

Lt. Trent Kirk
The Man
The Husband
The Father
The Fire Fighter
The Heartfelt Thanks and Story of Honor

I want to express the sincerest appreciation my daughters and I feel towards everyone who expressed their sympathy, love and prayers during the most devastating time in our lives, the loss of a husband, father, son, brother and a brother fire fighter, Lt. Trent Kirk.

Throughout the days after Trent went to be with our Lord there were many heartfelt words spoken and printed in an attempt to capture my husband's character and personality. Although every word spoken or printed was true to his nature, I felt the community deserved to know the man, the husband, the father our daughters and I knew him to be. Therefore, I place my trust and my pen in the Lord's hands to help me let you know what kind of husband and father Trent was to me and our daughter's, Hope and Charity.

I first met Trent Kirk on October 2, 1992 and immediately realized he was very special; he was kind, considerate, ambitious and full of life. We immediately became good friends as we spent many hours on the phone sharing our past, our present, our future, fears, joys and sometimes our tears. As our relationship blossomed we began to talk about a life together as husband and wife and how we would spend our lives together well into retirement. For me, the talk of marriage was especially fearful as a single mother of one. Trent also knew the fears of marriage without the possibility of having children of his own, as Hope's birth had been difficult for me almost five years earlier. We talked at lengths about that situation as well as my concern of becoming a fire fighter's wife. You see, when you marry a man who serves his community like Trent did there is always that fear of the unknown, would today be the day? Trent understood my fears and I put my faith in God to grant me the strength and love for Trent to overcome my fear of becoming a fire fighter's widow. On February 18, 1994 I became Mrs. Trent Kirk. A day of joy and happiness that will be forever etched upon my heart.

As our life began to take new turns and we soon learned we were expecting our second daughter, Charity. After just days of accepting a transfer from Station 24, which was just a few miles from our home and close enough for visits, to Station 16 halfway across town. I would soon learn the true meaning of "24 on/24 off"-- a firefighter family schedule. The news of becoming a father of his own was especially emotional for Trent, as we were unsure this day would ever come. This pregnancy was again difficult and I went into early labor at six and one half months. With medications and rest I was able to carry her until I was 35 weeks. The day Charity was born April 18, 1995, we knew God had blessed us with another miracle baby and this was a very happy day for our family, Trent, Hope and I knew our family was now complete.

Little did I know the responsibility I would have with Trent's fire fighter schedule in raising two children. You see, a fire fighter is away from his family almost 100 days a year. These days are predetermined annually so any birthdays, anniversaries, or special days are coordinated by his days off. The responsibility placed on the spouse of a fire fighter is compounded since broken bones, runny noses, sleepless babies, stopped up toilets, leaking roofs, flat tires, power outages, continuing health conditions and other family emergencies cannot be planned and coordinated around schedules, they just happen. Even though our spouses are away from us physically they are able to surprise us with early morning wake up calls, late night phone conversations that help keep our marriages somewhat similar to the dating phase of our relationships.

Trent and I soon discovered that we were spending more time apart than we were together and we decided to start our own business that would allow us to be together and share more valuable time as a family. We talked about what kind of business we would begin and since Trent had experience in hanging wallpaper, he taught me how to help him and we were on our way. As the business grew we added other decorating tips to our portfolio including interior design and faux finishing. Once we added the interior design and faux finishing, we soon learned that I had finally discovered the gift the Lord had given me. With Trent's encouragement, I attended workshops and other learning classes to help me become the best I could be and with the Lord's hands, our business sprouted wings and became a success. We measured success not by money or the number of jobs we could schedule but by the hours we could spend together watching our efforts grow which started us on the long road to provide an education for our daughters, especially Hope's dream to become a doctor, and for our own retirement goals. During the time I was busy studying interior design and faux finishing, Trent was

excelling in his fire fighter career. He had joined the Fire Department in 1992 and by 1995 he had been promoted from a Private to a Driver, with the support and encouragement of the late Lt. Javier Lerma. Under the tutelage of Lt. Daryl Payton over the next four years, Trent took his career to it's final level before going home to be with the Lord, as "Lieutenant" Just month's prior to his death he had taken the Chef's exam. As an 11 year veteran, I watched my husband excel in a career he truly loved, to repeat his words, "This is the BEST job ever." I had never nor do I believe I will ever again meet someone as special as Trent, someone who possessed the capacity to love, nurture, encourage and excel. My husband was truly a special man I wish you could have known him, if you had not had the pleasure, because if you had, I am confident that you would know just what our family and our community actually lost that dreadful night.

Father's Day, June 15, 2003 started like every other day for the Kirk family, excitement about celebrating a day honoring Trent. We had our plans for the day interrupted by the need for a Lieutenant at Station 31. In just keeping with his nature, Trent answered the need and headed for the fire department to work overtime. It wasn't until I received a call at dinner with friends that I would know how this Father's Day would be different. I wish I could tell you the details of that night but as our Lord protects us, those hours are for me now, just a blur. The catastrophe of a terrible fire and the result of a choice one person made has changed my life and our daughter's lives more than words can express. Some would expect us to harbor ill will towards the events of that night but only our Lord can be the Judge and Jury.

Now as our days pass, we remember the warm touch of a man and father we loved dearly, we remember his laugh, his sense of humor. We remember the way he said "tater tarts" in his own special way and how he teased, wrestled, and played with each of us. We remember how when often plans changed, new ideas came up, or help was needed-- his reply was "Okay". We sit quietly sometimes and can even smell the smoke-laden clothes he often brought home after a busy night at the station. As a wife, I can remember the lingering smell of smoke that would be in Trent's hair and mustache when he would ever so gently ease into bed early weekend mornings so not to wake me. That was very important to Trent because during the week his voice was my alarm clock, when he called from the station to wake me up. Oh, there are so many things we will miss here on this earth but we have God's promise that we will be together again one day in a place called Heaven where there are no tears only joy, laughter and dancing at the Lord's feet. What a day of rejoicing and homecoming that will be for us, Donna, Hope and Charity, as we meet our husband and daddy at God's sovereign gate.

"Trent, if we had the time to spend together just for a moment, I would want you to know how much we love you honey and that the dreams we shared for the girls and our business are in God's hands and I rest in knowing that he will prepare me for what lies ahead. As you watch over us from Heaven, know that I will continue our dream, "*Kirk's Designs*", as we planned but for now, out of love and respect for you, the business will need to wait for a little while. My prayer is that the Lord will guide me in our dreams in a manner that will bring you honor. Please rest in knowing that God has us in His hands and you be patient at that fire station in Heaven and keep my side of the bed warm and I will join you again one day".

As each day goes by we receive phone calls and emails from close friends, family, firefighters, and sometimes people we have never meet offering support and asking if there is anything that they can do. My most heartfelt response to their concern is that prayer is the key to healing and is felt by this family everyday in the challenges that we face. Please continue to pray for the Kirk and Zachary families, in days to come we will be faced with challenges that only God can help us with.

Written by: Donna Kirk