

Remembering Robert (Bob) Fowler, Spencerport volunteer firefighter

The parking lot of the Spencerport Fire Station 3 was filled by 9:15 a.m. and vehicles lined Route 259 as a large crowd gathered in the firehouse on Saturday, February 24 for the Robert E. Fowler Memorial Tribute.

According to Spencerport Volunteer Fire Department Chief Joe Muniz, the ceremony grew from the Spencerport Firemen's Association membership's desire to honor firefighter Robert (Bob) Fowler on the 10th anniversary of his tragic death. Fowler was killed and his son, Timothy, injured on their way to Station 1 on Lyell Avenue to answer a

fire call when a tree uprooted by unusually high winds fell on the vehicle they were in as it passed into the intersection of Route 259 and Lyell Avenue, February 22, 1997. It was the 22-year veteran firefighter's last call. Timothy suffered serious back injuries from which he has recovered.

Spencerport Fire Commissioner David Spencer welcomed the assembly, followed by fellow Commissioner David Goddard who said a prayer. Spencer then addressed those assembled with a eulogy of Bob Fowler and how the memories of Bob's contributions to the fire department and the community remain in the minds of the firefighters.

Gail Fowler, Bob's wife, spoke of her husband's dedication and related some humorous incidents about life with Bob, then New York State Assemblyman William Reilich called the Fowler family to the dais where he presented the

Assemblymen's Medal of Merit to Gail Fowler. She was joined by family members Tim and Elizabeth Fowler and Alan and Melissa Fowler and their daughter, Chloe.

The Honor Guard marched to the front of the firehouse, a bay door was opened and the group processed to the flagpole nearby and stood at attention while a flag presented years ago to Gail Fowler by the Organization for Families of Fallen Firefighters was attached to the pole. Jim VanBrederode, a Gates Keystone bagpiper, played "Amazing Grace" as the flag was hoisted to the top of the flagpole.

Then, Fire Chief Joe Muniz rang the last call bell for the man who had once been his Cub Scout leader. The tribute's poignancy and solemnity grew greater with each toll of the bell, the 5-5-5 alarm known as the firefighter's last call.

Walter Horylev; Evelyn Dow



The helmet and goggles of firefighter Robert Fowler rested on the table next to the rostrum.



Spencerport Fire District Commissioner **David Spencer** and Fire Chief **Joe Muniz** (right) opened the ceremony commemorating the tenth anniversary of the tragic death of life-member firefighter Robert Fowler, who died when his vehicle was hit by a falling tree on his way to answering a fire call on February 22, 1997. After an invocation presented by firefighters and Spencerport Fire Commissioner Dave Goddard, Dave Spencer described the dedication and efforts of Robert Fowler in his 22 years of service to the Spencerport Fire Department. He said that after ten years, Bob's memory stays in the minds of fellow firefighters. Along with other great personal attributes, "Bob was a man you could count on," Spencer said.



NYS State Assemblyman **William D. Reilich** presented the Assemblymen's Medal of Merit to **Gail Fowler**.



The honor guard stands at attention while two firefighters attach a National Fallen Firefighters flag to the firehouse flagpole. Gail Fowler received the flag from an organization for families of fallen firefighters; it flew over that organization's monument to fallen firefighters in Washington, D.C. Jim VanBrederode, a Gates Keystone bagpiper, played "Amazing Grace" after the memorial flag was raised.

Photographs by Walter Horylev



Chief Joe Muniz rang a large brass bell, signaling the firefighter's last call.