

# 400 firefighters honor a 'brother' lost in crash

By EDWARD COLIMORE  
News American Staff

The thought ran through Walter Scott's mind over and over again as he carried the casket down the block-long line of 400 blue-uniformed firefighters to a waiting hearse.

"It should have been me."

Scott, a captain with 26 years in the department, was a pallbearer in services for acting Lt. Donald Knopp, a firefighter who died Sunday after a fire truck and engine accident March 5.

Knopp, 44, was one of seven firefighters injured while responding to a false alarm in northeast Baltimore. He was trapped in the twisted wreckage of the fire truck cab that normally was Scott's post.

"The day of the accident," Scott said. "I was assigned the place of the chief's aide, who was on vacation. I should have been in that truck. It should have been me there."

Firefighters from a dozen departments across the state Wednesday filed past the coffin at the United Evangelical United Church of Christ in Highlandtown. They wore black crepe buttons on their sleeves and white gloves.

Mayor William Donald Schaefer, Fire Chief Thomas Burke and other city officials joined the firefighters, taking their seats in the front pews across from Knopp's family. Knopp is survived by his widow, Viola, three stepchildren, two brothers, two sisters, his mother and three grandchildren.

"Don was a great firefighter," Scott said. "He was meticulous in everything he did and devoted to the department. I worked with him the last four years."

"I understand he helped save a neighbor's life during the past snowstorm. He

and ambulance attendant (cardio-pulmonary rest) someone who had a heart

Wilbert Tice, a pallbearer of the firefighters involved in the accident, said the death of "death of a brother" to members of the department.

"I worked with him in the house for 12 years," he said. "I socialize much away from home. Everyone knew they could depend on you. You have to depend on someone in business."

"His death is a great loss." Several firefighters, in addition to pallbearers, discussed the death of Knopp, the department's alarms and the light penalty for the accident. "It just makes me a firefighter said. "I see a man and for what?"

"It was all because someone was looking for some kicks. We these people stiffer penalties. I think we should lock 'em away the key."

During the funeral services, W. Scott Hengen, pastor of the Church of Christ, paid tribute to "devotion to duty," his 20 years of service and his exemplary life.

Firefighters — many of whom were away as Cumberland and then filed from the church in a long blue line.

A six-man honor guard led the procession from the church as church bells rang out in salute. Schaefer and Burke carried the casket to the hearse.

Burial was at Crest Lawn on Baltimore National Pike Avenue.



The News American — Paul T. Whyte

**HONOR GUARD:** Hundreds of firefighters lined both sides of the 900 block of S. East St. outside United Evangelical Church of Christ Wednesday as the casket bearing the body of Firefighter Donald Knopp was carried to a waiting hearse.

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"Don was a great firefighter," Scott said. "He was meticulous in everything he did and devoted to the department. I worked with him the last four years."

"I understand he helped save a neighbor's life during the past snowstorm. He

and ambulance attendants applied CPR (cardio-pulmonary resuscitation) to someone who had a heart attack."

Wilbert Tice, a pallbearer and one of the firefighters involved in the March 5 accident, said the death of Knopp was the "death of a brother" to many members of the department.

"I worked with him in the same fire-house for 12 years," he said. "We didn't socialize much away from work, but everyone knew they could depend on him. You have to depend on people in this business."

"His death is a great loss."

Several firefighters, including other pallbearers, discussed the danger of false alarms and the light penalties for conviction. "It just makes me mad," a firefighter said. "I see a man like this die and for what?"

"It was all because somebody was looking for some kicks. We have to give these people stiffer penalties. I personally think we should lock 'em up and throw away the key."

During the funeral service, the Rev. W. Scott Hengen, pastor of the United Church of Christ, paid tribute to Knopp's "devotion to duty," his 20 years of service and his exemplary life-conduct.

Firefighters — many from as far away as Cumberland and Hagerstown — then filed from the church and formed a long blue line.

A six-man honor guard led the funeral procession from the church to the hearse as church bells rang out and firefighters saluted. Schaefer and Burke followed the casket to the hearse.

Burial was at Crest Lawn Cemetery on Baltimore National Pike and Mount Pike Avenue.

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