

A tribute to the fallen

NN monument honors police, firefighters

By Sandra Tan

NEWPORT NEWS

Charles Sanzo wasn't thinking about heroes on that December day. He was thinking about his brother's wedding two days away and about the Christmas presents he still had to buy.

But a warehouse fire broke out in downtown Newport News, and off-duty firefighters were called in to help. Sanzo headed for the site of the blaze, and destiny met him there.

He suffered injuries that killed him two weeks later.

"I don't care how many years go by," said his mother, Madeline Sanzo. "You never get over it."

As she took her first steps toward the Newport News Police and Fire Monument, her eyes burned for the name of her son. The letters were raised in bronze.

CHARLES L. SANZO

FEBRUARY 2, 1969

Sanzo's name is one of 23 on the monument unveiled outside City Hall Friday. The names were those of firefighters and police officers who lost their lives in the line of duty, the deaths stretching from 1919 to 1994.

Madeline Sanzo's eyes stayed on her own son's name. Crushing a tissue against a new flood of tears, she moved her gaze to a bronze statue flanking the right side of the monument.

The shield-shaped helmet and the shiny turnout coat identified the figure as a firefighter. On the opposite flank stood the figure of a police officer. Between them are the names of 22 men and one woman.

More than 300 police officers, firefighters, politicians and community members paid tribute to them with silence as each name was called. Police and fire honor guards raised their arms in slow salute, and one by one, citizens came forward with white roses and solemn spirits.

Bagpipers played "Amazing Grace" in a long, eerie wail as the parade of wondrous tributes continued. The trumpet played "Taps," and the honor guard fired a resounding 21-gun salute from the roof of the employer parking garage across the street.

The force of the salute was enough for

Peace see front p. C4

A bronze sculpture of a policeman stands at one end of the Newport News monument. A firefighter sculpture stands at the other end.



Mary Ann Rutherford, whose son Steven, a police officer, was killed on duty in 1994, listens to the speakers Friday. "You never get over it," she said earlier this week. "You just have to be thankful that people remember him." Photo by Buddy News Photo



Nine-year-old Briney Jolly places a rose at the monument in honor of firefighter John T. Cox, who died in 1945.

City Hall memorial cites "fallen heroes" in Newport News

The names of 11 police officers and 12 firefighters are etched in bronze.

BY ERICA REP
STAFF WRITER

NEWPORT NEWS — Bob Allison was never in a neighborhood watch group where his Newport News home is unharmed. He was only 17 in 1982, when, five months later, police officer Steven Rubenstein pulled the station wide.

In the next week, the 26-year-old Allison was had found Allison's name was etched.

Rubenstein etched the name of 11 officers and 12 firefighters whose names are etched in bronze on a monument erected Friday at front of Newport News City Hall.

It is the city's first monument honoring those

What started as a \$50,000 police statue became a \$100,000 life-sized police and firefighter monument.

deceased heroes.

The killing of three officers in 1981, the deaths in 1982 of neighborhood and city in Newport News and 1983 of Wallace S. Harpster — prompted the city to a memorial.

At Allison, who touched the ground there last night, it was a memorial. Rubenstein's widow had intended to go to push even harder.

The husband of Martha Rubenstein, who Martha Rubenstein had been killed while posing as a pizza delivery man in a drug operation in 1981.

"I was with Steve in her," Allison said, looking to her at a Newport News. Her life is dedicated to Allison and Rubenstein. It is not of her, your heart out. It is not of her with a terrible feeling.

Allison added that feeling to his understanding of police work through a woman who served on the Hampton police force for 21 years and a brother-in-law who retired from the Los Angeles Police Department.

He had the heart-breaking mission to uncover who would honor, praising the monument as a way to remember and remember those who have died serving the city.

The first \$500 was collected spontaneously at a National Night Out Rally, a night when neighborhood turn on porch lights at a show of solidarity against crime.

Since Allison was elected president of Newport News Citizens Watch Council in December 1986, he said the reach of more than 200

neighborhood watch groups to fund the cause funds.

Martha Rubenstein donated \$10,000 of community money that had come pouring in after her husband died. A donation of \$4,000 came from Law 2. Lubart, an African businessman who spent three years as a Newport News prisoner in the 1950s before returning from the force.

"I don't know a police officer, always a police officer," said Greiner, who lived in the city 11 years. The owner of two businesses travels up every fall for a reunion with other retired officers. The coordinator keeps him coming back.

Greiner remembers at least one officer whose name is on the memorial, Clarence E. Small, who died in a car crash while responding to an emergency.

"He walked the same beat I walked, but on a different shift," Greiner said of his days working on a rough East End street. "I know him well."

Greiner said that what happened on the street bled into officers' families.

It was also the jokes in the squad room, the laughter, that bled them. And it was leaving life's lesson the hard way — such as the time Greiner would not hold a dying woman's hand in the emergency room because he did not think it was proper. Those regrets, they build law.

What started as a \$50,000 police statue became a \$100,000 life-sized police and firefighter monument. It was built by Neil Bredin, a former Monroeville police officer who prefers to be known as a "retired cop," not in action.

The monument, he said, "represents all the working guys, retired guys, and the ones who have been killed, and that's very emotional to me."

Bredin was present at the dedication, where a crowd of people lit and set of candles believed to city leaders pay tribute during a ceremony.

After the chaise was lifted off the monument, a lone firefighter slowly walked Among Grace.

One by one, 23 white roses were placed at the memorial's base, and police and fire honor guards carried their white gloves in 23 salutes.



Britney Jolley, 8, places a white rose at the base of a monument to deceased firefighters and police officers during dedication ceremonies at Newport News City Hall on Friday. The memorial was designed by Neil Bredin, a former Monroeville police officer.