

New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial's Selection Committee Rejects FF Paul Brady and Chaplain Richard Holst

BY REID J. EPSTEIN
Newsday, Melville, N.Y.

Posted: Wed, 04/21/2010 - 09:17

Updated: Wed, 04/21/2010 - 13:00

The state Workers' Compensation Board, the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation each found that Malverne Firefighter **Paul Brady** died in the line of duty in July 2006.

But this week, for the fourth time since he was crushed between the roof of a fire truck and the ceiling of the Malverne fire house, the New York State Fallen Firefighters Memorial's selection committee rejected a proposal to add Brady's name to the more than 2,300 already on its memorial wall in Albany.

"It feels like an insult," Brady's sister, Patricia Duffy of Rockaway, N.J., said Tuesday. "It's a matter of him not being forgotten."

In Monday's vote in Albany, five committee members representing paid firefighters voted against Brady, while four representing volunteer firefighters voted yes. The deputy state fire administrator also voted no.

While the paid-firefighter representatives said they voted based on established criteria, volunteer firefighters Tuesday characterized the split as evidence of bias against them by their paid colleagues.

A vote to include Huntington Manor fire chaplain **Richard Holst**, 60, who suffered a heart attack during a September fire, deadlocked 5-5. His petition will be reconsidered at a future meeting.

The committee members who voted against Brady and Holst said their deaths didn't meet the inclusion criteria because they weren't in the line of duty when they died. However, records show other firefighters have been included on the wall after dying in accidents, of heart attacks and, in one instance, during military duty in Iraq.

Syracuse firefighter Edwin Cook Jr., who represented the New York State Professional Firefighters Association, voted against both Brady and Holst.

"My men are also ordered to clean the toilets at the beginning of each shift," he said during Monday's meeting. "If they happen to drown in one, do they go on the wall? No. It's a maintenance issue. He was doing a maintenance check. It was a tragedy, it wasn't a line of duty death."

Of Holst's death, Cook said: "What caused the heart attack? Standing up to make a phone call?"

Inclusion among the 2,300 names on the wall in Albany brings no money or other benefits to the families and fire departments back home. Nonetheless, spots on the wall

at Empire State Plaza near the Capitol are prized as lasting tributes to deceased firefighters' service and dedication.

"The guy gave his life for his community and the least his brother firemen can do is put him on a place of honor," former Malverne Fire Chief William Ward said of Brady. "To pick and choose the way they're doing it is just wrong."

On July 30, 2006, Brady, 42, was conducting a maintenance check on the roof of a fire truck parked inside the Malverne fire station when another firefighter -- unaware Brady was on the roof -- pulled the truck out of the bay and into the driveway. Brady was crushed beneath a ceiling beam, and died hours later.

In arguing for Brady's inclusion on the wall, Ward and others pointed to the case of Jamel Sears, an FDNY trainee who suffered a fatal heart attack during a 2008 training session.

In April 2009, the committee rejected the FDNY's petition to add Sears, 33, to the wall, saying he died in a training exercise and not in the line of duty.

Two months later, after an FDNY appeal, the committee, with the support of the volunteer firefighters on the committee, made deaths during "hands-on training" eligible for the wall and added Sears' name.

Sayville fire Commissioner Donald Corkery, the committee's most vocal proponent of including Brady and Holst on the wall, argued that the paid firefighters define line of duty as being "on a third floor with flames shooting out," while volunteers consider all duties related to firefighting as part of their job.

McClatchy-Tribune News Service