2014 CALIFORNIA FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL
As President of California Professional Firefighters and Chair of the California Fire Foundation, I am once again honored to welcome you to the California Firefighters Memorial Ceremony, our annual tribute to the men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to our state.

Each year, we come together in this hallowed spot to pay tribute to the men and women who put their lives on the line every day. Whether they were lost in the flash of a catastrophe or eventually succumbed to a job-related disease, each of the 15 men we honor today risked it all for each one of us.

We gather in Sacramento this year with heavy hearts as we reflect upon the significant losses experienced by our profession and those with whom we serve. As California reels from a season of trend-breaking fires that have put thousands of our brothers and sisters in jeopardy – we hail their selfless call to duty. These incidents are poignant reminders that when a firefighter puts on turnouts and heads out to a call, there is always the chance that he or she will not return. The polished limestone wall at the California Firefighters Memorial honors the more than 1,250 who gave their lives in the line of duty since California became a state.

This special tribute on the grounds of California’s State Capitol honors not only the sacrifice of those we have lost, but also the determination and commitment of those who fight on every day in service to their state and community.

As firefighters and Californians, we recognize the danger that these brave men and women face every day and the significant sacrifices made by the families they leave behind. For all of them, and for the people of our state, we etch their names into this proud Memorial.

Brothers and sisters, we will never forget you.

Lou Paulson
President, California Professional Firefighters
Chair, California Fire Foundation
While he was only a boy of 14 when he first came to Mare Island, Jim Greig eventually rose to the rank of fire chief of the naval base’s fire department in 1935. During his 38-year tenure as chief, Jim oversaw a period of major growth for the department and was instrumental in the development of some of the first mutual aid programs in the region. During World War II, Jim trained area civilians in civil defense and set up and maintained hundreds of bomb-watcher stations in the north Bay Area. Jim died on November 24, 1965 after suffering a job-related heart attack.

James D. Greig
Fire Chief, Mare Island Fire Department
November 24, 1965

For 32 years, Captain Holmes served the public with honor and distinction as a member of the Fresno Fire Department. Strongly rooted in the Fresno community, Neil graduated from Fresno High School and attended California State University, Fresno before completing the Fire Science program at Fresno City College. He had a great affinity for computers and his skills were instrumental in programming and developing Fresno City’s fire call response time database. He is survived by his wife Stacy, his children, Kristine and Jeffery, and his four grandchildren. Neil died in 1998 after suffering an on-duty brain aneurysm.

Neil Albert Holmes
Fire Captain, Fresno Fire Department
September 28, 1998

Michael began his career with the Redondo Beach Fire Department in 1980 and served with distinction for three decades. Throughout his career, Michael relished the opportunity to interact with and serve the community and found great personal satisfaction in the ability to make a difference in the lives of others. For five years, he worked in the Redondo Beach Harbor Division as part of the dive team, an opportunity that allowed him to combine his passion for scuba diving with his professional career. He was an avid outdoorsman who also enjoyed camping, snow and water skiing, hiking and was known for his commitment to his daily gym workouts. Above all else, Michael was a faithful, family-first husband and father. Michael passed away in 2011 after a battle with job-related cancer.

Michael J. Lamont
Firefighter/Paramedic, Redondo Beach Fire Department
September 21, 2011
John Allen Lawrence
Firefighter, Orange County Fire Authority
March 14, 2013

At the age of 19, John fulfilled his childhood dream of becoming a firefighter. Over the span of his 32-year career, John worked in many areas of the Orange County Fire Department and, later, the Orange County Fire Authority, but his true love of firefighting was realized when he transferred to John Wayne Airport and combined his love of airplanes and firefighting. John was often envied by his coworkers as “the guy who flew to work,” leaving his home in Big Bear City and taxiing almost to the front door of his station. He will be remembered for his quick wit, sense of humor and love of flying. John leaves behind his wife Kam, and his two sons, Hayden and Benjamin. John died in 2013 after a lengthy battle with job-related cancer.

Arthur Franco
Fire Captain/Paramedic, CAL FIRE
January 29, 2013

From an early age, Art Franco knew he would become a firefighter. As a young man, his Eagle Scout service project dealt with fire prevention, and while serving in the United States Marine Corp, he was given the opportunity to work with a variety of rescue equipment. On the job, Art cherished the opportunity to serve the community, while in his personal life, he loved to work with children – at school, youth ministries or on annual Christmas toy drives. He leaves behind his daughter Nikki and his sisters, Patricia and Rosalie. Art passed away in 2013 due to complications from Hepatitis C, contracted on the job.

Brian Russell Wolf
Battalion Chief, Downey Fire Department
July 21, 2013

Brian began his career with the Downey Fire Department in 1989, eventually working his way up to the rank of battalion chief. Those who knew him best say Brian was the kind of person you wanted to be around, possessing a kind heart, a wonderful sense of humor, an infectious laugh and a “can do” attitude. Brian brought all of these traits with him to the fire service, finding a way to become involved in anything he could get his hands on. He will be remembered as a true hero, not only to his friends and family, but to the countless people he helped over the years. He leaves behind his wife April and children, McKenzie and Logan. Brian died in 2013 after a two-year battle with job-related cancer.
Knowing from a young age that he wished to become a firefighter, Matt joined the Los Angeles Fire Department in 1982. He rose through the ranks of the department, eventually being promoted to fire captain in 2003. Through his nearly 30-year career, Matt was respected among all ranks of the fire department, not only because of how dedicated he was in his duty to protect and serve others, but also for the way in which he served with honor and courage. He will be remembered as a man who loved his family, valued his friendships and enjoyed camping in the great outdoors. Matt died in 2013 after suffering a job-related heart attack.

Matthew G. McKnight
Fire Captain/Paramedic, Los Angeles Fire Department
August 12, 2013

Norm Walters began his career in the fire service as a volunteer firefighter in Apple Valley, California, before becoming a career first responder with the San Bernardino City Fire Department. His family and friends remember him as a quiet, humorous, caring, dependable and loving man, as well as someone who had an insatiable thirst for knowledge. As a testament to this desire to learn, Norm attended college while serving as a firefighter and completed coursework to become a paramedic and a registered nurse. Those who served at his side remember him as the “consummate firefighter” – aggressive, hardworking, brave and caring. He was a loving brother and uncle and leaves behind his sisters, Linda and Irma, and his nephews, Alphonso, Antonio and Marcus. Norm died in 2013, shortly after being diagnosed with job-related colon cancer.

Norman Edward Walters
Firefighter, San Bernardino City Fire Department
August 28, 2013

Shawn began his career in the fire service in 2001, when he was hired by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Over the next 12 years, he would go on to embody the finest qualities of a true firefighter, serving the citizens of Los Angeles County with honor and distinction. Before joining the department, Shawn was an avid surfer and snowboarder, and those who knew him best say he brought the same tenacity and fearlessness he displayed on the slopes and in the water with him to the fire house. After the line-of-duty death of his father, Fire Captain Ken Bayer, in 1997, Shawn built upon his family’s legacy of excellence through his own career in the fire service. Shawn died in 2013 after succumbing to job-related cancer.

Shawn Bayer
Firefighter Specialist, Los Angeles County Fire Department
November 2, 2013
Paul G. Chenkovich
Fire Captain, Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department
November 5, 2013

Paul began his career in the fire service in 1988, serving a season with the U.S. Forest Service. He spent ten years with the El Dorado Hills Fire Department before joining the Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department in 2000, where he was eventually promoted to the rank of fire captain. Those who knew him best will remember Paul for his fierce devotion to his family, friends and career. On or off the job, if you needed a helping hand, Paul was your guy. Beyond firefighting, his passions included cooking, gardening, running, riding his Harley, soccer, woodworking and spending quality time with friends and family. Paul died in 2013 after a three-year battle with job-related brain cancer.

John Mazzocco
Fire Captain, Los Angeles County Fire Department
December 12, 2013

John began his career with the Los Angeles County Fire Department in 1986, eventually rising to the rank of fire captain after nearly 28 years of service. Throughout his career, John often commented how lucky he was to know he would be doing something he loved heading into every shift. He spent the majority of his career in his hometown, the Santa Clarita Valley, at Fire Station 111, where he will be remembered as a respected fire captain, a loyal and trustworthy friend and a true professional. John enjoyed playing golf, fishing, snow skiing, spending time with family and friends and supporting his sons in their many endeavors. He is survived by his wife Lori and their two sons, Matthew and Michael. John died in 2013 after succumbing to job-related cancer.

Darrell Glen Rice
Firefighter Specialist, Los Angeles County Fire Department
April 22, 2014

Darrell began his 22-year career in the fire service in 1992, when he joined the Los Angeles County Fire Department. As a member of the Swift Water Rescue Team and Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Team, Darrell routinely placed the well-being of others above his own personal safety and, as a result, received many commendations for his service. He enjoyed vacationing with family and friends, sports, live entertainment, shopping and decorating the house for the holidays. He was also an avid photographer and videographer. Darrell died earlier this year as a result of job-related cancer.
Sam began his career with the Chula Vista Fire Department in 2006, hoping to make the community, in which he and his family lived, a safer place. Coming to the department from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC), Sam quickly became the department’s “go to” for highly technical life safety questions. In 2011, Sam was recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as a firefighter demonstrating “personal courage and ever-vigilant guardianship of life and property.” His interests included spending time with his wife and three children, camping, riding his Harley motorcycle and playing the piano on his church worship team. Sam passed away earlier this year as the result of a job-related heart attack.

Samuel Escalante
Fire Investigator, Chula Vista Fire Department
June 21, 2014

Prior to joining the fire service, veteran Mike James Hicks was a decorated United States Navy member of the Underwater Demolition Team and later SEAL Team ONE. During his naval career, he received numerous military awards, including a Presidential Unit Citation, a Bronze Star and a Gold Star in lieu of a second Bronze Star. After his military service, Mike joined the National City Fire Department, where he went on to serve with honor and integrity for 30 years. Those who knew him best remember his calm, cool demeanor in even the most dangerous conditions, his sense of humor and his love of children and animals. He is survived by his wife Beverly. Michael died in 2014 after succumbing to the effects of job-related cancer.

Michael James Hicks
Firefighter, National City Fire Department
April 23, 2014

Armando J. Mora, Jr., better known as “Mando,” began his career in the fire service in the City of West Covina in 1980. A year later, he returned to his hometown of Sante Fe Springs to complete his remaining 33 years of service. Mando enjoyed spending time with his family and friends, especially when it involved good food, great music and everyone having a good time. His best times were going to Dodgers games and relaxing in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, a place where he said he always found peace. He will always be remembered for his sense of compassion, a strong belief for living life to the fullest and his unique ability to meet someone and make them a friend for life. Armando died earlier this year after losing close to a two-year battle with job-related esophageal cancer.

Armando J. Mora, Jr.
Firefighter, Sante Fe Springs Department of Fire-Rescue
June 18, 2014

Sam began his career with the Chula Vista Fire Department in 2006, hoping to make the community, in which he and his family lived, a safer place. Coming to the department from the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC), Sam quickly became the department’s “go to” for highly technical life safety questions. In 2011, Sam was recognized by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, as a firefighter demonstrating “personal courage and ever-vigilant guardianship of life and property.” His interests included spending time with his wife and three children, camping, riding his Harley motorcycle and playing the piano on his church worship team. Sam passed away earlier this year as the result of a job-related heart attack.

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Samuel Escalante
Fire Investigator, Chula Vista Fire Department
June 21, 2014
Falling Star

Silence comes in waves it drowns me
I smile Remembering your words
It hurts
Eyes blue
You’re too far
So I close them
And go to where you are ...

Make a wish on a falling star
Take me to the one where you are
And we’ll shine
And we’ll shine

Standing drawing lines painting pictures in the stars
Pretending you’re still here
Bending time
It’s a devastating art

I’ll keep reaching
Til I touch them
and find the one
Where we are

Still shining
Holding hands in the dark
Make a wish on a falling star
Take me to the one where you are
And we’ll shine
And we’ll shine

Reaching out to where you are
Holding onto Miracles
Wishing on a Falling Star
Loving Everything
That you are
You still are

Make a wish on a falling star
Take me to the one where you are
And we’ll shine
And we’ll shine
And we’ll shine

Original song created for the 12th Annual California Firefighters Memorial
Lyrics by Mela Lee • Music by Mela Lee & Alexander Burke (Magnolia Memoir)
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