

'Been a bad month'



'SOMBER' Eileen Davidson is escorted Sunday from the Floral Park wake for her firefighter husband Michael (oval), who died battling a Harlem blaze, as his fellow FDNY members gather to say goodbye.

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AP

FDNY's grief at fallen Bravest's wake

By C.J. SULLIVAN, IGOR KOSSOV and EMILY SAUL

A sea of firefighters stood in silence beneath a fluttering American flag and gave a mournful salute Sunday as the widow of firefighter Michael Davidson arrived at the fallen FDNY hero's wake on Long Island.

Eileen Davidson hid her grief behind dark glasses while being guided arm-in-arm into Floral Park's Timothy J. Dalton funeral home by a colleague of her late husband, who was lost last Thursday while battling an apartment blaze in Harlem.

Among the mourners was Timothy Cardinal Dolan, who carried a woven palm frond in observance of Palm Sunday as he entered the home for the services.

"It's very somber, a real sense of solidarity," Dolan said as he described the wake. "Everyone was together around Eileen. His mom and dad are there as well."

The fire that took the 15-year veteran's life broke out a floor below where production was wrapping up for the day on the set of the new Edward Norton film, "Motherless Brooklyn."

Davidson, 37, who was a nozzleman carrying the front of a

hose, was the sole death. The Long Island resident leaves behind four young children.

The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

Surviving family members were shepherded to Sunday's wake in FDNY vehicles. The widow didn't speak as she walked into the funeral home past sobbing mourners.

Herself a breast cancer survivor, Eileen was again saluted by 200 members of the FDNY as she left the memorial some two hours later.

Dolan is set to give a eulogy at Davidson's funeral Tuesday.

How you can help

You can help FDNY Lt. Michael Davidson's children, whose educations will be supported by the Silver Shield Foundation. The group was launched in 1982 by late New York Yankees owner George Steinbrenner to aid the families of NYPD officers and FDNY firefighters who lose their lives in the line of duty. Davidson and his wife, a breast cancer survivor, have four children.

You can make a contribution at www.silvershieldfoundation.org/donate, or mail it to: Silver Shield Foundation, 870 UN Plaza, 1st Floor, New York, NY 10017

Outside the service, fellow smoke-eaters cried and hugged one another. "Been a bad month," one mumbled through tears.

"These get harder, not easier, every time we go to one," an FDNY lieutenant who declined to give his name said as he stepped out for some air. "It's heart-wrenching seeing his four kids now with no father."

The line of mourners stretched around the block, and a giant American flag was draped over a nearby LIRR trestle.

"I got to watch Michael grow up to become one of the best firefighters I have ever known,"

Capt. Robert Allen said following the wake, surrounded by fellow firefighters from Davidson's Engine company. "My favorite memory of him was playing with all the neighborhood kids. They all loved him. He'd put them on the rig and let them honk the horn."

"His death — it's the dark underbelly of our job," Allen added softly.

Purple and black bunting was hung from Engine 69/Ladder 28, where Davidson was stationed, and where a bouquet-laden memorial has been erected.

A sign erected on the lawn of his Floral Park home reads, "A Hero Lives Here."

A single black balloon floated nearby, tied to a police barricade.

Davidson died when his tank ran out of oxygen after he'd become separated from his team inside the smoke-filled basement of the building on St. Nicholas Avenue. He was posthumously promoted to the rank of lieutenant on Saturday.

A firefighter outside the burned-out building told The Post the structure had been slated for demolition on Monday.

Additional reporting by Tea Kvetenadze

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