



By Alan Spearman

Nurse Angela Morgan (left) comforts paramedic Candace Hardwick outside The Med Sunday night after firefighter Charles Zachary was brought in. He later died.

## Kirk's family comforted in knowing that he died doing what he loved

By Laura Coleman Noeth  
[noeth@gomemphis.com](mailto:noeth@gomemphis.com)  
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In an hour's time on Saturday, twins Brent and Trent Kirk leaned against Trent's fire-engine red pickup and had their last significant conversation.

But for an hour's time on Sunday, they might have had the promise of many more.

About an hour before Trent Kirk was due to get off from his overtime shift and go home to spend what was left of Father's Day with his family, the station got the kind of call that made Kirk want to be a firefighter: possible rescue, lots of flames.

A chance to save a life, a chance to comfort a victim.

On Monday, the comfort to the Kirk family came in knowing that Lt. Trent Kirk, 39, died doing what he loved, what he felt called to do.

"It was his dream since high school to be a fireman," said Brent Kirk. "He enjoyed helping people. He wasn't just interested in saving lives, he wanted to be there to help people when they were totally helpless."

Doug Owens was on his way to Arkansas Monday when he heard a news report that Kirk, who he supervised several years ago at Georgia-Pacific Corp., was one of the firefighters killed. In his car, he prayed.

"I just talked to God about it, I put it in His hands," said Owens, who described Kirk's work ethic as "superior."

It was while Kirk and longtime friend Jimbo Townsend worked at Georgia-Pacific that both decided to fulfill goals. One went to college, the other to the Fire Department, where he quickly advanced to driver, then to lieutenant. Townsend, who lives near Dallas, will be here for Kirk's funeral Thursday.

It was during those years that the two of them went out one night and Kirk met his wife, Donna. Kirk later was in Townsend's wedding.

On Monday, whether it was in the half-staff flags at fire stations throughout the county or on Kirk's Bartlett street, the mourning had begun. While Donna Kirk was away making funeral arrangements, other firefighters' wives were answering the phone or bringing food.

The familiar sound of splashing in the Kirk pool behind Julie Haugen's house wasn't there Monday.

Haugen was the babysitter for the Kirks' daughters, Hope, 14, and Charity, 8.

"Oh, it's just like your heart sinks into your stomach," said Haugen. "You hear about firemen getting killed, but when it's someone you know, you can't believe it's happening."

Haugen remembered all the times that Kirk dropped his daughters off with "a big squeeze hug and kiss" and picked them up with promises of trips to the ice cream store or park.

"Those girls had him wrapped around their fingers," Haugen said.

In Raleigh, Brent Kirk, with his younger brother Dennis, spent the day at the home of their mother, Betty Kirk.

They talked of a brother who excelled in sports, one who played basketball all four years at Raleigh-Egypt High and who participated in firefighters' athletic competitions.

"He picked up any sport really quickly," said Dennis Kirk, 37. "We'd get a Ping-Pong game and he'd whoop us in a day or two."

On Saturday, the three were among 100 or so family members at a family reunion at Natchez Trace State Park east of Jackson, Tenn.

It was there where Trent Kirk was kidded about having a pickup the size of a firetruck, where he and his twin brother had one of those ordinary conversations that become extraordinary because they're between twins.

"It was just me and him," Brent said. "Being twins, we had a special bond. We talked about all the good old times, how good it was to have everyone there."

Kirk's funeral should be a proper service for someone who gave his life for others, the surviving twin said.

"He really deserves that, since he died for other people. I think he deserves the highest honors they could bestow on him. He wanted to be a fireman, he wanted to help people and he died trying to help people."

And yes, his brother said, he was a hero, though that wasn't what Trent Kirk set out to be.

"Trent was just a normal human being who had a job he loved doing. He loved his family and he loved his job. He was living the American dream, so to speak.

"He didn't set out to be a hero, though he'd done some heroic acts. But it was not his goal to be a hero. It was his goal to serve his fellow man."

- Laura Coleman Noeth: 529-5853