsteen paid his respects in a 20-minute chat with Stacey Farrelly.

"Joe always wanted to be a fireman," recalled his brother, Patrick. "He would organize the gang with red wagons loaded with water bottles."

Besides his wife of 24 years, Farrelly leaves Ryan, 19, Devin, 18, and Juliann, 11.

Firefighter Tom Griney said Farrelly would be embarrassed by all the attention. "He said a man should never be called a hero if he's being paid for doing what he loves to do," he said.

'Judged by love'

At St. Thomas More Church in Hauppauge, L.I., firefighter John Tipping 2nd was remembered for hopping a fire truck to the twin towers site from Ladder 4 at Eighth Ave. and 48th St. — even though he been placed on sick leave just hours before for an eye injury suffered in another fire incident.

Tipping, 33, was one of 15 members of Ladder 4 to die.

The Rev. John McNamara, Tipping's cousin, said: "He did not have to answer that call, but he did. But any one of you who are firemen know why John got on that truck."

"In the evening of his life, John was judged by love," said the priest, "and he was not found wanting."

His girlfriend, Kristin Costic, told the church packed wall-to-wall with firefighters and friends that she and John were "partners in crime."

"Most of all John and I were best friends. I had the pleasure of being the one he chose to share [his life] with."

He leaves his father, John, a retired firefighter, his mother and three sisters.

Devotion to duty

More than 1,500 mourners crowded Newark's Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart for a memorial Mass for Fred V. Morrone, the Port Authority's top cop who rushed over from Jersey City and up to the north tower's 50th floor in a rescue attempt.

Morrone "did not hide behind rank, but charged ahead as a leader does, assuring people as he rose in the tower, moving up as others moved down," said Archbishop John J. Myers.

His son, Fred, told of Morrone's daily devotion to duty, family and especially his wife, Linda, who was diagnosed with leukemia 10 years ago.

"My dad was not one who committed one final heroic act," said Fred, 31. "He lived his whole life a hero."

"The last thing he said to me was, 'We're going to make an assessment, and we're going to try to help some people out,'" Port Authority Chairman Lewis Eisenberg said. "He'd probably like best to be remembered that he was part of a team of heroes."

A better place

In services in both Spanish and English, Claribel Hernandez, who turned 31 on Sept. 6 and worked as an administrative assistant at Sybase, was mourned in services at St. Mary's Church in Woodside.

"They killed Claribel that day, but they couldn't kill her love, her spirit and her soul," said the pastor, the Rev. Francisco Walker.

"Now more than ever she will be missed and she will always be in her husband's heart and mind. But she is in a better place. God called her to share his everlasting life."

She is survived by her husband, Eslyn, and their children — 11-year-old Joseph and 5-year-old Stephanie.

A childhood friend, Susie Cervantes, said Hernandez "was the type of friend who never turned you away. It's lonely without her — not seeing her come home from work and play with her children is devastating."

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