NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

DAILY NEWS, MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2001

A day of tears and hope

Memorials for firefighter and insurance executive

By JENNIFER WEIL and MIKE CLAFFEY
DAILY NEWS WRITERS

An insurance executive beloved by his family and friends for his generosity and humor, who was lost in the World Trade Center disaster, was remembered at a service in Brooklyn yesterday.

Also memorialized over the weekend was a firefighter known for his bravery, artistic talent and the special care he gave his two children.

Frank Pershep, 59, known as Pop to his three grandchildren, was a vice president at Aon Corp. and worked on the 93rd floor of 2 World Trade Center.

In a service at Temple Beth Ahavath Sholom in Bensonhurst, a military honor guard unfurled an American flag and played taps in recognition of Pershep's National Guard service in the 1960s.

"We are here to remember Frank Pershep," said Rabbi Valerie Lieber. "Our hearts are shattered with this dark cloud inside of us. But the ache inside our stomachs has not erased the memories we have."

The speakers at the emotional service included his wife of 35 years, Estelle; his two daughters; his brother-in-law; two co-workers, and a friend of 55 years.

His widow prompted laughter from many of the 300 mourners when she spoke of her husband's eccentricities, like his passion for beige pants, of which he had four dozen pairs.

Turning serious, she remembered his selflessness. "He always put others before himself," she said, recalling how he cared for her and his sister through recent illnesses.

"If Frank were here now, he would say, 'Stop crying. Life must go on,' " she said. "So rest in peace, my love, and wait for me."

As she returned to her seat, she and many of the mourners were unable to follow his advice, and their tears flowed freely.

Bringing a 'message of hope'

At the service for Firefighter Paul John Gill in Long Island City, the theme was a "message of hope," said Gill's father, John.

Mayor Giuliani was among a contingent of more than 2,000 people who attended the service Saturday at Evangel Church in Long Island City.

Gill, 33, a wrestling champ for Martin Luther High School in Queens, had been on the job three years.

A member of Engine 54/Ladder 4 at 48th St. and Eighth Ave., he was cited for saving the life of a baby with carbon monoxide poisoning, his father said.

He was becoming known for paintings he made on the floors of three firehouses where he served and for his Celtic-themed artwork.

But perhaps the most important work of his life was the care he gave to his two sons: Aaron, 14, who had a kidney transplant at age 6 and requires $30,000 a year worth of medicine, and Joshua, 11, who suffers from idiopathic juvenile osteoporosis. He is also survived by his wife, Tina.

Gill was in the Marriott Hotel with his company evacuating people from the 21st floor when one of the towers collapsed on top of the hotel.

"We don't feel that Paul is dead," said his father. "We feel God reached out his hand and said: 'Come with me, you brave firemen. Come with me to heaven.' "

CITY_21MC100_011831446

NYC-WTC_000413733