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Brookline firefighter hurt in fall

By 0, 5/1/2004

A 35-year veteran of the Brookline Fire Department was in critical condition yesterday from a head injury he suffered after falling off a firetruck on the way back from a call, the Fire Department said.

Irwin Gross, 58, of Natick, was part of a team responding to a report of a gas odor in a building on Regent Circle about 9 a.m., Chief Peter Skerry said. After the firefighters cleared the scene, Fire Engine 3 turned right on Washington Street, where Gross apparently fell and struck his head, Skerry said.

Gross, who was unconscious at the scene and taken to Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, is a highly regarded member of the department and a "terrific, all-around guy," Skerry said.

"He's just always very outgoing, very personable, upbeat, positive -- help out anybody in a heartbeat," said Skerry, who has known Gross for more than 20 years. "You really could not find anybody to say a bad word against him."

The cause of the accident is under investigation by Brookline and State Police, who are working to reconstruct the scene, authorities said.

STEPHANIE VOSK

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Firefighter Injured In Fall From Truck

Man Listed In Critical Condition

POSTED: 1:52 PM EDT April 30, 2004

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BOSTON -- A Brookline, Mass., firefighter was hospitalized with serious injuries after falling from a fire truck while responding to a call Friday.



Irwin Gross, 58, fell from the apparatus in front of 665 Washington St. at about 9 a.m. Fire and police units were dispatched to a report of an odor of gas in a building on Regent Circle.

Gross was transported to an area hospital, where he was listed in critical condition.

Brookline Police Department Traffic Investigators are conducting a reconstruction of the incident. Due to the investigation, Washington Street was closed between Beacon Street and Fairbanks Street.

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Fireman killed in fall from engine: Natick resident was a 36-year veteran of Brookline fire squad

By Bernie Smith / News Staff Writer
Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Natick resident Irwin "Buzz" Gross, a 36-year veteran of the Brookline Fire Department, died Monday night three days after hitting his head in a fall from a fire truck on the way to a call.

Interim Fire Chief Peter E. Skerry yesterday called Gross "a gentleman to the nth degree."

"There was no role he wouldn't play," Skerry said. "He was the kind of guy you wouldn't have to ask in the first place."

Gross, 58, was riding in the rear of Engine 3 on the way to a call Friday morning when he apparently fell off near the Washington Square Station. Gross, who suffered head trauma in the fall, died Monday just after 10 p.m. at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

Gross, who also worked as an electrician, is survived by his wife, Marsha, and two children, Matthew and Liz.

Skerry said the accident is being investigated by the Brookline Police and Fire departments and the state police accident reconstruction team. On Friday, Skerry would not rule out the possibility that a faulty engine door contributed to the accident.

Gross lived across the street from the West Natick fire station on Speen Street, and Natick Fire Lt. Mike Aries said yesterday he had known him for several years.

"He would stop in the station occasionally," said Aries. "He was a real nice guy -- a gentleman. He was probably a lot more reserved than most firefighters -- he was a fine man."

"Every time there is a firefighter loss, you take note of what you do in the business," said Aries. "It touches all of us. You hear this is a unique family. The guys all care about each other, even those you haven't met."

Services will be Thursday at the Congregation Mishkan Tifela, 300 Hammond Pond Parkway, in Chestnut Hill. Michael Hart, executive director of the synagogue, said Gross was a member of the congregation.

Funeral arrangements will be handled by Stanetsky Memorial Chapels on 1668 Beacon St.

Donations to aid Gross' family can be sent to: Firefighter Buzz Gross Fund, c/o Brookline Municipal Credit Union, 334 Washington St., Brookline, MA 02447-0776.

(News staff writer Norman Miller contributed to this report.)

Photo Gallery



Irwin "Buzz" Gross

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Firefighter to be buried with full honors today

By Tom Farmer
Thursday, May 6, 2004

A Brookline firefighter killed in a freak accident while responding to an alarm last week will be buried with full honors today while an investigation into the incident is close to completion.

Irwin "Buzz" Gross, 58, of Natick died Monday night from head injuries he received Friday when he fell from an engine leaving the firehouse on Washington Street.

"He was a kind, caring funny man who was always ready to help anyone who needed him," Gross' daughter, Elizabeth, said yesterday.

"He was a wonderful father, grandfather and husband. He felt so proud to be a firefighter, to be able help people who needed him on a daily basis."

Firefighters from around the country are expected to be at Gross' noon funeral service at Congregation Mishkan Tefila in Newton.

Meanwhile, Brookline police Capt. John O'Leary said a probe of the fatal accident is close to completion.

"It's going along pretty good," he said.

"I don't think it is going to be long."

Gross fell from an older engine that was put into service for the regular engine that was being repaired, officials said.

Investigators are trying to determine if the antiquated apparatus met current safety standards.

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1,500 pay tribute to Brookline firefighter

The Boston Globe

By Mac Daniel, Globe Staff | May 7, 2004

NEWTON -- As about 1,500 firefighters from Maine to New York City stood at attention yesterday and saluted with gloved hands, a hearse carrying Irwin Gross slowly drove under a 200-foot arch formed by the extended ladders of two Brookline ladder trucks, between which waved an expansive American flag. Six of the Brookline firefighter's friends and co-workers kept pace, their hands never leaving the sides of the hearse.

Right behind was Brookline Engine 4, representing Gross's station house, its grille draped in black crepe.

Gross, who died Monday, was eligible for retirement when he was fatally injured while responding to a call last Friday, but would not set aside his life's work, friends said yesterday at Congregation Mishkan Tefila in Newton.

"My place is with my station," Rabbi Michael Menitoff recalled Gross as saying.

Gross, 58, a Natick father and grandfather who was known as Buzz, was thrown from a rear-facing cab and struck his head on the pavement as the fire engine he was riding in made a sharp right turn while pulling out of Station No. 6 on Washington Street en route to a reported gas leak.

On the anniversary of the day in 1968 that he became a firefighter, Gross's life and career were recalled during his funeral service.

"Today, to this very day, would have been his 36th year . . . on the line," said Menitoff, Gross's cousin, whose first official act as a rabbi was to officiate at the wedding of Irwin and Marsha Gross.

Gross was remembered at the funeral as someone who recorded a near-perfect score on the Scholastic Aptitude Tests, but chose to forgo college and become a master electrician. Speakers recalled his love of one-liners -- "some inspiring and some not so inspiring," Menitoff said -- and his eccentricities. Gross rarely wore socks and had a lifelong loyalty to GMC vehicles.

Gross was also Brookline's first trained emergency medical technician. Fire Chief Peter E. Skerry Jr. said Gross was the catcher on the department's softball team, and was someone who believed he could run faster during games while wearing his work boots -- all the while carrying several tools in his pockets.

Gross's ties to his family superseded everything else, friends said. He recently brought his grandson to the same New Hampshire campground where Gross and his son went years earlier. He was also looking forward to walking his daughter down the aisle at her upcoming wedding. Fire and police investigators are examining the accident, which occurred on a 29-year-old firetruck that may not meet safety standards. They are also trying to determine if Gross had his seat belt fastened. A similar accident in 1982 involving another Brookline firefighter led to nationwide changes in safety guidelines for fire truck manufacturers.

Skerry said the funeral marked the end of a career during which Gross was commended for bravery numerous times. He said the firefighter had a "clarity of judgment" that peers admired. "He will be deeply missed," Skerry said. ■

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