

Daisy Mountain fire chief remembered in Glendale

by **Betty Reid** - Aug. 12, 2010 03:01 PM
The Arizona Republic

About 1,000 firefighters, friends, family and leaders from Glendale and Phoenix paid their respects to Tom Healy as his flag-draped coffin entered a conference room Wednesday.

[Photos from the funeral](#)

They had come to a funeral at the Renaissance Hotel in Glendale to mourn the Daisy Mountain Fire Department chief, who lost his battle to lung cancer Friday. Seventy-five Arizona fire engines were parked outside on Maryland Avenue waiting for the funeral procession to start.

Those who knew Healy recalled his passion for work, sports, carpentry work, motorcycles, family and leadership.

"He had an absolutely exceptional character," said retired Phoenix Fire Chief Alan Brunacini, who befriended Healy in 1975.

Work at Daisy Mountain

Brunacinni remembered the a fire captain and his crew at work. They put out Valley fires, tended to car accidents, rescued mountain hikers and often connected with people in despair.

Brunacinni shared a story about a man perched on a fourth floor of a Phoenix building ready to commit suicide in the 1970s.

Healy, Brunacinni said, walked up the four flights, sat with the man and the two chatted sports and had whiskey delivered. The man did not end his life because Healy met "the guy on his term," Brunacinni said.

Glendale Fire Chief Mark Burdick told the 88 Daisy Mountain Fire District firefighters, who sat close to the Healy's casket, that their chief "loved" the north Phoenix fire district. Healy oversaw the expansion of the district.

The district, which includes Anthem, serves 45,000 residents over 100 square miles. When Healy took the helm of the Daisy Mountain Fire District in 1999, there were two fire stations and two firetrucks that served north Phoenix. Under Healy's leadership, two more stations opened and two firetrucks were added, said Dave Wilson, Daisy Mountain Fire Department spokesman.

Work at Phoenix Fire Department

Healy spent approximately 30 years with Phoenix Fire Department before moving to Daisy Mountain.

Fire Chief Bob Khan, a then-aspiring Phoenix firefighter, met Healy, a captain, in 1982.

Khan, then 23, traveled to Good Samaritan Hospital with Healy and another firefighter, who had been overcome by heat and dehydration during a training drill. When the three arrived at the hospital, Khan remembered sporting rubber boots and guzzling soda to cool down while waiting for word for about the status of the fellow firefighter.

"Healy told me, 'Stop drinking the Coca Cola and take your boots off and you'll cool down a lot faster,' " Khan said.

Khan obeyed.

"It seems like yesterday he told me to take off my boots and cool down," Khan said.

Khan credits Healy for opening health clinics in Phoenix and Glendale for firefighters. The health centers screened firefighters annually. The idea is keep firefighters healthy especially when they are exposed to hazardous chemicals.

"There are many firefighters who are alive today because of the once-per-year medical screenings," Khan said. "We're stronger and healthier because of Healy's work."